

Fact Sheet 1: Be Care - Health and Pastoral Care Ministry

What is Health and Pastoral Care Ministry (HPCM)?

Health is more than the absence of disease. It is better described as ‘a dynamic state of wellbeing’ resulting from harmony between a person’s body, mind and spirit; and their ability to adapt to, and live in harmony with, other people, the creation, and with God. Illness occurs when there is disruption in any of these relationships. The Biblical concept of health is summarised in the word ‘**Shalom**’ which scripture describes as physical and psychological wellbeing that includes just and right relationships between people and nations which are a product of integrity, and moral/ethical living that results in people experiencing peace, wholeness, health and a sense of wellbeing.

The ‘**health**’ focus of HPCM includes the many proactive activities the Christian faith community undertakes that promote health and wellbeing. These incorporate the values, beliefs and practises that motivate and promote wholeness. They are integrated to inform the continuum of life from conception, birth, development and maturation, and include delay, decline, illness and death. Health ministry seeks to facilitate shalom, promote wholeness, prevent disease, injury and abuse, enable coping, nurture faith, ignite hope, demonstrate love, expedite healing, and cultivate relationships within the person (body, mind and spirit), between the person and others, between the person and the creation, and between the person and God.

The ‘**care**’ focus of HPCM includes the reactive activities the Christian faith community undertakes to restore health and wellbeing. They are intentional responses to identified needs within our community that foster interdependence, mutuality, compassion and healing.

Together they provide a balanced and holistic ministry that does not wait for a problem to occur in order to respond with Christ’s love. Rather it takes an approach that seeks to empower people to discover God’s gifts within themselves to prevent suffering, as well as alleviating it when problems arise. HPCM is a Christian response to living a just and righteous life (Micah 6:8). This relationship is illustrated below:

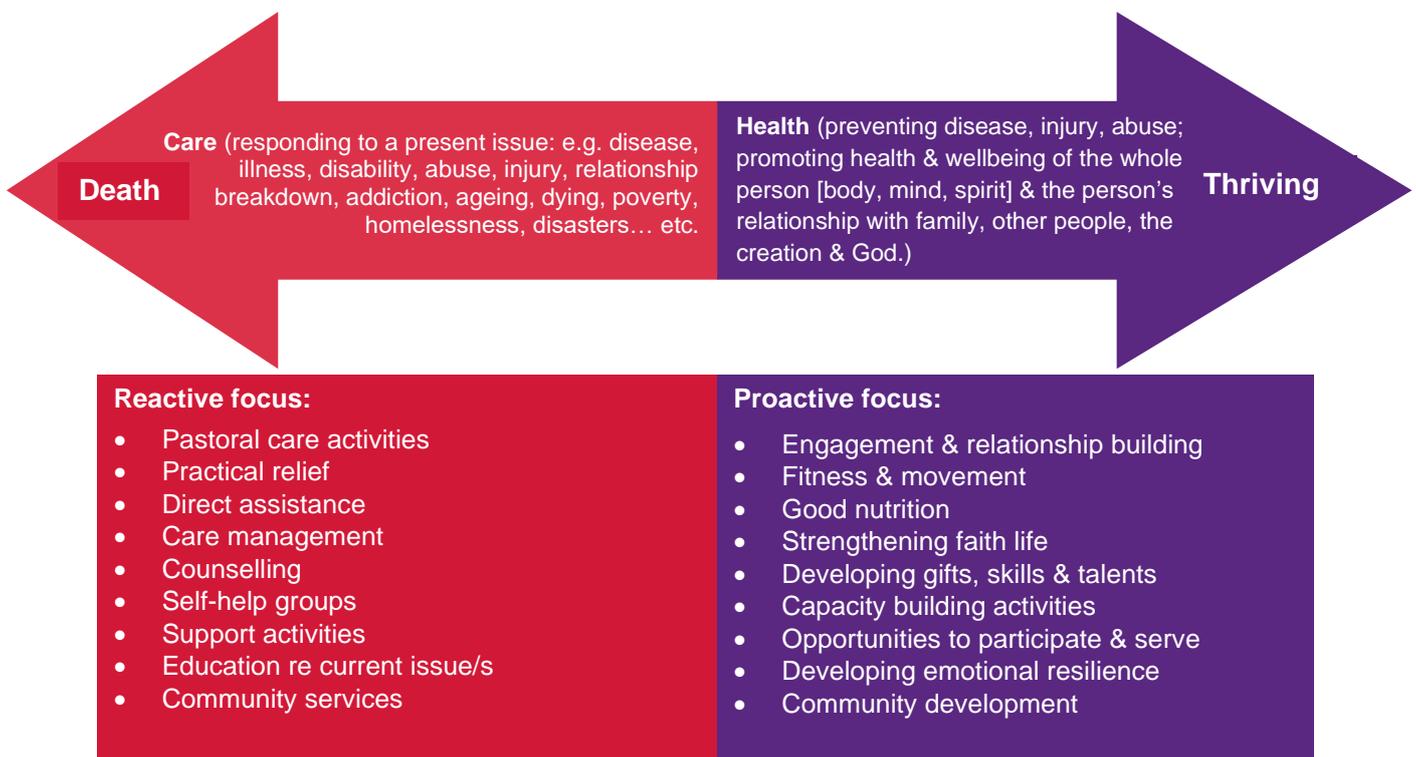


Figure 1. Health Continuum and focus of Health & Pastoral Care Ministry (van Loon 2018)

What principles underpin HPCM? (van Loon 2000)

HPCM is underpinned by the Biblical principles of justice, righteousness, stewardship, communion/relationship, compassion, service, healing and transformation. Each of these can be explored in depth but they are summarised below.

Justice and Righteousness

In the Old Testament the word *mishpat* is used to describe the importance of treating people equitably. It includes fair acquittal or punishment based on the evidence of a person's case. However, *mishpat* also involves giving a person their rights. This includes protection and care and this should be focused on care of "widows, orphans, immigrants/refugees, the poor" (Deut 15:11; James 1:27). A second Biblical understanding of justice is the word *tzadeqah*, which is translated as "being righteous", referring to daily living activities where each person conducts their relationships within the family and the community with integrity, fairness, equality and generosity (Keller 2010). How Christians protect one another, care, relate and live, will directly impact their personal health, family health, community health and global health.

Stewardship

Christians are entrusted with God's most valuable creation, humans and the environment. How Christians accept their stewardship responsibility and carry it out is their testimony to the world and their "living sacrifice" to God (Rom 12:1-2). How we care for ourselves enables us to fulfil God's purposes for our lives, regardless of our health state or the presence of disabilities. How Christians care for one another and care for the creation, influences the health and wellbeing of all.

Communion and Relationship

God created humans as relational beings. He wants us to break down barriers that stop us from sharing generously, giving and receiving, partaking and participating. A person enters the faith community as an individual, but through Jesus Christ we experience communion and relationship – being together, belonging to one another and God through Jesus Christ, which is illustrated in the communion celebration.

In our society the church is often the only place where people gather together across the lifespan, in a voluntary manner, for the long term. This has significant personal and community health benefits.

Compassion and Service

All HPCM activities are underpinned by the commandments to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself." We love others because in and through Jesus we are able to serve with compassion. As John 13: 34-35 says "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another." God gives explicit instructions in Matthew 25: 31-46 to focus on the hungry, imprisoned, naked, homeless, sick, poor, widows and orphans i.e. the most vulnerable in our world. It is every Christian's calling. It is not a charitable choice, rather it is a commandment to just and right living. 'Loving our neighbour' is the church's best outreach tool, and the hallmark of a growing church (Ephesians 4:16,32) and central to God's 'kingdom come' on earth (Matthew 6:2). One of the outcomes of living this way will be personal and community health.

Healing and Transformation

The Biblical concept of healing is comprehensive. It is often a journey toward wholeness in body, mind and spirit that requires ongoing rescue, release, restoration and redemption (e.g. Luke 2:52; 8:43-48; John 5:6-15). It includes concepts of harmony, wholeness and effective function of the person, the community and the environment, and their relationship to God. The Biblical process of healing is not uniform with God healing in many ways. We know disease, injury, abuse, disability and death are not a part of God's original plan, rather they are a result of the fall. Healing is a process where we grow closer to Jesus and our wholeness is made complete in him, so when we die we receive God's ultimate healing (Revelation 21).

Health and Pastoral Care Ministry

The reactive activities Christians do to care for others, serving to restore relationships and bring healing	The proactive activities Christians do that promote health , prevent disease, injury & abuse
Justice: <i>Mishpat</i> – caring for those living in unjust circumstances	Justice: <i>Tzadeqah</i> – promoting right living and right relationship with God, others, and creation
Stewardship: Christ's followers accept and carry out God's delegated responsibility for their own body, relationships and gifts as "living sacrifices"	Stewardship: Christians are entrusted with the care of God's valuable creation i.e. your personal gifts, people, relationships, and the environment
Communion: is based on being with a person/s, sharing their sufferings, journeying alongside them during their struggles, reducing barriers to participation, enabling restoration to community when people become disengaged	Communion: nurturing accepting, healthy relationships across the lifespan enables personal & social capacity & develops resilience. Actively engaging the most disenfranchised into community is our Christian call.
Compassion: Love is our motivation, our action, and our gift. We are to help people find their God given strengths and develop these	Compassion: Christians must reflect God's transforming love to others by acceptance, attitude, action, affirming our 'oneness in Christ'
Service: Serving sensitively to empower people to meet their known needs. Being available and prepared in attitude and action (Col 3:12-17) [Not an attitude of "How good <u>of</u> us to do this" but rather an attitude of "How good <u>for</u> us to do this!" This difference is important!]	Service: growing talents, nurturing attitudes that reflect Christ so the church responds locally and globally to promote health, and prevent disease injury and abuse, with activities that empower, encourage, heal, and nurture body, mind and spirit.
Healing: requires activities that restore integrity of body, mind and spirit, and develop transformative relationships between the person and God, the person and creation, and between people locally and globally	Healing: involves the removal or amelioration of stressors. It includes proactive development of God's gifts in people that develop resilience and protective factors to disease and disruption

Table 1. Biblical principles underpinning the 'Health and Pastoral Care' ministry (van Loon 2018)

How do we begin HPCM?

Here are some basic steps to consider:

Believe: God's word compels Christians to love their neighbour. God's Holy Spirit equips us to do this.

Be prepared: personally attend, or better still bring a team to the 'Be Care' introduction to Health and Pastoral Care Ministry course at Baptist Care. We can provide this course in your church (minimum of 10 participants). You can research the web and read books to prepare you for HPCM.

Be organised: establish an HPCM team; obtain resources for the ministry to function and decide on your HPCM focus using proactive activities and reactive responses to needs/issues.

Be empowered: by your church via commissioning and prayer; and maintain your own spiritual growth.

Begin: get together your team; research the gifts and talents of the professional and lay members within your church and match their capacity with the established needs of your community.

Be energised: find a faith-based mentor; harness your prayer support team; maintain your personal wellbeing (body, mind and spirit).

Become part of the Church Support Network (formerly Health and Pastoral Care Ministry Network): Baptist Care will support churches to establish and develop HPCM activities via its collaborative peer network which assists with education, resource development, mentoring, professional standards, etc. We also have people who can support your church to develop this ministry further. Just contact us to discuss how we can help you.

Who is involved in HPCM?

People involved in *Health and Pastoral Care Ministry* include:

cared for: individuals, families and communities

care givers: salaried/volunteer health practitioners and lay workers with knowledge and gifts

care team: people are encouraged to have an HPCM team that work together

Why should we participate in HPCM? (van Loon 2000)

Health and Pastoral Care Ministry provides a vehicle to reach into our community with the healing and saving love of Christ. The church as the body of Christ – his heart, hands and feet are called to be Christ's transforming love in the world.

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (James 2:14-17.)

The Christian church has a mandate to continue Jesus' ministry in our world. This includes the health, healing and restorative care Jesus provided.

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." (Matthew 9:35)

In Luke 10:37 Jesus uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to clearly instruct us to 'Go and do likewise!' That is, to show compassionate care without prejudice to all who need it, especially the vulnerable. This is true religion, to regard everyone as our neighbour and to love them unconditionally and practically. HPCM enables this activity to be developed in an organised manner providing effective and far-reaching ministry and mission opportunities. HPCM develops a continuum of care for our most vulnerable people by complementing and supplementing existing health, community, disability and aged care services and linking our Baptist churches with the services of Baptist Care. This ministry provides innovative opportunities to bring the gospel to our community and meet their tangible needs.

"...whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14:12)

In summary

The Church Support network of Baptist Care brings together Christians who want to care in their local faith community and the community they serve. Health and Pastoral Care Ministry is both proactive, seeking to promote health and wellbeing; and reactive, responding effectively to actual need in ways that empower, strengthen and heal people. Finally it is prophetic in its hopefulness of the transformation Jesus can bring into a person's life now and for eternity. It can be summarised as:

- **Be carefree** – promote health of body, mind and spirit for individuals and communities
- **Be careful** – prevent disease, injury, abuse and relationship breakdown across the lifespan
- **Be caring** – provide compassionate care activities aimed at restoration and healing

Joining the Church Support Team Network is FREE

Just provide us with your email and contact details and we will place you on the network database that keeps you informed of activities that will equip and resource you regarding Health and Pastoral Care Ministry. Please contact Anne at email: avanloon@baptistcaresa.org.au, 0409 921 337.

References:

Keller T 2010, *Generous Justice*. New York: Riverhead Books

van Loon AM 2018, *Health and Pastoral Care Ministry*. Wayville, South Australia: Baptist Care SA.

van Loon AM 2000, *Developing a conceptual model of Faith Community Nursing in Australia*. PhD dissertation, Adelaide, South Australia: Flinders University.