

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Hospital Visitation

IN GENERAL

These policies have been drawn up for hospital visitation to provide a unique setting to minister to people who find themselves with a greater dependency upon friends, family, church and their faith. Those who prepare themselves to minister in hospital settings and to the sick will discover that a visit, a Scripture, a Spoken Word, or Prayer will bring Hope and Comfort. Lives can be forever changed from your obedience to the Word of God and compassion for others.

The Lord said in Matthew 18:20, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* He said in Mark 16:18, *“...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”* Additionally, He said in Matthew 18:19, *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.”* In these scriptures we can see that God has established many of His principles upon people ministering to people through His Word.

PURPOSE

To provide support for hospitalized church members and their attending family.

PROCEDURE

Maintain the Hospital Visitation Ministry of people who shall:

- Ensure that all church members of the congregation and their attending family are offered the presence of the Pastor(s) or a lay volunteer/lay chaplain before and during surgery;
- Ensure that those church members who are hospitalized for extended periods of time receive regular follow up visits and calls; and
- Ensure that any church member, who is hospitalized for whatever reason, receives a visit or a phone call.

GUIDELINES

When you visit someone in a hospital, always:

- Call the hospital before you visit to insure they are still admitted and have not been discharged.
- Choose a time during the day to visit if at all possible, unless you have been called by the family in crisis.
- It is acceptable for one to visit a patient of opposite gender. Our men are often more comfortable visiting when their wife is present, when visiting a woman. When a female staff visits a male patient, they customarily take another woman with them when their spouse is not available to visit (since it is usually during the work day). In any case, a hospital room is considered a public space, the visit is brief and the door is kept open. Female and male staff persons do not travel together to make hospital visits unless there is a group (3 or more).
- Pray before leaving the car or entering the room that the Lord will give you the right words of encouragement to minister to the patient.
- Use the Purel, or other hand sanitizer outside the door (sometimes foam sanitizer is hanging on the wall), before and after each visit
- If visiting a patient of the opposite sex, ask a nurse to enter the room prior to you to insure that the patient is appropriate to receive your visit.
- Knock before entering the room; do not interrupt doctors or staff who are treating the patient; simply leave and return at another time or wait outside the door until the staff have left
- Never wake up a patient; if a relative is there, you can address them or offer to talk with them outside the door
- Introduce yourself and provide a business card if you have one
- If the patient is alone and asleep, simply leave your card on their bedside table with a note that you are praying for them – be sure you do pray for them afterward in your quiet time
- If the patient is awake and alert, speak clearly and positively, and do not ask probing questions; just listen; if they offer information about their condition, hold this information as confidential, only providing necessary information to Church Pastor and/or Care Ministry. (**Never say, “I know what you are going through” because you really don’t know**).
- Professional opinions vary about whether or not to sit down to talk to a patient. If the patient requests you sit down, please do in honoring their request (**but never sit on the patient’s bed**) – sitting down in a chair, however, may make their visiting with you less tiring than having to look up at you from their position in bed; standing during the visit, however, may afford you the opportunity to leave after a very brief visit as needed; but sitting affords you the opportunity of spending a short time and having it feel like a longer time to the patient because you sat down.
- Talk in a volume that is respectful of them and their semi-private neighbor on the other side of the curtain. There should be no loud talking or heavy laughter. However, since laughter is good medicine, it would be appropriate to keep your conversation light and positive.
- Watch your time and do not outstay your welcome (usually 15 minutes or less), unless you are sitting to give a family member a break away; give the patient the opportunity to fall asleep as you sit quietly; do not ever turn their television on; if it is on, that is their choice but keep your focus on them.

- Pray with the patient before you leave the room. When family is present, remember them in your prayer as well. Oftentimes, it is a sweet thing to all hold hands around the patient, depending on how many are there and if the opportunity is there. It is okay to hold their hand or touch their arm as you pray. Make sure you cleaned your hands before you entered the room. If not, excuse yourself to wash your hands in the room before you hold their hand in prayer.
- Pastors of the Church should take a vial of anointing oil with them should the patient desire this element of prayer.

Intensive Care Visits

- Be aware of the hours of visitation before you go
- Be aware of the signage at the doors – regarding gowns, masks, and gloves – and follow the hospital instructions; dispose of these items in the appropriately designated places
- Keep visits very brief, acknowledge family who are present, leave a business card if you have one in case the patient is asleep
- Do not take flowers or gifts while the patient is in ICU – flowers eat up oxygen, and gifts often get lost (especially when the patient is moved to another room) or stolen. If spouse is there, a benevolence check from the church is a thoughtful and appropriate gift.

Gift Ideas

- A benevolence check from the church to help with expenses
- A greeting card (prayer, get well, encouragement)
- A small devotional book with scriptures
- A topical Bible
- A small plant or flower (if in regular room)
- A pre-paid coupon for hospital parking for family
- Offer to sit with patient while family goes to hospital café for meal
- Offer to assist with needs before leaving the hospital room (if you can follow through)
- A meal to the home after discharge from hospital
- Offer to sit with patient who is bed bound, read book or scripture
- Offer run errand to grocery store or pharmacy for family
- Follow up cards for prayer or encouragement to the home address

Remember that you are representing God when you visit and it is a called honor to make this visit.