

# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato Lay Pastoral Associates Program Guide

November 2022  
Rev. Rita Capezzi



Created with the help of materials from the First UU Church of Richmond (VA), the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Bethesda (MD), and an earlier document created by Rev. Lisa Freidman and congregants of UUFM.

# **Lay Pastoral Associates Program Guide**

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Dear Lay Pastoral Associate,

Welcome to the Team. Through this program, we seek to provide more extended and intensive pastoral care than can be accomplished through the caring cards, calls, and emails sent by our Care Team. With the guidance and direction of the Minister, you can provide deep listening and reflection for congregants with chronic conditions or reaching end-of-life. As a Team, we reflect on the situations of those in our care, offer helpful suggestions and feedback to each other, and hold together the pain and suffering that we feel as we serve.

You recognize the difference between listening and waiting to speak. You have the disposition to acknowledge sorrow and pain without jumping in to fix problems. You know how to hold back your own stories, fears, and anxieties when in the presence of those in your care, to process them later and in the company of other Team members. We, all of us, do this work in our own humanly imperfect ways, learning and deepening as we go, asking advice, and going to the Minister for guidance and hope.

This manual is a living document, meant to be adapted and changed as the Program develops and new Associates join the Team. Add your ideas and help develop this beautiful and needed service to our congregation.

Blessings and warm wishes,

Rev. Dr. Rita Capezzi  
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# The Lay Pastoral Associates Program is . . .

- A Ministry of the Fellowship
  - We practice the values and policies of the congregation by modeling inclusion, sensitivity, and empowering care
  - We are doing important and sacred work as we nurture the meaning-making and connectedness of our people
- An extension of the Minister’s own pastoral presence
- A group of Associates recruited by and reporting directly to the Minister
- A program visible to and accessible to the congregation (members and friends alike)
  - Program and LPAs are introduced to fellowship during a worship service
  - Program displayed on bulletin boards and webpage
  - Program identified with special nametags
- A system for continuing LPA training and feedback
  - Chaired and mentored by Minister
  - Stresses confidentiality and reflective practices throughout the program
  - Meets monthly or more for:
    - Discussion of congregant contacts, including questions that arise from meetings
    - Ongoing training
    - Associate support for each other through their own life crisis and concerns
    - Maintaining records of contacts and meetings, held confidentially by the Minister.
- A means for maintaining sustained connection between congregants and the Fellowship, especially when service attendance becomes impractical or impossible or a congregant is in chronic need because of long-term illness, ongoing grief or loss of a close loved one, end-of-life situations
  - The Care Team identifies to the Minister congregants who need more care than that Team can provide
  - The Lay Pastoral Associates provide deep listening and bearing witness to great pain
- A program that provides a structure for responding to emergencies that affect the congregation

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## **The Lay Pastoral Associate Program is Not . . .**

- A program providing outreach in moments of acute need, which is the role of the Care Team
- A support group for congregants
- A source of specific (especially professional) advice. E.g., legal, medical, financial, psychological

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## A Lay Pastoral Associate is Not . . .

- A practical solver of everyday problems or a “fixer”
- A chat partner, unless chatting opens routes to deeper discussions (sometimes chat may be the only communication possible, but it is not the goal)
- A cheerleader, Pollyanna, “yes-man,” absolver, friend
- A decision-maker
- A judge or approver
- A professional counselor (though trained to recognize when such a service is needed)
- A searcher for own spiritual beliefs through interaction with a congregant under care

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# Top 15 Life Change Stressors for which Pastoral Care could be Needed

(according to Dr. Richard Rahe's Life Change Stress Test)

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Death of a child                                       | 8. Loss of job                   |
| 2. Death of a spouse                                      | 9. Death of a close friend       |
| 3. Death of a parent or sibling                           | 10. Pregnancy                    |
| 4. Divorce  | 11. Birth or adoption of a child |
| 5. Separation from spouse due to work or marital problems | 12. Miscarriage                  |
| 6. Being jailed   | 13. Major business readjustment  |
| 7. Serious illness or injury                              | 14. Parent's divorce             |
|   | 15. Relative moving in           |

**Other stressors:**

1. Systemic racism and relentless microaggression
2. Addiction (self or loved ones)
3. Moral injury resulting from living against fundamental values
4. Harm from doctrines or practices of religious communities
5. Traumatic community events, including climate crisis
6. Isolation

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# How Pastoral Care Types Compare

## Care Team:

- Provides phone calls, emails, texts, and cards of care and sympathy
- Sends birthday cards
- On a time-limited basis
  - Provides meals/sets up Meal Trains
  - Helps with shopping
  - Provides transportation to and from medical appointments
  - Runs errands
  - Writes notes or letters/Makes calls
  - Provides childcare
  - Visits after a hospital stay

## Pastoral Care:

- Offers to hear feelings and problems
- Visits regularly in neutral setting, at congregant's home, or in medical facilities
- Provides forum for conversation about current problems so greater self-awareness and understanding can be achieved
- Helps structure what needs to be done when congregant is overwhelmed
- Recommends help and consultation for professional services (e.g., legal, medical, financial, psychological)
- Does not need a license and is not a therapist or counselor
- Is under the auspices of the Minister

## Psychotherapy/Counseling

- Treats diagnosable mental disorders
- Helps congregant change feelings, thoughts, and behaviors
- Helps congregant ease conflicts
- Needs to be licensed

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# Companioning: A Ministry of Presence

**Lay Pastoral Associates Practice Presence:** Pastoral care is about being present to another person, deeply. It is not problem-solving. A Lay Pastoral Associate is not there to make meaning for someone or tie up their difficult situation in a pretty bow. They are there to be present with folk in their own struggles, their own emotional and spiritual journeys. In the words of a mentor to Lay Pastoral Associates, “When someone asks you a hard question, like ‘Why me?’, your job is not to answer them. Your job is to be present to them. Your being present to them while they ask that difficult question is a much greater gift than any answer you could offer. Your presence helps them find their way into their answer.”

## How a Lay Pastoral Associate is Present:

- Puts everything aside before a visit to be fully present to the congregant
- Moves WITH the congregant as they struggle with challenges, so they know they are not alone
- Conveys unconditional positive regard, empathy, compassion, assurance, affirmation, understanding, and acceptance
- Talks about the feelings and process of wrestling with challenges
- Resists the temptation to fix or cure a problem
- Creates a space in which congregant can acknowledge the multiple feeling they have about their issues
- Does not rush the process, as progress will happen in its own time
- Is honest when asked to reflect about the concerns shared
- Is dependable, keeping appointments and confidentiality

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# Longing to be Fully Heard

## What if. . .

You could meet with someone who has respect for your spiritual needs, who cares about your distress, who is a part of your fellowship community, and would hold your situation in strict confidence?

## What if. . .

You could explain everything to someone who wants to hear the whole thing all the way through, the entire range of your experience, and you could finish your thoughts without being interrupted?

## What if. . .

You didn't have to hear about how so-and-so handled it such-and-such a way, or get any other well-intentioned but sometimes irrelevant advice?

## What if. . .

You had compassionate support and the time to talk completely through the issue

## Would it help you sort it all out?

**Lay Pastoral Associate follow the "Ring Theory":** "Comfort in, dump out." When someone in the congregation is facing a crisis, we don't dump our own crisis experiences on them. When someone is going through a crisis, we must center their experience and their meaning-making. This is why, in Susan Silk's Ring Theory, the person most impacted is at the center. In concentric circles around them are other people who are impacted and hurting. Our job as pastoral caregivers is to direct the comfort of our presence toward the center of the concentric circles, and direct the "dumping" of our own fears and frustrations away from the center of those circles.

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## Practices of a Good Reflective Listener

**Lay Pastoral Associates Practice Reflective Listening:** Reflective listening is a powerful tool. It's about listening so you deeply understand the speaker: what they're saying, and how they're feeling when they say it. And then it's about reflecting it back with what you say. Example: "I hear you saying 'I'm just hoping for the best,' and I can really hear the fear and frustration in your voice as you say it."

### Reflective Listening Looks Like This:

- Listening to understand what is meant, not to ready yourself to reply, contradict, or refute. An important general attitude as well as a listening skill.
- Knowing what is meant involves more than the dictionary meaning of words used. It is about listening under or beyond the words, which involves, among other things, tone of voice, facial expression, and overall behavior of the speaker.
- Observing all this and taking care not to interpret too quickly. Looking for clues as to what the person speaking is trying to say, with the LPA putting themselves (as best they can) in the speaker's shoes, seeing the world as the speaker sees it.
- Putting aside our own views and opinions for the time being. Realizing that one cannot listen to themselves inwardly and at the same time listen outwardly to the speaker.
- Controlling impatience, because listening happens faster than talking. Trying not to jump ahead with the listening because of thinking you know what's coming next.
- Not preparing an answer while listening. Getting the whole message before deciding what to say in return.
- Showing interest and alertness, with questions meant to secure more information and not to trap or force a speaker into a corner.
- Expecting the speaker's language to differ from one's own way of talking. Not quibbling about words but rather trying to get at what is meant.

# How Matches between Congregants and Lay Pastoral Associates Are Made

- Congregants may contact the Minister to request care from a Lay Pastoral Associate
- The Minister may identify a congregant who would seem to benefit from relationship with a Lay Pastoral Associate
- A Lay Pastoral Associate may identify a congregant who would seem to benefit from relationship with a Lay Pastoral Associate
- The Team will discuss congregants and determine which Lay Pastoral Associate could best meet a congregant's needs
- The Minister contacts the congregant to explain the program and which Lay Pastoral Associate will serve, perhaps facilitating the first meeting if that seems desirable
- The Lay Pastoral Associate contacts the congregant to set up the initial meeting and a regular schedule

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# How to Reach Congregants Who are Difficult to Reach

1. Mention that you bring greetings from the congregation
2. Access the Weekly to share with them
3. Read selections from the hymnal (readings or hymn lyrics)
4. Play a recording of the Sunday service
5. Bring recordings of UU hymns to hear and sing along with
6. Bring chalice to touch, hold, see, and light
7. Show photos from daily life in prior decades when the congregant was younger
8. Show directory photos from times past
9. Bring fruits or vegetables to see, touch, and eat
10. Bring seasonal nature items to see, touch, and hold
11. Bring an art object to see, touch, and hold
12. Read to the congregant from their own library
13. Show photos from their own albums
14. Bring something pleasing to touch
15. Tour congregant's home with them so they can tell stories and access important items
16. Your loving, caring presence and tone of voice will be received more meaningfully than you can tell

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## Logistics

1. Assignments between a Lay Pastoral Associate and a congregant in need are made at LPA meetings. We keep confidence about these relationships, with only the Care Team aware that the connections are made (they do not receive details).
2. Provide all contact information and get the congregant's
3. Schedule meetings for no more than an hour, once weekly or one or twice a month as makes sense.
4. Keep focus on the nature of the interaction (deep listening, spiritual companionship) and refer other needs (transportation, meals, etc.) to the Minister, who will direct the needs to other groups.
5. Make notes of the meeting to share with the Minister and the other members of the LPA Program. Be sure to note for yourself any issues you want to raise at the next meeting.
6. Discuss the meeting at the next LPA meeting. Call the Minister if you feel something needs to be discussed immediately.
7. Attend the LPA meetings to de-brief meeting, for new learning, and to receive pastoral care space as a caregiver.
8. Discuss with the other LPAs and the Minister if the sessions should end.

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# Pastoral Care Request Form

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mankato is committed to providing a caring, helpful response to the needs of our congregants. Please use this form to let us know what you need. Indicate below the services you need, provide your contact information, and give the form to the Minister, who will coordinate care and respond back.

## Care Team

Meals on a short-term basis

A cheering card or phone call

Baby sitting in an emergency

Transportation to or from a medical appointment

Respite care for caregivers

## Lay Pastoral Associates Program

Support during a crisis

Regular visits for someone in hospice or a care facility

An ongoing, caring presence to listen to your concerns when you are grieving, ill, injured, disabled, and when you experience life changes such as divorce, relationships ending, unemployment, ongoing illness of a loved one, relocation, care-giving, and other challenges

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

This form is also available as a Breeze form accessible from the Weekly and from our website.



**Lay Pastoral Associate Visit Log**

Date:

Person under care:

Visit #:

Visited by:

Nature of the visit and issues presented:

Follow up with Lay Pastoral Associate?

Date:

Request to see the Minister?

Lay Pastoral Associate Debrief with the Minister:

Date: