



The **Dove** depicting the Holy Spirit is a symbol of Pentecostalism.

PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES (ALSO KNOWN AS PENTECOSTALISM)

Pentecostalism is a Christian movement that takes its name from the event of *Pentecost*, when the Holy Spirit descended on Christ's first disciples and they were 'baptised in the Holy Spirit'. Key beliefs in Pentecostalism are: that the Holy Spirit continues to be present in the world guiding their actions; the need for a personal experience of conversion; and the authority of the *Christian Bible*.

Pentecostalism shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16). It is closely related to and usually included in the category of evangelicalism.

Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing faith movements worldwide, claiming approximately 500 million followers in North America, South America, Africa and Europe. The churches are self-governing and are led by clergy, who may be called pastors or ministers.

Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

1 Profile of Pentecostal Churches in Ireland:

Pentecostalism is a growing movement worldwide with an established presence in Ireland, where there are networks of churches. In Ireland there are several specific ethnic African congregations as well as congregations of mixed ethnicity, which include members from Ireland and new communities such as Brazil, China, Poland, the Philippines, the Roma Community and South Africa.

2 Religious contacts and religious practices:

Due to the multiplicity of churches it will be important to clarify the name of a religious contact that can be called as necessary for support for the person and guidance for the healthcare setting. The Assemblies of God Ireland could be used to source the name of local Pentecostal Churches for dialogue purposes and relationship building.

3 Family and community visits:

There may be several visitors praying at a bedside (possibly round-the-clock) in times of critical illness. Religious leaders have indicated that it is acceptable to request some to go to the hospital prayer room to continue prayers while some remain at the bedside.

4 Death-related religious rituals:

There is no established ritual to prepare a person for death. In case of imminent death the named pastor should be called and they will lead prayers at the bedside.

5 Cleaning and touching the body:

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

6 Initiation ritual/infant baptism:

Pentecostalism emphasises personal conversion at a time the person is ready. Even in cases of threat to life, baptism of infants is not necessary.

Profile of Pentecostal Churches in Ireland

Essential Practice Point

1

Census 2006 indicated that Pentecostalism increased by over 157% between 2002 and 2006, with 8,116 members in 2006. Contributors indicate that this figure is an underestimate and that the major growth in Pentecostalism is from the new communities, including a number of African countries (see details below), Brazil, China, Poland, the Philippines, South Africa and the Roma Community.

There are some networks of Pentecostal Churches in Ireland, each having numerous members:

- *African Pentecostal Churches:* The Joy in the Nation network is a nationwide collective of African Pentecostal Churches. The network currently has in excess of thirty members, some of whom are also affiliated to the Assemblies of God Ireland (see next point). These churches have congregations in a number of places in the Irish State including Dublin (the largest membership), Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and other major urban areas. The largest is the Nigerian-led Redeemed Christian Church of God. Gospel Faith Mission is a second large Nigerian-led Church. Others are Abundant Life led by a minister from Togo, and Christ Co-workers in Mission led by a minister from the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire).
- *Assemblies of God Ireland (AGI) and other networks:* Assemblies of God Ireland is a member of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal fellowship of churches and organisations in the world.

In 2008 there were approximately forty member churches located in the major cities and towns throughout Ireland. Some have multi-ethnic congregations; for example St Mark's Pentecostal Church, Dublin, presently has a congregation from twenty-eight national backgrounds, and there is also a Polish fellowship affiliated to the AGI.

The Elim Pentecostal Association and the Apostolic Church Network are also represented in Ireland.

Pentecostalism is practised by approximately 70% of the Roma Community in Ireland; see Roma Community section for details.

Care of the ill

Beliefs about the treatment of illness

An African minister has indicated that culturally African Pentecostalists may believe that illness and medical conditions can be caused by unseen evil forces. The person may request a pastor to help them address these matters through calling on Divine intervention in addition to the person co-operating with medical treatment. The pastor will assist the person through prayer, possibly anointing with oil and helping them re-affirm their trust in the healing power of Jesus Christ. These practices are in the tradition of *healing through faith*. A private space may be requested to perform these religious rituals.

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point

2

- There are numerous Pentecostal Churches in Ireland. The person is likely to wish to see their own pastor for religious and spiritual support. It is important to clarify the name of a religious contact who can be called as necessary for support for the person and guidance for the healthcare setting. This will be particularly important in times of critical illness and death-related matters.
- A contact point for African Pentecostal Churches is provided at the end of the section.
- The Assemblies of God Ireland could also be used to source the name of local Pentecostal Churches for dialogue purposes and relationship building. The contact details are at the end.

Pentecostalism generally places less emphasis on ritual and ceremony while there is a strong emphasis on personal faith and prayer. Hymn singing is a regular part of worship.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

Care of the Dying

Family and community visits

Essential Practice Point

3

Community members are likely to come to the bedside to pray with the patient and in the case of serious illness this may be round-the-clock. Religious leaders have indicated that it is acceptable to request from visitors that a few remain at the bedside while others go to the hospital prayer room to continue the prayers.

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point

4

There is no established ritual to prepare a person for death. In case of imminent death the named pastor should be called. The pastor will enable the person to reaffirm their relationship with God in preparation for death and will lead prayers at the bedside. Prayers will also be held for the family.

Customs to be observed at death

- An African minister has indicated that due to the community nature of African society an African family is likely to expect healthcare staff to be empathetic to them in their grief and provide as much assistance as possible with meeting cultural norms (see next point).
- In African culture a deceased person should not be left alone. Many families will wish to sit with their relatives during their time in the hospital mortuary and this will need to be facilitated.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point

5

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

Postmortem requirements

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

Interment ritual

Both burial and cremation are acceptable generally.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

Some Pentecostals may wear a plain cross or have their own copy of the *Christian Bible*.

Use of religious symbols

- Candles and a plain cross are appropriate in the tradition and can be used in the mortuary area when a Pentecostal family is using the facility.
- The crucifix is not a symbol of the tradition and preferably should not be displayed in a hospital mortuary when a Pentecostal family is using the facility.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

Essential Practice Point

6

- Pentecostalism emphasises personal conversion at a time the person is ready and baptism takes place when the child is ready. Even in cases of threat to life, infant baptism is not necessary.
- A child is usually dedicated in church and prayers held for the child and family.

Foetal, infant and child death

- There are no specific religious requirements governing miscarriage and stillbirth. The pastor will be willing to perform a religious ritual or service that will be sensitive to the situation on request from the parents. It will be necessary to discern the parents' wishes in these cases and call the named pastor as appropriate.
- Normally a service is held for deceased infants and children, while the nature of the service depends on the age of the child and the parents' wishes. The pastor will be a resource in these matters.

Memento of a deceased child

There are no religious restrictions on giving a memento of a deceased child to the parents such as hand/foot-prints, a lock of hair, etc. It is appropriate to ask if families would find this helpful.

Developing a Local Pentecostal Church Contact

There are numerous churches involved in the various networks of Pentecostal Churches and there are also independent churches. Contact details for the person's pastor should be sourced directly from them, if known.

African Pentecostal Churches:

Pastor Michael Arowolo, Secretary of the Joy in the Nation Network of African Pentecostal Churches, is agreeable to being contacted by healthcare settings for the strict purposes of sourcing the names and contact details of local churches. His contact number is 087 9927265.

General information on Pentecostalism:

Assemblies of God Ireland, Carraig Eden, 1 Marine Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

Tel: (01) 2016961

Website: www.agireland.org

Contributors

- Reverend Remba Osenga, Pastor of Christ Co-workers in Mission Church provided information for the Joy in the Nation Network, of which he is an Executive member and former Chair. The Christ Co-workers in Mission Church is a member of both the Joy in the Nation Network and Assemblies of God Ireland.
- Dr Miriam A. Kelly, Carraig Eden Theological College and Reverend Gary Davidson, National Chairman, Assemblies of God Ireland, provided information on the other Pentecostal Churches. Dr Kelly approved the finalised version of this section. Ms Margaret Moore, Assemblies of God Ireland, facilitated us in engaging with contacts in the organisation.

