

those who would prefer to remain more anonymous and independent.

Conclusion

The overarching message of *Gone But Not Forgotten* is that church leavers are worth taking seriously and that appropriate pastoral strategy can begin to turn some leavers into returners. The key resides in listening to the individual tales of the leavers. Such a strategy proposes a revised Bo-Peep theology of pastoral care, reshaping current practice and rewriting the received tradition of the nursery:

Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
but now knows where to find them.
Listen to the leavers
and help them become returners
bringing new tales of salvation before them.

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THE ROLE OF CARE GROUP LEADERS

Paul Beasley-Murray

This short article consists of the instructions given to care group leaders in Victoria Road South Baptist Church, Chelmsford and gives an insight into the way in which one church enables and equips its team of pastoral care volunteers

Care groups are the primary focus of pastoral care within our church.

In a church as large as ours it is very easy for people to feel lost and uncared for. Your primary task is to ensure that all those within your group feel loved, wanted and cared for - in a sense you represent the Lord and his love to all those in your care. To keep track of people in your care group, you may find it helpful to have an informal 'register' in which you mark absences from church!

A secondary role is to be the eyes and ears of the ministers. Please inform us of concerns: e.g. sickness, loneliness, loss of faith, family problems, redundancy etc.

Eight practical ways of fulfilling your caring role:

Share the caring with other members in the care group, and in this way practise 'one-anotherness' (see 1 Cor. 12.25; Gal. 6.2). Ensure that the members of the care group have one another's addresses and phone numbers.

Pray for members of your group - and encourage them to pray for one another (see Jas 5.16). Consider establishing a telephone 'prayer chain', where members alert each other to pray for special needs.

Visit all the house-bound members of your group - and ensure that they are visited regularly by someone in the group.

Encourage those in your care on a regular basis. Aim to have a monthly 'pastoral conversation' with every member of the group. Remember that pastoral care is not just helping people to cope with life's crises, but also helping people to grow in the faith. Feel free to lend a good Christian book you have just read. Or to suggest a series of Bible reading aids.

Recognise anniversaries. Make a list, not just of birthdays and wedding anniversaries. but find out too when people were widowed.

Practise hospitality. Encourage members of the group to invite each other to their homes for a meal or for a cup of coffee. Maybe you might set a lead by having people in your home on a regular basis.

Organise social activities. Hold a party, for instance, with the other care groups in your pastoral area.

Offer practical help: e.g. baby-sitting, transport, shopping, collecting library books, help with housework, repairs, decorating...