Creating and Sustaining Lay Pastoral Care Teams

Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law.
This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.

~ James Vila Blake
Assumptions

- Parish care is different from pastoral care
  Parish care = cards, meals, rides
  Pastoral care = visiting, presence

- By vocation, training, and call, the Minister is best resource as pastoral caregiver

- Lay people are essential partners in this ministry

You will be cared for.
And you will be called upon to care for others.
- Mission of Prince of Peace ELCA Church (Burnsville, MN)

Definitions of Pastoral Care

“Pastoral care is the faithful ministry of a religious community to the needs of people in face-to-face relationships. This ministry comes from a genuine concern for each person, caring about her as a person of unique worth, and caring for her as a mutual responsibility.”
- Paul Johnson, A Theology of Pastoral Care

“Pastoral theology is the science of the care for souls.”
- Catholic Encyclopedia
Sources of care in congregations

- person to person
- lay ministry team
- RE teachers
- worship services

- within groups
- minister to individuals
- congregation's staff
- minister to congregation

Differences between Parish Care and Pastoral Care

**Parish Care**
- Writing cards
- Making and delivering meals
- Transportation to appointments and worship
- Medical equipment loan programs
- Buddy systems for elders

**Pastoral Care**
- Visiting people who are ill or hospitalized
- are in nursing homes or who can't get to church
- are dying
- have experienced illness or death in the family

*Education about*
- caring for elderly parents
- living wills, etc.

Process of creating or revitalizing lay ministry teams

communicating process and vision

- vision of pastoral ministry
- nurture pastoral teams
- volunteer appreciation
- ongoing coordination
- selection and training of caregivers
- transition from old system
- design program
- communicate!
- selection and training of leadership
Exercise: Exploring your Vision of Caregiving

What kind of care do you want to share?
Why?
What is your vision for caregiving in your congregation?

Identifying need

Identifying needs in the congregation is relatively easy...

- Joys & Sorrows
- informal networks
- Religious educator and RE teachers
- Administrator
- Minister
- committees/groups

Collecting the information in one place... not so much.

Skills Needed for Volunteers

**Parish Care**
- availability
- sensitivity
- good follow-through on commitments
- task oriented

**Pastoral Care**
- great listener
- pastoral presence
- trustworthy
- commitment over time
- understands pastoral care as ministry

Volunteers accepted
No training needed
Selection process
Extensive training needed
Parish Care: Skills Needed for Leadership

Task Manager
- task-oriented
- able to handle lots of details
- good record-keeper

Volunteer Coordinator
- recruiter
- cheerleader
- good communicator

Vision Keeper
- holds and shares vision of why parish care ministry is important

Parish Care Program Design

Infrastructure to support widespread involvement
- greatest number of volunteers
- greatest number of recipients
- ... is therefore hardest for staff to coordinate

Managing Volunteers
- recruitment
- appreciation
- vision-casting

Parish Care Program Design

Collect information about how folks can help
- initial survey
- reaching new members and friends
- system to collect, maintain, update and share this info

Collect information about who needs care
- clear way to gather info from multiple sources
- communication with caregivers
- record-keeping: impact
Parish Care Program Coordination

Coordination with other pastoral care providers
- coordinator is member of caregiving leadership team
- integrated record-keeping

Exercise: Assessing your congregation’s parish care program

What are your parish care program’s most powerful opportunities for ministry?

Is your program equipped to take advantage of these opportunities?

Skills Needed for Volunteers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Care</th>
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Selection process

Volunteers accepted

No training needed

Extensive training needed
Shift from Parish to Pastoral Caregiving

Significant change in **purpose**

- doing → being

Significant change in “**task**”

- presents → presence

Significant change in **relationship**

- mutual/social → focus on other

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Shift from **social** to **pastoral connections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>external subjects:</th>
<th>the person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weather, world &amp; local events</td>
<td>accepting tension areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintaining congenial atmosphere</td>
<td>comfort through facing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort through avoiding</td>
<td>helping person share him/herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutual sharing of stories &amp; experiences</td>
<td>being understanding, empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being pleasant, positive</td>
<td>Spirit, God and the holy and our relationship to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion: difference between churches, services, ministers</td>
<td>the person's significant relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people in general</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Pastoral Care: Skills Needed for Leadership**

**Pastoral Presence**

- approachable
- spirit of service to others
- trustworthy to hold and safeguard confidences

**Spiritual Leadership**

- theological vision and language
- casts vision of pastoral care as lay ministry
- convening power

**Collaboration and Communication**

- works well with minister and understands how pastoral pieces fit
- enjoys staying in touch with people
Pastoral Care: Skills Needed for Volunteers

Pastoral Presence
- approachable
- spirit of service to others
- trustworthy to hold and safeguard confidences
- is willing and able to commit to significant relationships

Collaboration and Communication
- works well with others

Pastoral Care Program Design

All pastoral care team programs need:
- vision of care for congregation
- process for selecting and training leaders and team members
- system for collecting and sharing information about who can help and who needs help
- continuing education for team
- oversight from Minister

Program Design: Small Group Ministry Model

Leadership Team
- leadership recruited and trained by minister
- leadership team are lay ministers to care providers
- minister facilitates monthly meetings in SGM format, which are spiritual not logistical

Care providers
- assigned by team leader/minister
- follow a small number of people, stays with person
- shares information with team leader
- regular but infrequent meetings with other providers
- opportunities for continuing education
Program Design: Pastoral Associates Model

Congregational Charge
- broad and explicit lay ministry program
- congregation empowers, sometimes elects

Leadership Team
- application process for leadership team
- portfolio model
- minister facilitates monthly meetings

Care providers
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Program Design: Expanding Pastoral Reach

Pastorally-focused gatherings and conversations
- end of life issues
- caring for elderly parents
- parenting
- facing economic hardship

Listening circles

Adult education and faith development

Small group ministry

Exercise: Assessing your congregation’s pastoral care program

What are your pastoral care program’s most powerful opportunities for ministry?

Is your program equipped to take advantage of these opportunities?
Training for Pastoral Caregivers

Led by minister and pastoral/service professionals
› developing pastoral identity
› deep listening
› confidentiality
› identifying emergency situations
› skill-building: life cycles, bereavement and grief, death and dying; hospital and nursing home visits
› when to make referrals to minister
› boundaries and limit-setting

Tips when starting a lay pastoral care program

› vision is critical
› explicit transition from old/informal ways
› ministerial leadership throughout
› “start slow and grow”
› building trust: start with the programs you can easily manage and execute well
› constant communication with congregation

Meanwhile, at the Parish Care Team Coordinator’s funeral...

“Does this mean you won’t be driving me to my doctor’s appointment?”

Establish reasonable expectations about the level of services available.
Exercise

Where is your congregation in the process of creating our revitalizing your parish/pastoral care programs?

What do you need to do to equip yourselves to do this work?

Resources

Creating a Lay Pastoral Care Team Ministry
(www.uua.org/congregationallife/sharingministry/104574.shtml)

Paraclete Press
http://www.paracletepress.com/ministry-pastoral-all.html

TransformingChurch
http://www.transformingchurch.com/resources/2005/01/training_and_eq.php

UU Congregations with Pastoral Care Programs

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (OR)
http://www.uueugene.org/UUCE/PastoralAssociates.html

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton (NJ)
http://www.uuprinceton.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=49

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh (PA)

First Unitarian Church of Oakland (CA)
http://www.uuoakland.org/about/pastoral_care/

Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church
http://www.pbuuc.org/comm/caring/pastoral.html

and many more...
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Lay Pastoral Care Teams

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