

Pastoral Care in a

Different Time

1 Corinthians 12:24-26 But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Pastoral care involves all of us as 1 Corinthians tells us. As a follower of Christ, you are the hands and feet, the eyes and ears of Christ to others in your church family and those in your neighborhood. The following will give you practical insights and tips to help you care and love others well for Jesus during this time of difficulty.

Be a non-anxious presence.

Staying calm, emotionally present, and free from anxiety creates trust and provides comfort. We must reach out non-anxiously. This means managing our own feelings, so we neither try to flee the situation nor flood it with our own emotions and anxieties. Those we are caring for will take our calm and compassion to help reduce their own anxieties.

Show up for people, even if not in person.

"Avoid close contact" is becoming the norm these days, especially for people over sixty. We have the unique opportunity to show up for people by placing a phone call, sending a text, or using a digitally option. It is not the same as being able to reach out and hold a hand, however, there are ways for us to "show-up". You are likely already connected to people on various social platforms, so use them - with care - to offer your support.

Listen with love.

No matter what turn a pandemic takes, one of the most enduring and powerful gifts we can offer is to listen. By listening we represent the love of Jesus, the love of community, and love of life itself. Compassionate listening is exactly what people need when they are faced with times of uncertainty.

Find ways to make community.

The human desire to be with others is incredibly strong. Although a crisis may lead some people to withdraw, it can also be a significant opportunity to pull together and support each other. Make a phone call to say "Hello" and "How are you?", text a friend, set-up a video chat, sit in your front yard wave and say "Hi" to neighbors, and actively pray for anyone you meet.

Keep values alive.

Find ways to remind people that God's loving presence was here before the universe itself. Seeing ourselves as part of a much larger picture offers hope. Maintaining God's loving presence in our lives will give a sense of hopefulness, even when circumstances threaten to dim our hope. Lean into God's sustaining presence. Be in His Word so you can share His Word with others.

Pray.

Spoken prayers for people who are anxious and in great need can reshape a situation. A spoken prayer is participating not only that person's life but in God's life also. The prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Rest.

Remember that you too need rest. Please tend to your own needs. Lean into your church family for prayer and support. It is tempting to believe in a crisis that we must give or do everything right now, mostly this is impossible. Self-care is not selfish. As this outbreak continues to unfold, take steps to renew your own energy and hope in the Spirit of God.

Monitor and follow health guidelines.

Be sure to follow state and county guidelines. Modeling for others how to reach out without panic can be a big part of pastoral care.