

The Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew & Matthew Pastoral Care Ministry – 2017



While Eucharistic Visitors are the most visible role of the Pastoral Care Ministry, the Pastoral Care ministry supports SsAM members at times of any transition, not just when people are shut in or are ill. All of you are encouraged to make phone calls and to send cards even though the Church Office and other SsAM members may be doing so as well. Prayers are always welcome. This Ministry is an extension of the pastoral care provided by the clergy and allows more people to be visited and contacted.

This handbook provides information about Eucharistic Visitors (pages 2 – 6) and those who provide pastoral care by calling, visiting, sending cards and praying for others (page 7). We hope you will consider joining another aspect of this ministry. Let the Spirit move you. If interested, please contact D-L Casson, Parish Ministries Coordinator, in the Church Office.

EUCCHARISTIC VISITORS

The Eucharistic Visitor members are also the eyes and ears who keep the clergy/office updated about the conditions of people who are ill or shut in. There may also be times when you are called on to provide transportation to church services and special or to help provide a meal. As an Eucharistic Visitor, you will be licensed by the Diocese of Delaware upon the request of The Rector. The license lasts 5 years and is renewable. Attendance at a Safe Church program, offered by the Diocese, is also required every five years for Eucharistic Visitors.

A Eucharistic Visitor Prayer

(adapted from a handbook of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany, NY)

Look with mercy, O God our Father,
on all whose increasing years
bring them weakness, distress, or isolation.
Provide for them homes of dignity and peace;
give them understanding helpers,
and the willingness to accept help;
and, as their strength diminishes,
increase their faith and their assurance of your love.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eucharistic Visitors

The Eucharistic Visit: An Expression of the Communion of the Saints

As a Eucharistic Visitor you have the exciting opportunity for worship, prayer and fellowship; and the incomparable privilege of bringing the Blessed Sacrament to those “who for reasonable cause cannot be present at a public celebration of the Eucharist” because they are ill, home-bound, in a hospital or nursing home.

You will already have been nurtured and renewed through your participation at the Eucharist and will be sent forth by SsAM with the Blessed Sacrament. God will be using you as a “Christ-bearer” to connect those whom you are visiting with the larger corporate Body of Christ, not only at SsAM, but in the whole Communion of Saints, past, present, and future. Although the act of bringing the Consecrated Bread to a shut in is not a Eucharist, it is a time of prayer and worship and of receiving Christ in the Sacrament. Whatever is done and said during that visit will be “Church” for that person: you have the privilege of being one of the links that keep that shut-in connected to the SsAM family. Each Eucharist Visit is an expression of the reality of the “Communion of the Saints.”

Remember the prayer that is said as you are sent off for your visit:

In the name of God and of this congregation, we send you forth bearing these holy gifts, that those to whom you go may share with us in Christ's body and blood.

We who are many are one body, because we all share one bread, one cup.

Understanding Ourselves and Others

As a person providing pastoral care, it is important to take time to examine your own attitudes and feelings about those you are visiting prior to the meeting. Persons may be ill, disabled or facing death. We are all growing older and closer to our own death. However, at times we are reluctant to visit hospitals or nursing homes because of fears about confronting our own limitations and mortality. By being conscious of our own fear or anxiety, we can offer it to God and find strength for the work we are given to do. Bear in mind that a person who has a disability is a person just like everyone else. We each have our own disabilities; in some of us they are more readily visible than in others. But God knows and accepts all our disabilities and loves each of us. Many of those unable to come to the regular church service may be under stress due to health matters. They may be in pain, feeling anxiety about their future and in need of personal support. As a Eucharistic Visitor you must try to understand what it is like to suffer as the other does, while at the same time maintaining the abiding faith that Jesus Christ is already and always at work in that person's life. This does not mean trying to convince the other person or "cheer them up" so much as faithfully maintaining one's own attitude of faith and hope in God as we listen and empathize.

Practical Ways of Communicating God's Loving Care

Words alone do not communicate adequately God's love for the people we are visiting: our actions and attitudes speak volumes about the comfort and hope offered in the Gospel and the Blessed Sacrament. Some of the ways in which we communicate our Faith are very practical. For example:

- **Get on their "eye level."** If the person you are visiting is bed-bound or sitting in a low chair, don't stay standing: sit. *Standing over* someone "communicates" that you want to leave soon, or that you are, in a sense, superior to him or her.
- **"Be there" with the person.** Listen and wait. Give them time to express themselves, or be silent. Your presence with them is very comforting and meaningful to them. Theologians speak in terms of the "sacrament" of *being there with* persons. Our attention and loving ministry to the people we visit that they are reminded of how much God loves them and continues to be present in their lives through the Holy Spirit. Our words, our actions and our prayers should all communicate God's loving Presence in their time of weakness and need.
- **Enough time should be allocated** to conduct the Communion Service and to listen to the person's immediate concerns. Eucharistic Visits will vary in length, but should neither be rushed nor overly protracted.
- **Remind them of their ministry:** *to pray* for the needs of others, to uphold the clergy, vestry and other ministries of the Church. Ask them to pray for **you** and the ministries of the Church; tell them of other specific needs so that they may intercede for family, neighbors and friends. This is not mere "talk," or "giving them something to do: it is a powerful ministry in the Church.

- **Communicate** your parish's clergy need to know if there is a particular need or issue that you encounter: an expressed desire for Confession and Absolution; signs of depression and sense of hopelessness; something observed that appears to require nursing care or medical attention; a family issue that is problematic or potentially so. As a Eucharistic Visitor it is not appropriate to engage in counseling or become involved in medical issues.

***Please remember that this is not a task –
it is an important ministry.***

Each Eucharistic Visitor should have available:

- A Communion kit with consecrated wafers and wine (please return the kit with the wine vessel cleaned)
- Sufficient copies of the service entitled "*Distribution of Holy Communion by Lay Eucharistic Visitors to persons who are Ill or Infirm – Rite II*" so that everyone present can have one. This is a two-sided yellow card. Copies are in the Pastoral Care mailbox in the Church Office.
- The latest service leaflet and a copy of the *Weekly Vision*.
- A bible (any translation)
- You may wish to take altar flowers (especially for visits after Christmas and Easter)

First Things First

During the Eucharist, uphold the person(s) in prayer to whom you will be privileged to bear the Body and Blood of the Lord. Pray that you may be an able and compassionate Eucharistic Visitor.

Getting Ready

You will be given the names of the person to be visited. If visiting an individual for the first time, be certain to obtain appropriate background information which will help meet the pastoral needs of the individual and make your visit more effective. You should be aware of other family members in the home, if the individual can answer the telephone or not, special interests or past involvement with the church, any special needs for assistance, or other advice or comments the Rector provides. [Check to see if the person has pets if you are allergic to pet hair/dander]

The Rite

When taking communion to an ill or shut in person, remember that you are not performing a "mini- Mass." Rather, you are bringing the Sacrament to be shared with a fellow disciple as members of the Body of Christ. After the Gospel, you should tell the person(s) being visited about the sermon. Prayers may be offered briefly for the Church, the World, and the

concerns of those present. We are fortunate to have *prayers of the people* created by Christina Brennan Lee, so please use them.

Setting Up

Upon arrival, introductions should be made to the home bound or hospitalized person and others present including the statement, "I'm here to bring you Communion from the Eucharist at SsAM." This sets the tone for the visit and already designates this Communion as an expression of SsAM's Eucharistic action.

Inquire about any physical limitations, swallowing difficulties or needs. [See *Frequently Asked Question (4) below.*]

Others present may be invited to join in the service. All are welcome to receive Communion. Conduct the service in a reverent manner. The most important point is to take your time so that you can be fully present to God and the other person.

Record Keeping

Accurate record keeping will be an important tool in maintaining accurate parish records and for preparing the annual report of this parish ministry to the Bishop. Please fill out the card on the Communion kit and, if needed, provide more details to the Church Office.

Afterwards

After the last Communion, consume the remaining wafers and wine. You may want to pause to reflect a few moments on what you have just done, on how God is using you, and to give thanks for this opportunity to serve Christ in your brothers and sisters.

You may want to make special note of any needs or pastoral concerns that came to your attention during these visits. You are also your Rector's eyes and ears. Sharing your pastoral conversations and observations during your visit with the clergy is very important to their ministries as well. Do not discuss the person's health with others. If there a special need or concern which should be taken care of, the Rector and Church Office should be made aware of this as soon as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Experienced Eucharistic Visitors can recount any number of unexpected and sometimes very unique circumstances that they have encountered during their ministry. The following questions and answers may help you be prepared for some of these situations:

What if no one is at home?

We recommend that you call ahead and set up a time for the visit.

Do I leave for my visit immediately after the Eucharist has ended, or can I attend the coffee hour before I leave?

Taking communion from the Church's Eucharist means bringing the person who is "shut in" into the corporate body of Christ and SsAM by your actions; so your visit should be as close to the end of the service as possible.

Upon arriving at the home, hospital or nursing home, I do not have enough wafers for the people present. What is the correct way to handle this situation?

First, ask if everyone would like to take part in receiving communion. Next, if there are more people than wafers it is acceptable to break the wafers in half.

If the person I am visiting has difficulty in swallowing, how is Communion administered?

It depends upon the severity of the swallowing difficulty. Even a small piece of wafer can cause choking, blockage on the airway or aspiration pneumonia for someone with a swallowing difficulty (*dysphagia*). In a home setting, a family member should be consulted. In an institutional setting, the Nurse-in-Charge or Medication Nurse should be asked regarding any swallowing restrictions. If the person being visited is able to swallow, it is acceptable to place just a small piece of the Wafer in their mouth. In a case where a person is unable to swallow, the following rubric from the Book of Common Prayer [p. 457] should be read, or communicated in other simple words:

If a person desires to receive the Sacrament, but, by reason of extreme sickness or physical disability, is unable to eat and drink the Bread and Wine, the Visitors is to assure that person that all the benefits of Communion are received, even though the Sacrament is not received with the mouth.

Several times when I have visited people in the hospital, staff persons have come in to take blood pressure or some other procedure. How is this handled?

In many cases the medical staff will give you the time needed to complete whatever you are doing. Just tell them you will only be a little while longer. You might wish to ask the medical staff if they would like to join you in prayer or communion. Many times we forget this part of our ministry. If an emergency situation occurs during your visit, get out of the way and pray for the person and the medical team ministering to the person. Please make note of this on the card.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Another aspect of the Pastoral Care ministry is provided by the team members who call SsAM members who are ill or otherwise unable to attend services. These phone calls mean a great deal to the person called.

There is no set schedule for calling. You may call just to let the person know you are thinking about them and praying for them. Perhaps you have some SsAM news you want to share. Let the Spirit move you!

D-L Casson will provide the regular list of people who are visited and who receive the weekly prayers/Weekly Vision (and Day-by-Day materials). In addition, if there is someone you have not seen for a while, please give them a call. Please don't assume the Church Office knows about everyone who is ill or hospitalized! Let us know if you get any news, including health improvements! Let the Church Office know if someone should be added (or removed) from the Prayer List. (There are two lists! A shorter one for SsAM members and immediate family members which is printed in the Weekly Vision/e-blast and a longer version with friends and neighbors, that is prayed at the Wednesday healing service).

All members of the Pastoral Care Ministry are encouraged to actively raise up names during the Prayers of the People.

CORRESPONDENCE

Did you know that 20+ people receive the Weekly Vision and Prayers of the People every week? They are also sent small Palm Crosses, Day-by-Day, Lenten and other spiritual materials, and other items to help them feel connected to SsAM. These weekly mailings are only part of the ministry.

A team of four people rotate and send a birthday card to everyone whose birthday we have. (The names are also shared each month in the Weekly Vision so more cards can be sent). These ministry members buy, write and address the cards which the Church Office mails.

Other cards – get well, thinking of you, and sympathy cards – are also mailed out by the Church Office. Feel free to do the same! This does not need to be coordinated with the Church Office. Send a card whenever you think of someone.

Do you have other ideas about how we can provide Pastoral Care? Please let us know.

Thank you.