



MINISTERS FORUM

INFORMATION MINISTERS Can Use

ESTABLISHING VIBRANT COUNSELLING MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

Walking responsibly in Christ Jesus

The Church represents Jesus to the world. We are the body of Christ, which means we are His presence on earth today. But what is our specific responsibility to God as His individual children?

Paul brings us right to that point in Eph.4:1—a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
(NIV)



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**“One Lord, One Faith,
One Baptism.”**
Ephesians 4:5

Greetings: Dear Ministers of this Great Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ :

As we complete this series on ‘how to start a vibrant counseling ministry in your church’ we will focus on the actual starting and how to operate. Bearing in mind that Instituting or birthing a Counseling ministry is not a difficult task when we reflect on the book of Acts where the early believers reaped the benefits of being in community (church) with one another (Acts 2:44-47). Within this community, believers were harmoniously sharing, serving, giving, sacrificing, need meeting, fellowshiping, worshiping and multiplying. The Elders shepherded, ruled, and preached (Acts 6) while the people served one another.

When a church starts a lay counseling ministry, it frees itself to live out biblical community where every member is ministering. Instead of referring our “counseling” needs outside of the church, imagine a church community with every member ministering and offering mutual care. Introduction of a counseling ministry can therefore be a seamless integration into an existing church.

As indicated in the previous issues there should be no planning without the Lord’s direction of your steps (Proverbs 19:6). Begin by gathering a few people committed to fervent prayer. Approaching the members with the intent of sharing the vision and discern their interest in spiritual friendship training. As you sense God’s direction and open doors, assign someone to lead the process (someone who has training in Counselling, Social Worker or a Minister with the distinct passion for working with people).

As a Leader/Minister/visionary in a congregation/ you labor to feed the flock as needed. Paul says we should “commit” or place nearby for safe-keeping those things that we deem precious enough to be passed on. In other words, the starting of the ministry should consist of people who can steward the vision well. It is wise to consider believers who are teachable, faithful, submissive, discreet and have a heart for people.

Since the nature of this type of ministry involves personal interaction with confidential matters, it’s key to have processes to wean out those who may not be able to handle this ministry responsibility—these include persons who are struggling with different issues and are not healed. Conversely, this ministry should include “wounded healers” meaning, those who have been wounded but are now healed and can use their experiences to help others who are going through similar situations—overcomers .

The establishment of Counselling Ministry can bring hope, facilitate healing, build a level of accountability and fellowship, as well as, provide additional human resources to assist the Pastor/leaders and by extension the general church population and beyond.

It’s Not About Who Brings The Message—(Messenger) It’s about the Message.

ESTABLISHING VIBRANT COUNSELLING IN YOUR CHURCH

THE COUNSELLING ENVIRONMENT—PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL

Where no counsel is the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety
Proverbs 11:14 (KJV)

The environment in which counseling takes place must be conducive for it to be effective. Effectiveness speaks to the achieving of the intended objective (s) of the counseling session. The physical speak to the physical setting place where the session is held; the emotional speak to the how to the attitude and disposition of the counselor and how it affect the person who is being counseled—which in and of itself will impact the counselee; that is thoughts, feeling and emotions.

Studies have shown that the effects of colour, chair arrangements and setting of counseling is very important to the establishment of counseling relationship. The findings of one study indicates that creating and atmosphere/environment that is conducive to good counseling fosters personal balance and harmony. In providing appropriate physical environment the following are recommended:

Lighting.—setting must be airy allowing the use of natural light (where possible). Light the areas you wish attention to be drawn, Lamps can be used to soften the impact of harsh overhead lights while providing sufficient light quality to observe facial expressions, gestures and other expressions of emotions.

Spaciousness—There must be sufficient space so that there is no sense of intrusion. Space must encourage effective communications. **Furniture**—When furnishing the room the effects on mood and the evoking of emotional states, form, shape, texture, colours and smell must be taken into consideration. Therapist have indicated that there are consistent themes to drawings of concepts such as anger, joy, peacefulness, from how furniture is arranged. For example, anger is often expressed in dark, jagged, pointed forms while joy is expressed in soft, curving and circular forms, whereas, light in horizontal lines indicate peacefulness or tranquility. You may also want o consider **scents and aroma** for their relaxing effects or to counter unwanted or intrusive smells in the environment.

Colour scheme— while there are individual preferences to different colours it is psychologically true that we respond in a universal way to colours; for example red speeds metabolism while blue slows it down. Whatever the colour used in the counseling space it should reflect thoughtfulness and care. Bear in mind also that an overly feminine or masculine room may not feel comfortable to the opposite gender and the counselee must feel welcomed.

The Place—must not be too secluded or so enclosed that outsiders cannot see what's going on in the counseling area. Although the area should ensure confidentiality it should not be secluded. Space should ideally be half-glassed with furniture strategically place for interaction.

Tissue—While Counselling sessions are not necessarily places for crying. Experience has shown that tears are a language spoken mostly in these interactions , making it a good idea to have it available. Brokenness tend to 'spill' so tears are always possibilities in these sessions. It's an indication of care when tissue is strategically placed in the room for easy access to those who need.

The tone of the environment must be set by the Counsellor who must be patient, positive, non-judgmental, prepared through much prayer, and be emotionally stable to minister in love and with compassion as led by the Holy Spirit..



A Recommended Book for the Minister

Strategic Pastoral Counselling"
David G Benner (2001)

.....*fundamental way in which strategic pastoral counseling is Christian is that it encourages reliance on the Holy Spirit . The Spirit is the indispensable source of all wisdom that is necessary for the practice of pastoral counseling...*

The Holy Spirit is indeed the true counselor (John 14:26) and the Pastor [and all others] are assistants. With the recognition that all healing and growth are ultimately of God the Pastor can relax in the work he does because the ultimate responsibility for the persons counselled lies with God. (2001)



ADMINISTRATIVE STEPS IN SETTING UP THE COUNSELLING MINISTRY IN AN INDIVIDUAL CHURCH

First of all there must be someone to lead the process (Coordinator/leader/Minister etc) with the ability to ensure that the necessary training will be provided to those who have the passion for the ministry. The Coordinator who will report to or guide by the Pastor/Minister whose Summary Job Description and recommended Training content should be similar to the ones outlined below:

JOB DESCRIPTION

Summary of Duties of the Coordinator

Position: Christian Counsellor
Reporting to: Pastor/or his appointed Minister
Summary of Duties:

Provide guidance and counseling support services through the incorporation of psychological thoughts and methods, the Bible and interpreting them from spiritual/theological perspectives in order to provide help for those in need.

Summary Requirements:

—The Counsellor will be required to:

- have experience working with persons from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, cultures and groups (adults, children, youth etc)
- possess effective verbal and written communication skills and motivational interviewing techniques;
- ability to use holistic approach to effectively resolve conflict and cope with crisis situation;
- offer biblical principles to issues of family, marital, relational and other areas;
- have a good knowledge of the different mental illness/disorders
- have well developed communication skills
- demonstrate ability to lead someone to Christian faith through accepting Jesus Christ;
- must be able to assist ministers who seek help with problems/issues that they are faced by exploring feelings, and emotions related to these experiences;
- able to organize training for the other members who will be involved in the ministry or the general membership;
- liaise with other agencies and individuals to assist in training/ providing information that will be useful for example, Child Development Agency (CDA) on matters relating to children

Qualifications:

Christian qualified in the field of Social Work, Guidance & counseling OR Minister of Religion with the passion, knowledge and skills in human relations OR Divinely Ordered educated through Divine Intervention—called in this particular area of People ministry [See page 4]

See page 4

TRAINING FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNSELLORS

Training is a very important element in the successful setting up of a Counselling Ministry because many of the Ministers and members of the church who have a passion for and are counseling people are not trained hence not fully aware of the psycho-social-spiritual needs of individuals who need help/support in dealing with the issues/conflict they face. Some of the areas recommended for inclusion in any training programme are:

- Introduction—Fallen man and his need for counseling
- What is and why a Counselling Ministry is needed in the church
- Overview of Counselling—Counselling techniques
- Types of Counselling—Individual, Family and Group
- Understanding of the Self—the counselor understanding who the counselor is become trying to understand others
- Characteristic, Roles and Responsibilities of the Christian Counsellor
- Ethics in Counselling
- Dangers/Pitfalls in Counselling
- Making referrals—referring successfully
- Effective communication/Questioning etc.
- Issues of Confidentiality and Disclosure (self or otherwise)
- Discussions of major social issues that impact lives and people and strategies to address them—issues of Abuse (sexual, emotional, physical ;
- When ABUSE comes to church—what is the role of the church
- Writing incident reports and Progress Notes

At the end of the training participants should be given a *Certificate of completion*. There should also be *quarterly or monthly seminar sessions* on providing information on different topical issue and how to address them when presented by those who come for help.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING STRATEGY

Motivational Interviewing is a focused and goal-directed form of counseling and is the practice of interviewing in a direct, Counsellee-centered counseling style to bring about change to a counsellee's behavior. This practice enables the counsellee to explore and resolve their problems from within (not forced from the outside) and is held accountable for his past and current behaviours.

This kind of interviewing style includes the Counsellor sitting in silence, allowing the patient to speak and lead the discussion. It is not aggressive but very passive and requires patience on the part of the Counsellor. The method is used to avoid being too pushy and convincing him to do things he may not be ready for. The effects of Motivational Counselling can lead to counsellee changing the course of his/her behavior and eliminating bad habits the lead to the problem (s). The change with this type of counseling strategy can be lasting since it is a slow and gradual process for the counsellee



Confidentiality in Counselling

Just a note on the importance of “Confidentiality” in Counselling

Confidentiality is an important aspect of Counselling which must not be breached. The information entrusted with should be carefully guarded. This is an aspect which has been constantly breached by church folks including ministers. Christians have often disclosed in their Testimonies some of the disclosures made by those they counsel to demonstrate some of the ills of the world and what people are going through to bring about the power of the Lord Jesus to deliver. One has to be careful however, not to be too specific because it might be detrimental to the counseling relationship as it relates to the question of Trust.

There are however, four situations when it may be necessary to disclose or share information about persons being counseled:

1. When the Counsellor is uncertain how to address a particular problem and is seeking advice or guidance from another counselor/Pastor/Minister
2. When there is a clear indication that Counsellee is going to do harm to self or another person
3. When it becomes necessary to seek assistance of others in the church or otherwise to encourage and enhance reconciliation (Proverbs 15:22, 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20)

Informed Consent Form

The above information is usually part of the Informed Consent Form which is usually signed by the person who comes for counseling which basically states that they are in agreement with how the session/conversation will be held. The form also outlines how conflicts will be addressed if and when any develops and points to the fact that they will be resolved in a biblically faithful manner and through mediation.

The **Informed Consent Form** also informs the counsellee that the Counselling sessions adhere to the laws of the land and ethical standards. It requires that all information received is held in confidence unless written permission is given or at the times mentioned above. By signing the Consent Form the counsellee agrees that, s/he is aware of all the principles and policies of the counselling session and is made aware of the Divine Intervention that allows the achievement of the desired outcome.

Self-disclosure is when Counselor reveals personal thoughts, feeling and emotions about matters that affect/ed them with the view to make counsellee comfortable to speak. This disclosure must be for the benefit of the Counsellee and not for the Counsellor to feel good or better

**UP With UNITY!
DOWN with
DIVISION! And On
With The CHURCH!**

PROFOUND MESSAGE !

coming out of the 69th Annual Convention of the United Pentecostal Church of Jamaica 2015 General Conference.

Unity is powerful—it successfully built the Tower of Babel but God had to confuse them that built it and destroyed it because it was not of God. As a picture, the church is like a jigsaw puzzle; each piece alone has a strange shape and can even sometimes appear to be distorted. However, each piece is cut to fit perfectly with another piece and when all the pieces are joined together (fitly joined) then and only then can the powerful, life changing picture be seen.—Battles against Satan are only won when we do it together!

Adapted

FUNDAMENTAL CRITERIA WHEN SELECTING FOR PRIME CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

MATURITY [not age] but those who have allowed themselves to go through the process of change whether through personal pain or have played a supportive role for others. Effective helpers tend to be able to handle their own problems (Dr Gary Collins)

We should not be challenging people to change when we refuse to change. This involves (a) Emotional stability (b) Ability to express self verbally (c) Insightfulness (the power or act of seeing into a situation; understanding the inner nature of things and discernment.

arrogant; a spirit of submission; modest. Meekness speaks to ensuring injury with patience and without resentment; mild; gentle. This is the way of life for Christian Counsellors

Contributed by: Marcia Chen Lecturer, Caribbean Bible Institute, Jamaica

MEEKNESS/HUMBLENESS

Humility—not proud; not

SELF MASTERY

NEXT Newsletter: will focus on several direct areas of counselling. The first area will be Grief Counselling & End of Life Issues

Available book:

Available in the bookstores of UPCJ and Pentab Bookstore is a little book written by Mavis Ferguson entitled: “A Guide to the Establishment of Vibrant Counselling Ministry in your Church”.

Feedback/Comments
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