

South Cities Church Plan for Care

At South Cities Church, our hope for care is to help people walk towards deeper joy in and obedience to Jesus in their lives (John 15:1–11), which we believe will be good for their souls, bring good to those they interact with, and bring glory to God. We want South Cities to have good systems for care, and for people to know what those systems are and how to get the help they need.

We believe wholeheartedly that the church is meant to be a blood-bought family of people that comfort one another with the comfort of Christ (2 Corinthians 1:3–11), correct one another with the truth of Christ (Ephesians 4:15–16), and compel one another in the love of Christ (Hebrews 10:24–25).

This document seeks to lay out the various aspects and levels of care at the church and provide clarity on the purpose and limitations of each.

Meaningful Eldership

The elders of the church are called to “pay careful attention” to the flock of God (Acts 20:28) and to “give an account” for the souls in their charge (Hebrews 13:17) in order to provide for and protect the precious church of God which was purchased by the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, we believe elders should not simply be one aspect of care at South Cities Church, but rather should be woven into every aspect of care. So, as we walk through the various levels of care in this document, the expectation is that the elders would be aware of the needs and concerns of the members and would be seeking to care well for the flock at each level.

Meaningful Membership

In order to know for whom the elders are called to give an account, South Cities Church has a care system in place for those who become members of our church. Every person who is a member of South Cities Church will have an elder assigned to him/her so that there is a direct link to church leadership, so no member falls through the cracks.

The elders are called upon to check in with a portion of their households each month and then to follow-up on anything that needs more attention. In this way, we hope our

members begin to get used to hearing from the elders and in turn feel the freedom to come to them with any concerns or questions they may have.

In order to be assigned to an elder who will be woven into all aspects of the care received at South Cities Church, membership is the first step. This does not mean the church will not care for those who are not members. It simply means that the way we are doing our best to “give an account” and “pay careful attention” is through church membership and that we will prioritize member care if a choice needs to be made.

Corporate Care

Purpose: We believe a great means of God’s care for his people is when they come together to pray, sing, hear the word of God preached, and take the Lord’s Table together. We generally refer to this as corporate worship.

The Bible tells us to not neglect meeting together but to encourage each other and stir one another up to love and good works (Hebrews 10:25). We simply can’t underestimate how special the moment is when the Spirit of God works in the church—the new temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

We believe that church care is much more than simply coming to corporate worship on Sundays, but it certainly isn’t less than that! In fact, this is the pattern we see all throughout the book of Acts as God’s people gather together for worship (Acts 2:42–47, Acts 4). Corporate worship is where God meets us in power to build up his church and make it overflow in love.

When we sing songs, we are not just singing to God alone (though we are doing that!), but we are also “addressing one another in songs, hymns, and spiritual songs.” (Ephesians 5:19) When we hear the Word, we are hearing it as a family. When we take Communion, it is a family meal (1 Corinthians 11:17–34). And as we pray together, many more give thanks as the Lord answers our prayers (2 Corinthians 1:11).

Where? The main place we gather for corporate worship is on Sunday mornings. However, we also currently have a shorter corporate worship moment together on Wednesday evenings as well, following the meal together and before the class time.

Limitations: While God regularly both convicts of sin and comforts us in suffering in a Sunday service, and while meaningful interactions happen after the service, the limitation of Sunday morning is that we need more and deeper interactions with other believers to walk toward Jesus. If we are to be healthy Christians, we must “exhort one another every day” (Hebrews 3:13) towards joy in and obedience to Jesus.

Community Care

Purpose: We believe it is helpful to have smaller settings of people to go deeper with in the Christian life. While we are all family, it won't be possible to go to the same level of personal knowledge or care with everyone. Yet, all the time, everyone needs deep relationships in the body of Christ, and everyone needs a band of brothers and sisters to be there when the waves of life grow strong and threatening.

It is important that we have people in our lives that can exhort us every day against developing hard hearts that come from the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12–13). We are sinful, broken people and we are not meant to live the Christian life alone. Instead we work together as a Spirit-filled body (1 Corinthians 12:1–11) that speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15–16) to each other with humble (because we're all sinners) boldness (because we deeply love each other and God's glory). Why? For our joy in and obedience to Christ in the lives of our fellow believers.

If we are to use our gifts, speak the truth in love, and exhort one another away from the deceitfulness of sin, that means we must know each other. There must be transparency. And these must be safe places to share our darkest places, knowing that Christ has paid for our sins and that therefore there is no condemnation. We must have places to know and be known so that we can walk together in this life towards Jesus.

The main goal of these groups is to listen, pray, and speak the truth in love. We encourage all of our members to find one of these places to get plugged into to help their souls find joy in and obedience to Jesus.

Where? South Cities Church has a variety of opportunities where these smaller settings happen.

Small Group Ministry

Contact: Daniel Viezbicke

daniel.viezbicke@southcities.church

Men's Ministry Groups
Contact: Phil Nelson
phil.nelson@southcities.church

Women's Ministry: Mentoring, MOMS
Contact: Emily Zwicky
emily.zwicky@southcities.church

Limitations: While we firmly believe that these first two means of care (Corporate and Community) are powerful and necessary for every person, we realize that even the small, personal, and deeper setting of these groups still have limitations and can even cause potential harm. We will sometimes hurt each other. We are imperfect sinners. The call of the gospel is the gain of living in community, which greatly outweighs the risk!

In light of this, it is wise not to give strong "advice" on sensitive issues, but rather, because of the complexity involved, to listen and pray.

Community Care is often the means of God for the good of his people in the regular hardships—and even extreme hardships—of life. If something comes up in your Community Care area that needs attention, reach out to the elder assigned to you and let him know of your need for help.

Counseling Care

Purpose: In times of more intense brokenness of sin or suffering, more focused care is often needed. Options for this kind of care include Care Partners and occasional support groups in the church, and helping connect you with counselors and other resources outside the church.

Our trained Care Partners are available to listen, pray, encourage, and walk alongside you during a difficult time. Support groups for various issues like anxiety, grief, etc. are offered occasionally or as needs arise.

We can also help make connections with counselors and other resources outside the church when more expertise is needed. We are not relinquishing our care for people at this point. We are simply seeking to get them the best care that they can have for their needs, and we will remain actively aware of what is going on through a Release of Information.

Counseling care will seek to include people from the Community Care level to support the person, and when Counseling Care is concluding, will ensure that Community Care is established. Counseling Care will also seek to keep a connection with the elder that is assigned to their care.

How? To make a confidential care request, email care@southcities.church

Contact: Stacy Thorpe
stacy.thorpe@southcities.church

Limitations: We recognize that even at this level of care, there is no guaranteed outcome. We entrust each person and situation to the Lord as we care for one another with the gospel.

Conclusion

We have prayed that this plan would provide a clear map for care that would help us to help others toward joy in and obedience to Jesus for their good, the good of others, and the glory of God.

Yet, we recognize that “apart from Jesus we can do nothing.” Our hope is not in this plan, but in Jesus Christ who has paid for our sins and sent the Holy Spirit—our Comforter and Exhorter—to help us walk through this life.

If you have further questions about where you can get help or what role you might have in caring for yourself or others as part of the blood-bought family of Jesus, please feel free to reach out to the church office (office@southcities.church) with your question and you will be connected to the appropriate person.

May God be pleased to redeem and heal in more ways than we could ask or even think as we walk through this life toward eternity together.