



Pastor on Call Handbook

General On-Call Responsibilities & Expectations

Each pastor will be “on call” two times per year. The on-call assignment will begin at 8:00am Monday morning and conclude 8:00am the following Monday.

- The week a pastor is serving as Pastor on Call, it is expected he or she will be in their office on the WLR campus that Friday morning. The expectation is from 8:30am – 12:00pm. The reason for this commitment is to be present in case of walk-in ministry needs or the rare emergency need.
- In the event an on-campus emergency happens, the immediate first contact is the Pastor of Operations.
- Please take a moment to check in with the front desk receptionist when you arrive on Friday.

If a person calls the church phone number between 5:30pm – 8:00am their call will be automatically transferred to the pastor’s phone via the Teams app. The Pastor on Call is expected to answer any after-hours phone call.

When there is a need after hours, it is the Pastor on Call who will respond to the need. This may include, but is not limited to, hospital visits, home visits, over-the-phone ministry, or connecting the person in need to the appropriate pastor.

Though the Care Team prioritizes walk-ins and emergency phone calls during business hours, the Pastor on Call is expected to be available to assist with emergencies or be available to step into emergency situations.

Responding to After-Hours Calls

People contact the church after hours for a variety of reasons. It could be anything from a request for information about events or programming to an immediate genuine need. The role of the Pastor on Call (POC) is to represent Fellowship well and, where necessary, either respond personally or facilitate the body’s greater resources in response to an emergency need. Simply stated **our goal is that people who call the church feel valued and cared for at the end of our connection with them.**

One of the primary responsibilities of the Pastor on Call is responding to emergency calls. There are two types of after-hours calls: members/attendees and those with no affiliation to Fellowship. Your priority should always be the church family. This means, whenever a member/attendee calls, they should have your undivided attention and receive your maximum effort. Those who are not affiliated with Fellowship should still receive pastoral care and kindness, however, you are not obligated to fulfill their ministry need during non-business hours.

- If the person with a need is a member or active attendee, the Pastor on Call is expected to record notes of their ministry experience in Ministry Platform. If the person is a stranger to us, simply send the information to the Care Ministry Coordinator and he/she will record the information.

Calls are set up on a cascading cycle, meaning, if you do not answer the call after four rings, it is automatically transferred to the backup POC. This is a safety net to allow for those rare moments when you are indisposed.

Types of Calls

Request for Information

- These phone calls are from people who need information about our Sunday morning services, events, activities, or the general church calendar. Take time to make yourself aware of on-going ministry so you are prepared with the necessary information.

Pastoral Counseling/Prayer

- These phone calls are from people who are hurting. Often, these kinds of calls come from non-church members who need a listening ear. Whether a member or not, the POC needs to take time to listen, respond, and care. When necessary and if possible, take the callers information and connect that person to the appropriate pastor or ministry the following day.

Benevolence Requests

- After-hours requests to address benevolence needs should be referred to regular business hours. There is an application and interview process conducted by the Care Team required before any requests can be met. When possible, refer to the Community Resource Form on the Staff Portal webpage. This document contains contact information for area homeless shelters, foodbanks, and clothes closets. Though we do not provide financial assistance after hours, our goal is still for the caller to feel cared for and served. Listen closely and sympathetically to their concerns and gently give directions based on what we are capable of accomplishing.

End of Life

- If the death is that of a spouse, child, or close relative, the Pastor on Call should make every attempt to see the family within an hour or two after the notification. If death is imminent, being present with the family is preferred. Also, the POC must notify a member of the Care Team in order for a Care Pastor to become involved in on-going care and eventual funeral preparations.

Emergency Room Calls

- Like an end-of-life situation, the presence of the Pastor on Call in the Emergency Room is incredibly valuable. Also, this type of call is an opportunity to involve the Care Team. Please take a moment to call, text, or Teams the Care Pastor when the need becomes known.

Child Abuse & Neglect

- If the child in question is actively involved in Fellowship Kids, the next step is to call the Fellowship Family Pastor. If the child is not actively involved in Fellowship Kids, then encourage the caller to call the local police. In the event the reported incident of abuse happens on the campus of Fellowship Bible Church, the next step is to call the Fellowship Family Pastor.

Suicide Threats

- All suicide threats should be taken seriously. Support and encourage the caller while trying to determine their name and location. Also try to establish their relationship to the church and any pastoral connections they might have. If possible, use a different phone to simultaneously call 911. If that is not possible, once the call is completed, immediately call 911. Call any family

members and pastoral contacts you discovered and make them aware of the threat if appropriate. For more information on how to respond to suicide threats, see the chapter: Handling Calls from a Suicidal Person.

Handling a Call from a Suicidal Person

The Mental Health ALGEE action plan is:

- **Assess** and assist with any crisis – assess the realistic risk of suicide or harm and listen for signs of trauma and high anxiety.
- **Listen** to the person non-judgmentally.
- **Give** the person reassurance, support, and information.
- **Encourage** the person to seek appropriate professional help.
- **Encourage** the person to remember there is hope.

Unlike other emergency action plans, the tasks that make up the ALGEE action plan DO NOT have to be done in sequence. You can assess the risks, give reassurance, and listen without judgment, all at the same time.

During the phone call, locate a second phone on which to call 911. If this is not possible, immediately call 911 after you hang up with the person who is threatening suicide.