

CRAFTING PASTORAL CARE PLANS

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like to develop a pastoral care plan for a church? Are you familiar with theological models that could help you in this endeavour? Do you know of resources, innovative possibilities, and people that might assist you to create a context-specific pastoral care strategy? Or does the idea of fashioning a plan render you nonplussed, because you do not know how to accomplish such a task?

These are some of the questions I pondered in 2016. A group of us had gathered to worship God and fellowship together when a visiting pastor encouraged us to take this initiative a step further and start a new church. After a season of discernment, we concluded that the idea was of God and under the leadership of two wonderful priests St Augustine's Anglican Church in Auckland, New Zealand was birthed. I was asked to lead the pastoral care component of this fledgling community and develop a pastoral care plan as part of my brief.

Experience had taught me that producing a church pastoral care strategy was no easy task. Many reasons account for this challenge. When I had been commissioned to develop a pastoral care plan for a church of 1200 plus parishioners in 2008, I had incorrectly assumed that all I would need to do was locate some plans that other churches used and modify them to fit our context. The problem was, however, that I was unable to unearth a single blueprint. I therefore set out on the lengthy, yet deeply satisfying journey of building and implementing a pastoral care plan from scratch.² Of course, the lack of literature on how to create a pastoral care plan is not the only challenge facing those given the task of developing new pastoral strategies. Designers also need to consider the discrete histories, idiosyncrasies, and ever-evolving needs of parishioners, as well as the unique demographics, ethnic compositions, and geographical locations of each church.

To navigate my way through these factors and craft a pastoral care plan for St Augustine's I used the integrative theological approach outlined by George Wieland, Myk Habets, and myself in *Doing Integrative Theology* as a framework. In the book we argue that integrative theology "sees the world of life, discipleship, and mission not only as the arena in which theological understanding is to be applied, but as the context in which the work of God may be discerned" and God may be "more fully known."³ This involves exploring (in no particular order) God's word (i.e., "the content of Christian belief; scripture and Christian theological

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² See Philip John Halstead, "Creating Pastoral Care Strategies for Churches in the 21st Century: The Organic Process of Developing the Pastoral Care Plan for St Paul's Symonds Street, Auckland, New Zealand," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 11.1 (2016): 72-87; Philip John Halstead, "Mental Health and The Church: A Pastoral Care Structure that Assists Individuals, Families, and Congregations affected by Mental Health Concerns," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 12.1 (2017): 32-49.

³ Philip Halstead, George Wieland, and Myk Habets, "Introduction: The Integrative Process," in *Doing Integrative Theology: Word, World, and Work in Conversation*, eds. Philip Halstead and Myk Habets (Auckland: Archer Press, 2015), 1-10, 4.

traditions”), God’s work (i.e., “the performance of Christian discipleship, community and mission”), and God’s world (i.e., “the worlds in which we live and the mission of God is realized”), as well as the interrelationships amongst these three overlapping elements.⁴

GOD’S WORLD

Each Sunday the people of St Augustine’s gather together from all corners of Auckland in an inner-city school auditorium to worship God, receive input, pray, and fellowship. Some of us also meet in various locations scattered around the metropolis during the week. Our website declares that everyone is welcome at St Augustine’s and that our goal is to give “ourselves away for the good of Auckland city.”⁵ But such aspirations are more easily articulated than achieved. Even for us to begin to welcome everybody and give ourselves away effectually—that is, to care well for all people—requires an awareness of the context in which we find ourselves.

Consider the following factors. Māori are the *tangata whenua*⁶ of Aotearoa New Zealand and as *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi) confirms “Pākehā are only Pākehā as a result of their relation to Māori.”⁷ I would like to spotlight three of the many implications that can be drawn from these cursory though important observations. First, St Augustine’s is (at the time of writing) predominantly a Pākehā congregation. Second, we need to acknowledge that our identity as Pākehā “is a colonizing identity, and waking up to history positions Pākehā repentance, unbelonging, and witness in the context of the specific issues and structures of unjust power and privilege in Aotearoa New Zealand.”⁸ And third, when thinking about developing a pastoral care plan we should bear in mind the treaty principles of partnership, protection, and participation,⁹ as well as the impassioned plea of a Māori friend of mine who recently remonstrated “nothing about Māori without Māori.” This suggests that we need to approach the local *iwi*,¹⁰ attempt to build relationships with them, and be open to their input.

Another dynamic that needs to be considered as we form St Augustine’s pastoral care plan is that Auckland is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world with 39 percent of its population of around

⁴ Ibid. 5.

⁵ “Saint Augustine’s,” Saint Augustine’s Auckland Church, <https://www.saintaugustines.org/>.

⁶ *Tangata whenua* are the “local people, hosts, indigenous people.” See John C. Moorfield, “Tangata whenua,” *Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary*, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=tangata+whenua>.

⁷ Andrew Picard, “From Whiteness Towards Witness,” in *The Art of Forgiveness*, eds. Philip Halstead and Myk Habets (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 241-268, 260.

⁸ Ibid. 260-261.

⁹ Ministry of Health-Manatū Hauora, “Treaty of Waitangi Principles,” <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/he-korowai-oranga/strengthening-he-korowai-oranga/treaty-waitangi-principles>.

¹⁰ *Iwi* are an “extended kinship group, tribe ...” that “often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.” See John C. Moorfield, “Iwi,” *Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary*, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=iwi>.

1.5 million people¹¹ being born overseas.¹² Europeans (59.3%) comprise the largest demographic in Auckland followed by Asian (23.1%), Pacifika (14.6%), and Maori (10.7%).¹³ Furthermore, over half of Auckland's inner-city population, which is where St Augustine's is located, identifies as Asian.¹⁴ While no pastoral plan or church can accommodate everyone's needs, Auckland's ethnic diversity must be considered in our pastoral care strategy; for instance, we could employ an Asian priest in the near future.

We also need to acknowledge some of our 21st century culture's proclivities. Busyness and stress are seemingly ubiquitous today. Pastors are particularly prone to this malady. Thomas Merton challenges us by writing "to allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to the violence of our times."¹⁵ Similarly, Eugene Peterson stated that a "sense of hurry in pastoral work disqualifies one for the work of conversation and prayer that develops relationships that meet personal needs ... the pastor must not be 'busy'. Busyness is an illness of spirit."¹⁶ Effective pastoral care plans need to grapple with these ills and offer alternative strategies.

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted are other features of our culture. Johann Hari adroitly observed that over recent decades people in the West have exponentially been dropping out of community activities. This trend has by now become an epidemic and our present "obsessive use of social media is" merely a failed "attempt to fill" our need for safe, caring, face-to-face connections.¹⁷ Accordingly, designers of pastoral care plans can potentially assist lonely people by offering applicable church- and community-based programs that facilitate interpersonal (and transpersonal) connections, offer people a sense of belonging, and build community.

Analogously, vast numbers of Aucklanders embody an individualistic worldview. Far too many of us wittingly and/or unwittingly prefer to live and serve alone. I was recently convicted of this reality via a conversation I had with a Samoan friend. He told me that in Samoa if one person grievously hurts another the perpetrator's entire family along with the perpetrator will go to the victim and the victim's extended family to seek forgiveness knowing that the victim's family may or may not extend forgiveness. A strength of this approach is that it serves as both a fence at the top of the cliff (e.g., it acts as a deterrent to wrongdoing) and an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff (e.g., it demonstrates to perpetrators and victims

¹¹ "Auckland Population 2019," World Population Review, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/auckland-population/>.

¹² Lincoln Tan, "Auckland More Diverse than London and New York," New Zealand Herald, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11575305.

¹³ "2013 Census QuickStats about a place: Newmarket," Stats NZ, http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=13397&parent_id=13171&tabname=&p=y&printall=true.

¹⁴ "Auckland's Asian Population," The Auckland Plan 2050, <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/auckland-plan/about-the-auckland-plan/Pages/aucklands-asian-population.aspx>.

¹⁵ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image Books, 1968), 86.

¹⁶ Eugene Peterson, *Five Small Stones of Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 61.

¹⁷ Johann Hari, *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression—And the Unexpected Solutions* (New York, Bloomsbury, 2018), 89.

alike that they are not alone). Other advantages include sharing the responsibility of care and uniting large numbers of people on multiple levels. Taule'ale'ausumai expands upon these points as follows:

The task of defining pastoral care from a Samoan perspective is extremely complex. The first difficulty is that the use of the term pastoral care in the context of Samoa creates an uncomfortable distinction between clergy and laity. When exploring the question, 'Who does the caring in an unofficial way?' the answer is everyone—clergy, laity, male and female. To explore pastoral care only as a clerical function excludes all these other caregivers from receiving credit for the work they do. Theirs may not be a ministry of the word and sacrament, but it most certainly is a ministry in every other sense of the word. Samoan people have as a second nature a concern for each other as well as for the environment in which they live. They do not need to be told when to visit the sick or pray for the concerns of the world: they cannot comprehend what it means to eat while their neighbours starve. Life revolves around the community and is part of the community ... Samoa's living standards may appear humble to the first world tourist, but even with the little it has, there is always room for one more guest in every home.¹⁸

The importance of these sentiments cannot be overstated. It seems to me that many of us need to experience a transformation regarding the concept of communal care. If pastoral care plans are to be truly beneficial, they and their advocates will need to inspire everyone who can care for others to provide care. No doubt, this will involve regular exhortations, prayer, and modelling. Meditation on the reality that we are interconnected and all part of Christ's body and that each one of us is essential to the vitality of the body will also help (1 Cor. 12: 12-31). Given the multiplicity of needs in all our lives, developing a community of caregivers is the only way forward.

GOD'S WORD

In *Doing Integrative Theology*, we define God's word as "the content of Christian belief; scripture and Christian theological traditions."¹⁹ The insights gleaned from these sources must shape the pastoral care offerings of churches. Consider the importance and implications of the following principles.

Love is at the heart of pastoral care. It has many different shades. Agape love, for example, describes the love that we are called to have for God and our neighbours (Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30). Such love "is totally for the benefit of the other and not dependent on it being reciprocated. It is giving love."²⁰ Many of us are used to hearing that this is how God loves us, but it is no small matter to discover that we are supposed to love (and care for) others free of any expectation of repayment. Some of the biblical descriptors of genuine love such as the call to demonstrate patience and kindness (1 Cor. 13:4) make this task even more

¹⁸ Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pastoral Care: A Samoan Perspective," in *Counselling Issues and South Pacific Communities*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997), 215-240, 215.

¹⁹ Halstead, Wieland, and Habets, "Introduction: The Integrative Process," 5.

²⁰ John Sturt and Agnes Sturt, *Mentoring for Marriage: A Resource Manual for Pastors, Counsellors and Couples* (Auckland: DayStar Publications Trust, 2004), 72.

challenging. So, too, does the reality that if we love and care for others well, witnesses of our love and care will be drawn to Jesus (Jn. 13:35). Consequently, bona fide pastoral care ought to influence our attitudes *and* actions.

Our relatedness to God is another key component of pastoral care.²¹ Liston Mills argues that every genuine definition of pastoral care has at its core “a way of understanding our relatedness to God and the ingredients or acts which may serve to enhance or detract from that relatedness.”²² For Eugene Peterson, this entails paying close attention to what God does and then finding and guiding “others to find, the daily, weekly, yearly rhythms that would get this awareness into our bones.”²³

The traditional term for pastoral care links to the Latin phrase *cura animarum*, which means the care of souls.²⁴ “While *cura* is most commonly translated ‘care,’ it actually contains the idea of both care and cure.” Thus, *care* points “to actions designed to support the well-being of something or someone” and “*cure* refers to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost.”²⁵ *Anima* is “the most common Latin translation of the Hebrew *nephesh* (‘breath’) and the Greek *psyche* (‘soul’).”²⁶ Traditionally, the Christian church has embraced both meanings of *cura*,²⁷ but sadly sections of the church today have lost sight of the goal of cure and have rather settled for care.

In their seminal study of the history of pastoral care, William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle argue that pastoral care “consists of helping acts, done by *representative* Christian *persons*, directed toward the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling* of *troubled persons* whose troubles arise *in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns*.”²⁸ What follows are four notable components of this definition and some examples of cure and care.

First, pastoral care involves helping acts and accordingly has a pragmatic focus. It grounds religion in present-day realities and specialises in the ordinary. In other words, pastoral care equates to ministry in mufti, which requires personal involvement and a sleeves-rolled-up, hands-on mentality.²⁹ Thus, when a St Augustine’s parishioner is hospitalised we should offer to visit, pray, help with transport, and provide meals for the parishioner’s family members to name just a few examples.

²¹ A version of this and the following eight paragraphs was first published in Philip *Doing Integrative Theology: Word, World, and Work in Conversation*, eds. Philip Halstead and Myk Habets (Auckland: Archer Press, 2015), 92-109. Permission was obtained from the book’s publishers to replicate portions of the text here.

²² Liston O. Mills, “Pastoral Care: History, Traditions, and Definitions,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, eds., Rodney J. Hunter, Nancy J. Ramsay, H. Newton Malony, Liston O. Mills, and John Patton. Enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 836-844, 837.

²³ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 45.

²⁴ Albert L. Meiburg, “Care of Souls,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, eds., Rodney J. Hunter, Nancy J. Ramsay, H. Newton Malony, Liston O. Mills, and John Patton. Enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 122.

²⁵ Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, “Spiritual Direction and Christian Soul Care,” in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*, eds., Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 11-28, 11.

²⁶ Meiburg, “Care of Souls,” 122.

²⁷ Moon and Benner, “Spiritual Direction and Christian Soul Care,” 11.

²⁸ William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1964), 4.

²⁹ Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, 1.

Second, pastoral care is carried out by representative Christian persons. These caregivers are recognized as trusted caregivers by their churches; they do not have to be ordained clergy. What matters is that they bring the compassion and wisdom of Christian tradition to the situations they encounter.³⁰

Third, Clebsch and Jaekle explain that pastoral care is “directed toward the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons*.”³¹ This suggests that care for struggling people might involve (a) healing that restores them to greater wholeness; (b) sustaining whereby troubled persons and their families are resourced to endure or transcend their circumstances; (c) guiding where the hurting are assisted to make prudent choices; and (d) reconciling wherein fractured interpersonal and transcendent relationships are re-established.³²

A fourth point that can be drawn from Clebsch and Jaekle’s definition of pastoral care is that people’s troubles need to be *meaningful*. For them, this means that authentic pastoral care only takes place when individuals’ existential concerns are being addressed and when the recipients of care acknowledge that the care is being given by representative Christian persons.³³ Clearly, this existential priority is not meant to detract from the importance of the helping acts alluded to in their first point. All expressions of pastoral care are significant.

God’s Word is full of inspirational images that can shape our thinking about pastoral care. Perhaps the most renowned pastoral image is that of the shepherd.³⁴ Contemplating the shepherd image may inspire caregivers to lead parishioners to rich pastures for nourishment, protect churchgoers, and tend to their flocks’ needs. Jesus outlines a similar set of characteristics in John 10: 1-18. He explains that good shepherds ought to be in relationship with their sheep and, if required, lay down their lives for them. Similarly, Jesus’ parable about the man who left 99 of his sheep to seek the lost one (Mt. 18: 10-14) suggests that caregivers should (on occasions) pursue hurting persons, especially as some of them will be in too much pain to be able to request help.³⁵ Images and parables like these reflect some of the sterling characteristics that caregivers can aspire to such as commitment, courage, and a willingness to go the extra mile.³⁶ They also display the advantages of shepherds having relationships with their flocks *before* crises hit. This is to say caregivers need to spend quality time with those in their care.

GOD’S WORK

In keeping with this study’s integrative theological approach, the third element that needs to be probed to source ideas for a robust pastoral care plan is that of God’s work (practice), which in *Doing Integrative Theology*

³⁰ Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 4.

³¹ *Ibid.* 4.

³² *Ibid.* 8-9.

³³ *Ibid.* 6.

³⁴ See for example Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperOne, 1983), 51-53.

³⁵ William B. Oglesby, “Shepherd/Shepherding,” eds., Rodney J. Hunter, Nancy J. Ramsay, H. Newton Malony, Liston O. Mills, and John Patton. Enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 1164.

³⁶ Alastair V. Campbell, “The Courageous Shepherd,” in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert C. Dykstra (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 54-61, 61.

we define as “the performance of Christian discipleship, community and mission.”³⁷ God’s work in the area of pastoral care at St Augustine’s can be witnessed in informal settings (e.g., friends helping one another out in times of crises) and formal ones (e.g., the development of the *LoveBites* initiative, which involves church members providing meals to people in need). God’s work can also be witnessed in other churches. Elim Christian Centre in Auckland city, for instance, cares for some of Auckland’s inner-city Asian community by hosting a weekly church service in Mandarin; translating English services into Korean and Mandarin; and running English as second language classes.³⁸ And predictably, God’s work also flourishes beyond church walls. A noteworthy example returns us to the theme of stress. Over a billion results are (supposedly) identified when one googles the phrase, “How to deal with stress?”³⁹ As I scrolled through several of these pages, the church’s contribution was conspicuous for its absence! An awareness of God’s work in other contexts enables us to learn from others and connect some of our attendees to existing support groups, programmes, and experts. After all, there is no point in reinventing the wheel.

To explore further where God might be working within St Augustine’s I asked numerous parishioners what they would like to see included in the church’s pastoral care offering. Eight themes emerged from these conversations. First, everybody I spoke with longed for St Augustine’s to be a loving community in which all attendees are genuinely cared for. Second, everyone wanted the church to orchestrate regular events and small groups that facilitate interpersonal connections. Third, the majority of unmarried 20 to 35-year-olds I listened to shared stories of disconnection from God and others. Some also expressed a measure of disorientation in life. Fourth, most interviewees craved to live in an environment of prayer, but some were uncertain as to what this might look like and how they should pray. Fifth, nearly everyone stated that the church ought to prioritise people’s spiritual growth and personal transformations. Sixth, there was an awareness that St Augustine’s comprised a high percentage of remarkable 55-plus year-olds who were spiritually mature, wise, and active in life. It was mooted that the pastoral care offering ought to tap into this rich resource. Seventh, several individuals expressed concerns about the heavy workloads that the church leaders carried, and they deemed it imperative that the church finds appropriate ways to support its leaders. And finally, a handful of parishioners articulated their desire to have access to pastoral counselling and prayer if the need should arise. Lofty as some of these aspirations may sound, there was a common conviction amongst the people I conversed with that they were obtainable given that St Augustine’s was a relatively small start-up church.

³⁷ Halstead, Wieland, and Habets, “Introduction: The Integrative Process,” 5.

³⁸ “Elim Christian Centre City,” Elim Christian Centre, <https://www.elimchristiancentre.org.nz/city-campus/>.

³⁹ See https://www.google.co.nz/search?source=hp&ei=44hKXPHsEom_wAOQhZ34BA&q=How+to+deal+with+stress&btnK=Google+Search&oq=How+to+deal+with+stress&gs_l=psy-ab.3..0l10.3272.15860..17587...2.0..0.504.8262.2-9j12j3j1.....0....1..gws-wiz.....0..0i131j0i10.nQgovpk-l-E.

ST AUGUSTINE'S PASTORAL CARE PLAN

Having listened to some of the key voices from God's world, word, and work, the next stage of the development of St Augustine's pastoral care plan involved me conflating the themes and insights outlined above into a proposal. This involved much discussion, thinking, and prayer. What emerged from this process are the six points below.

Caring for the Church Leaders

It is widely known that the health of churches depends appreciably on the wellbeing of their leaders.⁴⁰ It is also commonly accepted that church leaders encounter unique challenges and pressures in their roles that often contribute to stress, burnout, and depression.⁴¹ And one does not need to probe deeply to observe that a high percentage of church leaders do not have established self-care practices in place such as regular supervision and spiritual direction appointments. Complicating matters further is the fact that many leaders are reticent about seeking assistance and that they do not know where to find help. Accordingly, it is imperative that tailored care be provided for every pastor and people-helping leader, so that they are suitably supported to thrive, facilitate the church's blossoming, and sustain their ministries over time. As can be observed above, this emphasis displays society's cry to reduce stress, the explicit concerns of some of the interviewees, and the principle that everyone including the shepherds needs to be shepherded.

In the St Augustine's context, I propose that each leader's individualised care plan be shaped around the four overlapping principles outlined in Luke 2:52—namely, the notions of wisdom, health, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships. To achieve this, a supervisor, spiritual director, counsellor, or respected person from outside of the leader's immediate context will be appointed to coordinate and monitor the details of the leader's personalised care strategy. This person must have the liberty and inclination to challenge the leader where applicable.

Wisdom is multifaceted and is needed in all areas of life and ministry. Consider the oft neglected area of finances. Many church leaders make little or no provision for their own and/or their families' long-term financial futures and the toll of this omission frequently proves to be extremely high. And how many caregivers have effective strategies in place such as robust reading programs to increase their wisdom? Given the tyranny of the urgent, as well as the demands and inevitable ups and downs of ministry, many church leaders will be unable to nourish the wisdom component of their lives without the consistent encouragement of a supervisor.

The health cog of the mooted schema may also be problematic for pastors and people-helping leaders. Most of us know that good hydration, balanced diets, adequate sleep, regular exercise, medical

⁴⁰ See for example Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

⁴¹ See for example Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion* (Minneapolis, Minn: Bethany House, 2009).

check-ups, rest, recreation, and the like all contribute to good health. We also know that if we omit to consider our health we may unnecessarily break down or burn out. Yet, for a variety of reasons, many leaders ignore their own physical wellbeing. One of the most common explanations that persons provide for this omission is that the incessant stream of church-related needs that demand their attention leaves them with no time to fit selfcare strategies into their lives. Of course, what these leaders often fail to consider is the fact that if they push too hard for too long, and as a result become unwell, they will be unable to care for anyone.

Jesus reminds us of one of the key reasons why leaders need to prioritise their own spiritual health: He is the vine; we are the branches; apart from him we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). Church leaders need to draw inspiration from Jesus. Their spiritual beliefs, attitudes, and experiences will invariably shape their church communities. It is therefore imperative that church workers find ways to nurture their own relationships with God. No doubt, this will look different for each individual and be subject to change. For St Augustine's leaders, this plan encourages them to receive monthly spiritual direction or the equivalent, attend a conference every year of their own choosing that cultivates their faith, and take a church financed sabbatical for (say) three months every five or so years. On their sabbaticals they might rest, walk the Camino in Spain and Portugal, attend Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry in Redding, California, and/or be mentored by another minister in another context. Flexibility will clearly be needed here, because people's needs, life stages, and inclinations are unique; yet, the goal remains the same: to support the spiritual health and development of leaders.

Developing the interpersonal component of the designated St Augustine's leaders' lives is also vitally important. At an attitudinal level, for instance, this may involve some leaders entering therapy to explore their own shadows and unconscious worlds. And at a skills level it may necessitate that various leaders enrol in conflict resolution courses and/or find innovative ways to respond to the numerous requests they field from parishioners. Such steps could contribute towards greater congregational health.

While it is true that it would take a considerable amount of time for leaders to nurture the wisdom, health, spirituality, and interpersonal aspects of their lives, it is also true that the failure to invest in this critical work will in the long run reduce their effectiveness, soak up more of their time, and cause unnecessary damage to their flocks, families, and themselves. A friend recently summed this point up as follows: "If church leaders neglect to follow the airline safety rules of first putting on their own oxygen masks in times of emergency, they will very shortly be unable to assist anyone!" Thus, it is not a selfish act for pastors and caregivers to have long-term self-care strategies and prioritise themselves on occasions; in fact, it is essential that they do.

Pastoral Care for the Entire Congregation

The priority of offering pastoral care to everyone connected with St Augustine's reflects notions like God's goodness, our interconnectedness (1 Cor. 12:12-31), and the priority of love. It also mirrors the interviewees' desire to be part of a loving community and the fact that no one is beyond the need of cure and care.

To facilitate proactive pastoral care requires the development of effective systems. One expression of this in St Augustine's present context equates to the staff members (all of whom are part-time, of interest) collectively working through the church roll every four months to appoint each adult parishioner to a designated member of staff. From this point, staff are encouraged to initiate contact with their assigned people to enquire after their welfare, organise occasional catch-ups, elicit prayer requests, and build connections. If and when staff members observe that their nominated people are absent from church for a few weeks, they might e-mail or text them with a message like, "Hi Rob, I think I haven't seen you at church for the last few weeks and I was wondering if you're okay and/or if there's anything I could be praying for or assisting you with?" Predictably, we have quickly gathered bountiful evidence that demonstrates how these gestures are greatly valued. Even persons who have not attended church for some time frequently return to church after being contacted. This is not surprising given that most of us appreciate being valued and cared for.

Pastoral care strategies need to be flexible and non-restrictive. St Augustine's staff members can initiate contact with their nominated parishioners at whatever rhythm feels appropriate to them. Permission is not needed to communicate with persons from outside of one's designated group. And caregivers may ask others to connect with individuals in their own groups. What matters the most is that every church attendee tangibly experiences care and love. As the church grows, congregants with pastoral penchants will join the team of designated caregivers to ensure the sustainability of this stratagem.

Probably the best way to receive care at St Augustine's is to be part of a small group. It is in this context that people are most likely to be transparent, become known, and offer care to each other. As part of our burgeoning pastoral care strategy, we will clearly need to grow our small group offering, encourage people to join a group, and care for the small groups' leaders. Our hope is that the care of these leaders will be picked up by some of the church's vibrant and spiritually mature 55 plus year-olds.

Of course, we need to be open to new and changing modes of connecting people to care structures, too. One example spotlights the *Meet & Greet* evenings we recently initiated whereby persons who are relatively new to the church gather with staff and vestry members over a meal to get to know each other, hear about the church's philosophy, and ask questions. Our plan is to connect each cohort of attendees with a caregiver from the congregation who will accompany and care for them until they feel part of the church and have made some significant connections. Other plans include assembling a team of people who might be able to respond to congregants' practical needs and perhaps, in time, developing a geographical care-based structure since many of us live scattered across the city. Undoubtedly, further initiatives will emerge in time.

Care via Prayer

The primacy of prayer in pastoral care is well established. It can be witnessed in Jesus' care for others (Jn. 17), Peterson's earlier exhortation for pastors to find the time to pray for others, and the discussion of cure and care. Most people I spoke with about pastoral care at St Augustine's pointed to the importance of

prayer. It was as if they were saying that to pray for people is to care for people. Although there are multiple expressions of pastoral care, if prayer is not a leading component in a church care plan, and if prayer does not undergird every outworking of care, one could legitimately question if the care is Christian. Prayer not only builds transpersonal and interpersonal connections, it also seems to reveal the state of many people's spiritual vibrancy and maturity. Taken together we see that prayer has an immutable place in the Christian tradition of pastoral care. But what is prayer? Hans Urs Von Balthasar reasons that,

Firstly, prayer *is* a conversation between God and the soul, and secondly, a particular language *is* spoken: God's language. Prayer *is* dialogue, not [a person's] monologue before God. Ultimately, in any case, there is no such thing as solitary speech; speech implies reciprocity, the exchange of thoughts and souls, unity in common spirit, in a common possession and sharing of the truth. Speech both demands and manifests an I and a Thou.⁴²

Definitions like this remind us that we all have a lot to learn about prayer and that each person is at a different stage of her or his faith journey. If we are to help the interviewees fulfil their desires of living in an environment of prayer and if we are to make prayer accessible to everyone at St Augustine's, we plainly need to offer a wide range of prayer approaches. Some already exist. For instance, space is created in every church service for churchgoers to receive prayer. I contact each staff member at the beginning of each month to see if they have any specific prayer requests and concomitantly pray for them every day. And St Augustine's first three-day Silent retreat took place in 2018, which involved teaching on contemplative prayer, confession, creating space for God to speak, and giving each attendee the opportunity to meet with an experienced spiritual director for a one-on-one session.

Plans are also afoot to launch several new prayer ministries in the coming year. One is to establish a travelling prayer team whereby a small group of people will visit and pray for parishioners who desire prayer yet are unable to make it to a Sunday service to receive prayer. A second is to instigate a church prayer-line, which will enable persons to send their prayer requests to a designated church member, who in turn will send out a weekly (or emergency) e-mail to church members who have committed to pray for the people on the prayer-line. The recipients of prayer will also be followed up by an appointed pastoral caregiver. A third strategy is to link people who desire to deepen their connections with God to spiritually mature church members who can coach them in the art of prayer. And a fourth is to run a series of five-week prayer modules in our mid-week theology classes that will be commencing shortly. (We will also be offering five-week courses on pastoral care in this context.) By these and other means, we hope to advance our church culture of prayer and care.

⁴² Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1955/1986), 14.

Cultivating Interpersonal Connections

All the interviewees longed for St Augustine's to be a community in which every person who desires to connect with others can do so. Their unanimity is not surprising, given that we are created for interpersonal connections, we are linked to one another whether we acknowledge it or not (1 Cor.12:12-31), human bonds help to counter many of our epoch's ills such as loneliness, and care is best worked out in the context of community.

But how can meaningful social connections be nurtured in parishioners' lives in inner-city churches today? And how can people be encouraged to commit to others when they may at best be ambivalent towards the idea? In the St Augustine's context, one means is to continue with proven strategies such as the city-wide dinner banquets in parishioners' homes that occur several times each year. For these, a facilitator connects people who wish to attend a meal with those who want to host the events. An exciting twist to this scheme is that the facilitator only releases the hosts' addresses to the guests at the last minute and neither the hosts nor the guests know who is coming to dinner (or morning-tea, or lunch) until everyone arrives. This initiative has proven to be extremely popular and has enabled many new relationships to take root and blossom, which is particularly pleasing given that interpersonal connections comprise a crucial element in the lifeblood of effective pastoral care. Another means to encourage people to commit to others is to host church related social activities at least once per month such as tenpin bowling evenings, coffee tasting mornings, and educational mid-week presentations. In my view, most of these events should be aimed at the church's 20 to 35-year-olds who are not directly connected with families, as they were the interviewees who articulated the most disquiet about their disconnection from God and others. Interestingly, they also seem to equate to St Augustine's most under-represented demographic.

A further method of promoting social connections amongst ourselves (and others) would be to participate in an annual noho marae⁴³ at, ideally, the marae of the local iwi. Numerous benefits could stem from this, especially as experiences often transform lives in ways that nothing else can. We would observe first-hand how everyone serves on the marae. And we would hear stories that would lead many of us to deeper repentance, humility, and enlightenment.

Interpersonal relationships could also be enhanced via education on pastoral care related themes. For example, we could highlight the importance of friendship making, as friendships are an ideal context for extending and receiving care. Lynne Baab helpfully asserts that friendship is more like a verb than a noun⁴⁴ and Lex McMillan explains that *relations* is the primary ontology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as, by implication, humans.⁴⁵ Additionally, Jesus' inspirational example of connectedness could be explored. Not only did he consistently find time to bond with God, but he also related to different groups of people

⁴³ A noho marae is a 'sleepover' on a marae (traditional Maori meeting house), which helps to facilitate quality learning. See Vaiolesi Passells and Judith Ackroyd, "Noho Marae Learning: Externalised Through the Experience," *Social Work Review* 18 (Summer 2006): 59-69.

⁴⁴ Lynne M. Baab, *Friending: Real Relationships in a Virtual World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 96.

⁴⁵ Lex McMillan, "Social God, Relational Selves," in *Stories of Therapy, Stories of Faith*, eds. Lex McMillan, Sarah Penwarden, and Siobhan Hunt (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 3-17, 8-9.

in various levels of intimacy. Church leaders might also share about their first-hand experiences of friendships and encourage congregants to sit next to isolated individuals in church.

Facilitating Wholeness and Wellbeing

As stated, several parishioners expressed that part of St Augustine's pastoral care offering should be aimed at supporting people's journeys towards wholeness and wellbeing. This goal echoes biblical processes like discipleship, transformation, and reconciliation, as well as Clebsch and Jaekles' famous definition of pastoral care that seeks "the *healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons*."⁴⁶

To determine a person's wholeness and wellbeing is no easy matter. The first step might be to define wholeness and wellbeing by studying the life of Jesus. Alternatively, it may be useful to utilise a psychometric scale such as John Fisher's *Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measure* (SHALOM). This 20-item scale measures four domains of spiritual wellbeing—namely, people's relationships with themselves (i.e., the personal domain), others (i.e., the communal domain), the environment (i.e., the environmental domain), and the divine (i.e., the transcendental domain).⁴⁷

While some form of appraisal can be helpful, my experience suggests that what most churchgoers want when they are seeking help from the church is tangible assistance. Although every situation is distinct, care-seekers typically raise a surprisingly small number of themes. This reality offers pastoral caregivers and counsellors the opportunity to upskill in most areas they will encounter as they care for others. Keeping with Fisher's categories, examples include the importance of learning to grieve well (the personal domain); listen, forgive, and resolve conflict (the communal domain); live beyond oneself for the betterment of others (the environmental domain); and hear God's voice and determine God's will (the transcendental domain).

In keeping with the classic pastoral care image of the Gardener,⁴⁸ caregivers can facilitate wholeness and wellbeing in parishioners at a soil level. By this I mean, gardeners/caregivers can tend to the soil and create environments that enable the maturation of churchgoers. Caregivers can also nurture growth and healing via prayer and meaningful teaching. One example of these points spotlights the recent launching of a discipleship track at St Augustine's that enables explorers of the Christian faith to ask faith and heart related questions in a safe environment.

Developing a Pastoral Care Hub

Pastoral care is most effective when it is readily accessible and championed by appropriately motivated and skilled caregivers. To heighten the accessibility of a church's pastoral care offering it can be profoundly

⁴⁶ Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 4.

⁴⁷ John Fisher, "Development and Application of a Spiritual Well-Being Questionnaire Called SHALOM," *Religions* 1 (2010): 105-121, 107-109.

⁴⁸ Margaret Z. Kornfeld. "The Gardener," in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert C. Dykstra (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 209-217.

helpful to establish a contact centre. In our case, this will involve setting up an e-mail address like pastoralcare@saintaugustines.org and encouraging church attendees to e-mail us when pastoral needs arise that cannot be met through their existing small group networks. One of the benefits of using a generic e-mail address, as opposed to an individual's, is that a handful of people can receive the requests and in turn discuss and pray about the situations before the most suitable person responds. A further advantage of a team approach is that it spreads the responsibility amongst caregivers and frees individual team members to step away from their roles on occasions without interrupting the church care mechanisms. Naturally, this system will not prevent parishioners from contacting individual staff members or congregants about pastoral care matters should they prefer to do so.

A further task of the hub's designated pastoral care leaders will be to look out for like-minded parishioners who they can invite to join and ultimately lead the church's different pastoral care teams. Such recruitment not only provides gifted and passionate caregivers with platforms to use their gifts, but it also spreads the load and helps to embed pastoral care further into a church's ethos. A related reason for growing teams is the fact that larger teams are the *only* way to ensure that every congregant will be cared for when church numbers swell. As teams increase in size, the focus of team leaders will often switch towards the care of team members, who, in turn, care for the parishioners.

As with all new initiatives, we must heed the voice of wisdom and overtly state from the outset that every new care strategy and appointment will be reviewed after (say) three months. Procedural junctures like this provide opportunities for review, change, and encouragement. They can also save much heartache.

SUMMARY

I set out to create an effective pastoral care plan for St Augustine's via engaging with God's World, Word, and Work as outlined in *Doing Integrative Theology*.⁴⁹ This journey proved to be most enlightening and included me presenting the draft six-point plan outlined above at an academic conference at which St Augustine's two priests and several Maori, Samoan, Chinese, Indian, and Pakeha academics and pastoral practitioners were in attendance.⁵⁰ The presentation and plan were very warmly received. The sole critique was to enhance further the communal approach to pastoral care for reasons such as those included in this article. Happily, St Augustine's priests approved the six points and we are now at the stage of implementing them.

I hope that many of you who have read this article will be inspired to create your own pastoral care plans for your specific contexts. May others of you find ways to adapt aspects of this plan to assist those in your care.

Pastoral care has innumerable benefits and can be summarised in Jesus' words: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13: 34-35). As we love and care for one another via

⁴⁹ Halstead, Wieland, and Habets, "Introduction: The Integrative Process," 1-10.

⁵⁰ I presented my paper "Reinventing Pastoral Care Strategies" at Carey Baptist College's Research Conference on September 14, 2017.

the multiple expressions of pastoral care outlined here, we will not only enrich ourselves, but also provide a lens through which others see and hopefully encounter Jesus. What a privilege this is! What a responsibility! Let us all care for one another.