**The Pastoral Exercise**

**What is the aim of the Pastoral Exercise?** The Pastoral Exercise is intended to help Advisers in assessing your ability
 (a) to understand and respond to a complex human situation;
 (b) to show an appropriate pastoral response;
 (c) to communicate effectively in writing; and, if appropriate, to use suitable theological reflection.

**What do I have to do?** The Pastoral Exercise is a complex pastoral situation to which you are asked to make a written response of no more than 500 words. You will need to write as yourself (a potential ordinand) and not as if you were already an ordained minister. Please choose one of the scenarios below, copy the text and write your response below.

**Pastoral scenarios**

1. *Your sister is Vestry Secretary of her local church and usually attends mid week as well as Sunday services. She’s the first to volunteer when the church is holding an event. Peter is her son. She writes*:

I’ve got some rather shocking news. Peter phoned last night from Thailand (he’s there for another 3 months on his time abroad) to tell us that he has met a Thai girl and they’re getting married. It gets worse – she’s a Buddhist and they intend having a marriage ceremony over there in the next few weeks. Then he’ll be bringing her home and they’ll live in his student flat in Bath until he graduates and finds work.

I was so shocked I could barely speak. I don’t know whether we’re really welcome to travel there for the Thai ceremony (and I don’t know whether I want to go to Thailand to be honest – I’ve never been interested in going there). He said something about an event back home for all of his family and friends but I don’t know what he’s thinking about and it can’t be a proper church wedding for obvious reasons.

I’d always imagined him having a proper wedding – we brought both of the boys up to know what’s right. I feel physically sick and deeply sad.

What can I do?

1. *Your younger brother has been married for 4 years. He and his wife are both in their mid 30s and the family assumed that they would have children very quickly but nothing has happened. He writes:*

I’m writing to you because I don’t think I can manage to speak face to face about something so important as this. I want you to know that I love Sally, she’s the best person I know and I am so happy to have her in my life. But the truth is I’m not at all happy. I’ve realized that I like men – I think I’ve always liked men but not been able to recognize it. It feels as though I‘ve reached a crisis point now. Sally wants us to start a family and time is running out. But I don’t think it would be right to bring children into this situation. I love Sally but I want to be with a man. But I want to be a dad. It’s such a mess and I don’t have anyone to talk to.

1. *Margaret is an older member of your congregation whom you have visited from time to time. She was widowed 30 years ago and has never remarried. She is a woman of prayer and integrity who is approaching the end of her life. She writes*

There’s something that I’ve never been able to speak to you about that is beginning to worry me greatly. We’ve had several conversations about what happens after death and you’ve suggested that I’ll be reunited with my beloved Arthur who is waiting for me in heaven.

There’s something you don’t know. Everyone thinks that Arthur had a sudden heart attack and died in his chair. The truth is far more dreadful. Arthur took his own life. I know that’s a sin and it means I won’t be reunited with him. I still miss him and as I get older long to see him just one more time.

He was a gentle and lovely man who tried so hard to make things right. His moods were dreadful for him to manage and I know that he thought I’d be better off without him. He was so wrong.

So now you know. If you don’t feel able to visit me again, I will understand.

1. *You have known Steve since school, and he is really your best friend. Six months ago, he and his wife Annie became parents for the first time, and Steve is thrilled by his new daughter. He lives some distance away, and recently sent you this letter.*

I just wanted to get in touch privately – I don’t know who else to turn to. Sorry I haven’t been in touch for a while, but as you know, we’ve been settling into being parents! At first, Annie seemed fine, and the month I spent with her and the baby on paternity leave was great. We had such fun even if there was not much sleep. I’m back at work now, and I thought Annie would be OK as she has other mums nearby, even if her mum is not close. But when I get back in the evening, she hardly speaks to me, and she is so tired – even if there’s still lots of jobs still needing done. She doesn’t even seem to want to cuddle the baby. I was looking forward to us all going along to church to show off the baby if we could get organised in time, but she just isn’t interested any more. What do you think is going on? And what can I do?

1. *Your goddaughter Sophie is sixteen and hopes to be a doctor. She recently wrote to you:*

I’ve just had the most awful conversation with mum and dad. I’d heard them arguing and listened outside the door to find out what was wrong. It turns out that they couldn’t agree when to tell me that I’m adopted. I’m devastated – I always thought they were my real parents. How could they deceive me for years? I don’t know what to do. I really want to find my mother now and maybe I’ll just go home to her. I can’t trust my so-called parents any longer and I feel my future has been destroyed.

1. *Harry and Jane are good friends from church. Jane’s faith is deep and committed, but Harry is often away on business and doesn’t attend so often. Jane writes:*

Harry has just been posted to Saudi Arabia. It’s a real step-up for him and he’ll have a lot of responsibility, and much more salary (tax free). They will provide a house and servants and everything. He‘s desperate for me to go with him, and now the kids are away, I can see that it’s a great opportunity to see somewhere completely different. But what is it going to be like there? I’ve heard it’s really restricted for women, and I can’t imagine being a Christian there is going to be easy at all. I don’t want to let Harry down, but my life here is important, and I’m worried I’ll lose touch with Jesus if I’m cut off from my church.

1. *Ken is a friend from college days who has recently become a Christian. He has struggled with financing his studies but has now got a job, though it’s not well-paid. He writes:*

My new job is great – just what I wanted to do, and there’s a chance I’ll get promotion sometime. But I’ve always longed to have my own business, so I can develop that idea we were working on at College – remember? Well, it might just be possible after all. I didn’t know, but I my stepdad’s father – sort of my step-grandpa I suppose - died quite a wealthy man, and left his money to me and my sister. He quite liked us, though I found him a bit creepy. Well, the money would be enough to set me up – rent a workshop and get some materials, and do some publicity. The only thing is, when I asked my stepdad how his father got rich, he said that it was through ‘entertainment’ for men. I didn’t want to ask more – it sounded really embarrassing. But it must be immoral, and the Bible is very strict about sex. I can’t accept the money if it’s been got from prostitution or something like that, can I – especially now I’m a Christian? The only thing is, my stepdad will be pretty offended if I say I don’t want it. What shall I do?