

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Introduction

The **Congregational Care Team** is comprised of the **Pastoral Visitors** and the **Meal Train Coordinators**. The team serves the Mission and Compassion Ends of the congregation by creating an atmosphere of caring and support within the congregation. The team works with the ministers to support members of the congregation in times of crisis or personal difficulty such as critical illness, grief and major life stress.

Any congregant can request help by contacting one of the ministers or a Pastoral Visitor. There is a dedicated emergency number, (828) 771-6279, that is monitored by the Minister of Faith Development.

Members of the Congregational Care Team are lay pastoral associates. While volunteering in the congregation, they are not representing themselves as licensed, clinical, counseling, holistic or medical service providers, regardless of any licensure they may hold.

Congregational Care Team services are not intended to replace professional medical, clinical, social, or protective services or interventions, or to provide ongoing or repeated financial assistance.

Pastoral Visitors

The Pastoral Visitors work in conjunction with the ministers to follow up on Joys or Sorrows expressed by members of the community, or on other reported personal difficulties.

In difficult and demanding times, a person may experience high stress, which reduces the ability to cope. Family members and friends can be an important source of support but sometimes the presence of a person who is more emotionally detached from the situation can be very helpful. The Pastoral Visitor is not a counselor or a teacher or a "fixer" but an active, compassionate contact with the UUCA community.

The Pastoral Visitor's primary role is compassionate listening. A secondary role is to consider the person's needs and recommend other UUCA or community services as appropriate. Following an initial training, Pastoral Visitors work closely with the Minister of Faith Development, meet monthly, and receive ongoing continuing education.

The Pastoral Visitor's first task is to assess the person's needs. This is usually done by phone or meeting in person in a setting such as the congregant's home, a coffee shop or another comfortable setting. Needs assessment is done by active listening and asking clarifying questions. Some of the following possibilities may emerge:

1. Schedule continuing meetings for support and care with the Pastoral Visitor. This may be brief or long term.
2. Refer to the Meal Train Coordinators for temporary meal delivery or other practical help (one-time services such as rides to medical appointments, social visits, walking a dog or

- grocery pick-up). Coordinators use an online program for congregants and friends to sign up to fill needs requested.
3. Refer to community resources (Council on Aging programs, medical care, grief support group, etc.).
 4. Refer to one of the ministers due to the seriousness of the situation.

Other duties include sending appropriate cards, staffing the Congregational Care table one Sunday a month and being an aware, sensitive and compassionate representative of the caring commitment of the congregation.

All pastoral situations will be shared with the ministers, as they hold primary responsibility for the pastoral ministry of the congregation. Some pertinent details may also be shared with the Pastoral Visitor team if that is consistent with the person's wishes, and/or if it is necessary to provide appropriate care. Personal details about pastoral situations are not shared with other congregation members unless the person explicitly requests or agrees that they be shared.

Meal Train Coordinators

Meal Train Coordinators are contacted by the ministers or Pastoral Visitor to request support. They initiate an online sign-up calendar to provide ill/incapacitated/troubled congregation members with support for minor household tasks, rides and meals, as needed on a short-term or emergency basis. A Meal Train Coordinator will contact the individual to discuss needs.

The ministers retain a list of local support services and agencies, and provide appropriate referrals as needed. The Congregational Care Team does not duplicate the work of established social service programs. Due to resource limitations, the Congregational Care Team generally provides assistance only to the congregation's Members and congregants who have made monetary commitments to UUCA.

The Meal Train Coordinators do not provide medical intervention (including administration of medications, dressing changes or wound treatments, dialysis, insulin administration, glucose testing, or diagnostic services), toileting/bathing assistance, or lifting/transferring assistance for persons with limited mobility.

Situations which require multiple home visits on a regular basis (other than Meal Train) are beyond the scope of the Caring Response Network.

Financial Assistance

Emergency financial assistance is available through the Ministers' Discretionary Fund. In the event of multiple needs, priority will be given to those who have not previously received assistance. All requests for financial assistance must be approved by a minister and may be made privately to one of the ministers or to a Pastoral Visitor.

Revision History	
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Responsible Staff Member: Minister of Faith Development	
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Date	Description of revision
February 2016	Created
January 2019	Updated policy to match current practices