The background of the entire page is a complex geometric pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of teal and blue. A solid black circle is centered on the page, containing the main title and subtitle. A small teal square is positioned between the title and subtitle within the circle. A black vertical bar runs along the left edge of the page, containing a small white logo at the bottom left.

# Counseling Policies and Practices

LEADERS & STAFF



# Counseling Policies and Practices

<b>Table Of Contents .....</b>	<b>Page</b>
Leader's Guide .....	2
Counseling Ministries in Churches: Basic Guidelines .....	3–6
<b>Counseling Policies and Forms</b>	
Counseling Agreement .....	7
Adult Intake Form .....	8–11
Child Intake Form .....	12–16
Parent/Guardian Consent .....	17
Frequently Asked Questions .....	18–19
Counseling Ministry Information .....	20–23
Counseling Practice Standards .....	24
Counseling Risk Assessment .....	25
Counseling Administrative Policies .....	26
Symptoms Checklist .....	27–29
Conduct for Pastoral Counseling .....	30
Information on Counseling Groups .....	31–32
Counseling: Website front page .....	33
Conflicts of Interest Policy .....	34
Counseling Conduct with Youth .....	35
Counseling Myths .....	36
<b>Additional Resources .....</b>	<b>37</b>

# Leader's Guide

*How to use "Counseling Policies and Practices" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS*

Welcome to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: your complete guide to leadership training. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you assemble concise and complete documents dealing with counseling policies and practices in the local church. These documents include counseling agreements, various assessment tools, and documents that provide information on various counseling services and related activities in the local church. Documents also address specific counseling services and answer frequently asked questions. Selected by the editors of Building Church Leaders at Christianity Today, these documents address various methods for presenting the scope of counseling ministry, which come from a variety of churches and denominations.

We have assembled 16 documents. They include basic information on the types of counseling offered in the local church, policies for the clergy and lay counselors providing services, and an approach that actually sets up the counseling service as a specific form of ministry and outreach in the local church. You may use these sample forms as part of your policy and procedures handbook—especially for handling people who are fragile and confused (and those who love them) both within and outside of the congregation, and for reducing risks in counseling in today's litigious environment. Your church insurer also will appreciate the use of such policies in ministry.

These 16 policies and forms will provide church administrators, pastors, and lay counselors with materials needed to define the church's understanding of counseling, spell out what people can expect from this pastoral service, and indicate when small groups meet to help people with similar problems discover that others are facing them, too. With these documents in place, your church will be able to publicize the ways that it provides help to hurting members and people in the community, and give them a sense of hope to find healing in Christ. The congregation also will demonstrate its commitment to the wellness of the communities that it serves.

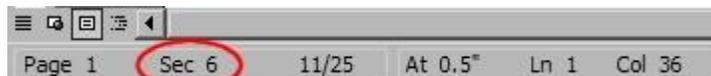
Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com).

To contact the editors:

E-mail [BCL@christianitytoday.com](mailto:BCL@christianitytoday.com)

Mail BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS, Christianity Today  
465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188

Printing Note: To print out the forms you would like to use, put your cursor on the page to print and notice the section number located on the left side of the status bar at the bottom of the page.



Click "File" + "Print," select "Pages," and type "s" and the section number in the corresponding box. For example, if you would like to print the third form, "Child Intake Form," type "s6."

\* We've worked hard to make sure this information is accurate and legally sound. However, we remind you that this is not a substitute for legal counsel. If your church has a legal question, be sure to talk with an attorney.

# Counseling Ministries in Churches: Basic Guidelines

By John R. Throop

Religious leaders have provided spiritual direction and counsel to people through the centuries. The church often was the first and last place where members and friends could work through grief, pain, and confusion by pouring out their hearts and baring their souls to a trusted pastor. They received preparation for marriage, child-rearing, and death. Pastors often provided spiritual direction and other deep and intimate ways to connect to God in prayer and life.

Early in the twentieth century, psychology and psychiatry developed as secular disciplines to help people work through behavioral, emotional, and mental issues. The mental health profession became much more diverse and sophisticated by the 1950s and helped people through an increasing number of life crises. Local church pastors continued to help church members as best as possible, but pastoral counseling developed as a formal ministry discipline in the 1960s.

## The Local Church and Counseling

During the past 40 years to 50 years, state regulatory bodies, insurance companies, doctors, and attorneys have assumed much more responsibility in licensing and monitoring professionals who work in private practice, in mental health centers, and in churches. Local church pastors and lay counselors increasingly have been strongly urged to put counseling policies and practices into writing, and to define limits to the psychological assistance they provide. Church insurers also seek to reduce the risks churches face in dealing with people seeking counseling.

While the local church may be the first point of contact for a troubled person or family, it often is a referral point to another level of help, such as a pastoral counseling center (perhaps located in the church, but separately incorporated); a psychologist or psychiatrist; a free-standing mental health center; or a center located in a hospital. Pastors and lay counselors in the local church may become part of a team of professionals who help people to deal with problems that either are a passage of life, or permanent in nature.

## Types of Counseling Ministries

Churches and pastors may be the first places a person will approach with a problem that has become too big to handle, or an issue that has deep personal and theological implications. They typically provide counseling in six major areas.

1. **Spiritual counsel:** Spiritual direction, prayer formation, confession, and evaluation of one's call to ministry, especially ordained ministry.
2. **Life transitions:** Moving in to, or out of, a community; new work or change in an existing job; unemployment or retirement; illness; death and dying.

3. **Relationship developments:** Pre-marital preparation; marriage and divorce issues; children's problems; problems in the immediate or extended family (children, aging parents, siblings); co-workers.
4. **Behavioral issues:** Sexual activity outside of marriage; pornography; obsessions; passive-aggressiveness; anger; verbal and/or physical abuse.
5. **Depression:** Grief; situational crises (job loss, relationship problems); unresolved issues from the past; aging and loss of independence; symptoms of deeper psychological issues; threats of suicide.
6. **Physical or mental illness:** Life-changing physical conditions; surgery and rehabilitation; terminal illness; alcoholism or drug addiction; medically based psychological problems.

### **Counseling and Psychological Intervention**

Often a church member or friend will contact the pastor or a lay professional in the local church first to discuss a problem or issue—usually because of a crisis. Seminaries provide basic training in pastoral care and counseling to lay the foundation for caring ministries. Continuing education programs, judicatory offices, and medical and psychological practices offer ongoing professional and spiritual development for ordained and lay ministers so that they can deepen their knowledge and sharpen their skills to meet increasingly complex problems and needs among congregational members and community residents.

These problems and needs have become very difficult to handle. Violence is a frequent symptom of deeper and severe psychological problems. Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction is much more prevalent in society. The internet has made pornography available in immediate, constant, and dangerous ways. Families are much more unstable, resulting in a decreasing ability to cope with life issues and an increasing frequency and depth of depression. Christians struggle with the same challenges as secular people do.

This complexity has brought about radical change in methods and options for dealing with symptoms, causes, and treatments. In the past 30 years, the psychological profession, the medical community (including psychiatry), and the insurance industry have set standards for intervention and treatment of diagnosable symptoms and conditions. The American Psychiatric Association, for example, has developed a desk reference manual, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR Fourth Edition*, which describes hundreds of conditions and illnesses that are psychotic and sociopathic in nature.

In addition to diagnostic and treatment standards, professional organizations have developed licensing requirements in every state (though they do differ state to state). For example, a person may have a master's degree in social work (MSW), but in many states they need to receive licensing to practice, and to be paid by insurers, so they become licensed clinical social workers (LCSW). The same process defines professionals who work with alcohol and drug abuse treatment (CSAC—certified substance abuse counselor). Many specific certifications are available from professional associations, often working in tandem with educational institutions and state agencies and boards.

As a result of these standards, churches and their pastors have determined that there are real limitations in the counseling they can provide. If they still are not convinced of this dynamic, the church's insurer will make coverage limitations very clear and require far more documentation to avoid significant, costly liabilities. So the local church may develop a counseling center operated on church-owned property and staffed by counselors with appropriate academic degrees who are licensed through a state agency. In other cases, the church and its pastors may opt to refer people to independent counseling practices in the community focused on specific problems, such as marriage and family, depression, addictions, or sexual issues.

### **Reducing Risks in Local Church Counseling**

Five risks have to be addressed by the local church, whether or not extensive counseling is provided. Pastors and lay people that provide counseling must be held accountable for complying with policies that the church board will develop, approve, and set into place. In this way, the church's insurer can document compliance with key standards so that liability risks are addressed.

- **Limitations on counseling are defined.** Churches that use unlicensed counselors (clergy or lay) should prepare a brochure or provide an online policy that describes the church's counseling ministry to each person being counseled (or the parent or guardian of the person being counseled). The church also should define certain legal limitations that apply to counseling, as well as the typical time commitment and method of counseling. Further, the materials should state that counselors are engaged solely in spiritual counseling based on their understanding of the Bible, and are not engaged in the practice of psychology, professional counseling, or psychotherapy.
- **Sexual activity is prohibited.** In addition, members of the opposite sex may not be counseled out of sight, alone, or off-premises. A pastor or lay counselor should require the presence of another staff person or trusted church member of the same sex as the person being counseled. Such practices are essential in dealing with children and adolescents, or those with special needs. Increasingly, members of the same sex should not be counseled in an isolated location.
- **Child abuse is reported.** State law may require a counselor to report allegations of child abuse to civil authorities. The duty to maintain confidences may not apply in the context of child abuse.
- **Confidentiality is standard.** Statements to a pastor in the course of counseling ordinarily are privileged, meaning that neither the counselee nor the pastor can be compelled to disclose in a court of law any statements made in the course of the counseling. However, the presence of a third party during a counseling session may jeopardize the privilege, since the counseling may no longer be considered confidential. The counselor may reserve the right to disclose confidential information in specified situations (such as threats of suicide or an intent to harm another person), or, as noted above, in the case of child abuse. All records of counseling appointments are limited to one or two staff members, and are to be kept in locked cabinets or a protected location of a computer hard drive.
- **A Counseling agreement is signed.** Require each person being counseled to sign a Counseling Agreement in which he or she:

- Acknowledges the counseling provided is biblical, not professional.
  - Acknowledges the counseling pastor is not professional in psychological counseling, psychiatric therapy, or marriage and family counseling or therapy, and is not licensed by the state as a counselor, social worker, or therapist.
  - Agrees not to sue the church for any expenses or damages that result from any of the pastor's counseling services.
  - Agrees that otherwise confidential communications may be disclosed to appropriate state law enforcement authorities where required by law.
- **Policies are put into writing.** A manual containing all counseling policies, practices, and standard documents should be developed, approved by the church board, and placed in the church office for use by all who provide counseling to persons.

—*John R. Throop*

**First Church**  
**Counseling Agreement**

At First Church, we strongly believe the power of faith in Jesus Christ can lead to emotional healing and well-being. We believe Christ can bring peace in the power of the Holy Spirit into the lives of those who confess their faith. For those who face problems and crises in their lives, First Church provides guidance, care, and support in prayer.

To assure a mutual understanding of the help offered by First Church in this time of need, we ask that you review and sign this Counseling Agreement, which spells out the terms of this assistance.

By signing this Counseling Agreement, I understand and acknowledge that:

- The counseling provided is Biblical, not professional.
- The counseling pastor is not professional in psychological counseling, psychiatric therapy, or marriage and family counseling or therapy, and is not licensed by the state as a counselor, social worker, or therapist.
- I agree not to sue the church for any expenses or damages that result from any of the pastor's counseling services.
- Both the pastor and I will maintain the confidentiality of our communication.
- I understand otherwise confidential communications may be disclosed by the pastor to appropriate state law enforcement authorities where required by law.

I also understand that the pastor will refer me for professional counseling to a professional medical or psychiatric counselor with specialized training if the pastor determines my problems extend beyond his ability to help.

I further understand that the pastor will set a limit on the number of counseling sessions to no more than six (6) hour-long periods, and I agree to abide by this limitation.

Finally, I understand that there may be additional specific terms to this Counseling Agreement that will be appended to this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Rev.) John Jones, Pastor*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Person in Counseling*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Counseling Session Record:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

# First Church Counseling Ministry

## Adult Intake Form

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

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ First Church member?  Yes  No If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Who referred you to us for counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status:  Never Married  Single  Married  Separated  
 Divorced  Widowed  Living Together

If married, how long? \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, please rate the extent of your current marital satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10:

(Low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (High)

If divorced, separated, or widowed, when? \_\_\_\_\_

If you've previously been married, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

If divorced, how would you describe your relationship with your ex-spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the current custody situation with the children? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all of your children (and step-children) and indicate whether they live with you at home:

Name	Age	Home?	Name	Age	Home?
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

How would you describe the relationship with your children? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your level of education? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current employment situation? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you seeking help at this time? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been dealing with this issue? \_\_\_\_\_

How is this impacting your life:

At home? \_\_\_\_\_

At work? \_\_\_\_\_

In other ways? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been in counseling before?  Yes  No

If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_

With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the counseling end? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you satisfied with the results? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your goal for this counseling? What do you hope it will accomplish? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this thought: **My counseling will be successful if I...**

Do you consume alcohol?  Yes  No

If yes, how much and how often? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you ever become intoxicated?  Yes  No

Have you ever used illicit drugs?  Yes  No

If yes, what, when, and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

If you use prescription or over-the-counter medication, have you ever used more than the prescribed amount?  Yes  No

Have you ever had a problem with drug or alcohol abuse?  Yes  No

If yes (include prescription drugs), please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any previous treatment for alcohol/drug use?  Yes  No

If you have, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do any members of your family have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse?

Yes  No  Not sure

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a family history of depression or any other emotional problems?

Yes  No  Not sure

If yes, please describe and indicate how the problem was addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever experienced any kind of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse?

Yes  No  Not sure

If yes, what type of abuse have you experienced? \_\_\_\_\_

When did/does it occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the abuse ever been disclosed and/or reported?  Yes  No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of legal action, if any, was taken regarding the abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the abuse affect you presently? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever thought about suicide?  Yes  No

If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you take any steps to harm yourself?  Yes  No

If yes, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you receive any treatment?  Yes  No

Have you ever been hospitalized for any emotional reasons?  Yes  No

If you have received psychiatric treatment, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note any pertinent medical history: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been under the care of a psychiatrist?  Yes  No

If you are currently on any medications, please complete below:

Medication	Dosage	Purpose	Physician
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Do you consider yourself to be a Christian?     Yes     No     Not sure

If yes, please briefly describe how you became one:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you belong to a church?                       Yes     No

If your membership is with a church other than First Church, which one is it?

\_\_\_\_\_

How often would you say you attend church in a typical month?

- \_\_\_\_\_ I usually don't attend
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 – 2 times per month
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3 – 4 times per month
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 – 6 times per month
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7 or more times per month

**First Church Counseling Center**  
**Child/Adolescent Intake Information**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help obtain a comprehensive background regarding your child or adolescent. By completing these questions as fully and accurately as you can, you will help your counselor in effectively assessing the particular situation and needs of your child or adolescent.

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

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's School District: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Is child in special education?  No  Yes Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of father: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are parents (circle one):      Married                  Separated                  Divorced                  Deceased

Name of step-parent (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Has the child lived with anyone else?  No  Yes If yes, at what age? \_\_\_\_\_

If divorced or separated, please explain custody/visitation arrangements:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name of guardian (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person giving information: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the child: \_\_\_\_\_

First Church member?  No  Yes If yes, how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Who referred you to us for counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your child adopted?  No  Yes If yes, at what age? \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, is he/she aware of the adoption?  No  Yes

Does he/she know the identity of the birth parent?  No  Yes

Please list all siblings (and step-children) and indicate whether they live at home:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Bio</i>	<i>Step</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Home?</i>
_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

List any other adults in the home and the relationship to the child:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father's education? \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's education? \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Step-parent's education? \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the family's current employment situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why are you seeking help at this time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been dealing with this issue? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some ways you've attempted to deal with this problem in the past?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you, or your child, been in counseling before?  No  Yes

If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

With whom? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the counseling end? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you satisfied with the results? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your goal for this counseling? What do you hope it will accomplish?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this thought: ***This counseling will be successful if...***

Describe any problems your child had at birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe any developmental delays: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rate your child's current health:      very good      good      average      declining

Child's approximate weight: \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.      Weight changes: lost/gained \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of last physical exam: \_\_\_\_\_

List all important past or present illnesses, injuries, or disabilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has your child had any history of substance use or abuse?     No     Not Sure     Yes

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any history of attention/hyperactivity problems: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has he/she ever received any educational or psychological testing?     No     Yes

If so, please describe when, where, and for what purpose: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has your child been under the care of a psychiatrist?     No     Yes

If he/she is currently on any medications, please complete below:

Medication	Dosage	Purpose	Physician
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Has the child experienced any kind of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse?

No     Yes     Not sure

When did/does it occur? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has the abuse ever been disclosed and/or reported?     No     Yes

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of legal action, if any, was taken regarding the abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the abuse affect him/her presently? \_\_\_\_\_

Has there been any history of aggression toward self or others?  No  Yes

If so, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

As far as you know, has the child ever thought about suicide?  No  Yes

If yes, when has he/she thought about suicide? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Did he/she take any steps to harm himself/herself?  No  Yes

If yes, what did he/she do? \_\_\_\_\_

Did he/she receive any treatment?  No  Yes

Has he/she ever been hospitalized for any emotional reasons?  No  Yes

If he/she has received psychiatric treatment, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

List and describe any significant family stressors (such as deaths, separations, job loss, financial hardship, addictions, legal problems, relocations, and so on):

Do any members of your family have a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse?

No  Not Sure  Yes

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a family history of depression or any other emotional problems?

No  Not Sure  Yes

If yes, please describe the problem and indicate how it was addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Who usually disciplines the child? \_\_\_\_\_

What methods are used? \_\_\_\_\_

Which seem to be the most effective? \_\_\_\_\_

Do parents/care-givers agree on discipline?  No  Yes

What is his/her typical response to discipline? (Please circle)

pout	tantrum	walk off	hit
yell	cry	ignore	talk back
test	comply	accept	other

When does he/she tend to misbehave? \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle any habits/fears that your child has, or has had:

head-banging	thumb-sucking	fire-setting	lying
rocking	hair-pulling	animal cruelty	tics
stealing	nail-biting	fear of the dark	other

Circle those descriptions which best describe your child's typical interactions:

cooperative	domineering	submissive	sensitive
aggressive	withdrawn	distant	competitive
provocative	manipulative	cruel	other

Do you consider your child to be a Christian?  No  Yes  Not sure

If yes, please briefly describe how they became one:

---

---

---

Has your child been baptized?  No  Yes

Does your family belong to a church?  No  Yes

If so, and your membership is with a church other than First Church, which one do you belong to?

---

How often would you say your family attends church in a typical month?

- \_\_\_\_\_ I usually don't attend  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1 – 2 times per month  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3 – 4 times per month  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5 – 6 times per month  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7 or more times per month

# First Church Counseling Ministry

## Parent/Guardian Consent

Name of Child/Children

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

I/We am/are the parent(s) or otherwise the legal guardian(s) for the above listed child(ren).

I/We agree to take total responsibility for the results of the counseling session and hold free and harmless from any and all liability both the counselor and First Church.

I/We have read and understand the above two paragraphs and give my/our consent to my/our child(ren) participating in counseling sessions at First Church.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# First Church Counseling Center

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What exactly is counseling?**

Simply stated, counseling is a relationship in which a counselor helps an individual, couple, or family better understand and solve a problem in an atmosphere of trust and privacy.

### **What happens in counseling?**

In counseling, the counselor and client seek to clearly describe the problem and create a strategy to solve or manage it. This occurs through specific steps, including the following:

- Assessment stage, where information about the problem is gathered;
- Goal establishment stage, where desired outcomes are identified;
- Treatment strategy stage, where a strategy for treatment is created;
- And, an action stage.

Evaluation occurs throughout counseling, which allows the counselor and client to make any needed changes in an effort to reach the client's goals. Referrals to additional community resources and/or professionals will be recommended when appropriate for your circumstances.

### **How is faith-based counseling different from other forms of counseling that a professional counselor provides?**

Faith-based counseling integrates the truths and teachings of the Bible with proven psychological theories, placing a focus on our human nature, redemption, and grace. All other concepts or ideas are measured by the truth of Scripture.

### **What is a "professional" counselor?**

A professional counselor is one who has a minimum of a graduate degree and is credentialed or licensed by a governing body following the completion of all educational requirements, supervised client hours, and examinations.

### **Can I be assured of confidentiality?**

Yes. Counseling is a professional service with ethical and legal guidelines requiring that what you share is kept confidential. There are four exceptions to a counselor's confidentiality guidelines, which includes concerns about a client's intent to harm themselves; a client's intent to harm another individual; a court order; or a client's written permission for information about their counseling session to be shared with another person or professional.

### **What is expected of me regarding counseling?**

Your responsibilities include being on time for your appointment; canceling with a 24-hour notice when it is necessary to cancel or reschedule your appointment; paying for services when rendered; and being as open and honest as you can with your counselor. It also helps to be ready to focus on a specific problem or issue, therefore making the most of your therapy session.

### **How long are the sessions, and how often will I attend?**

Each session is 50 minutes. The frequency of sessions varies according to the client's schedule, expressed concerns, goals, and appointment availability, and is discussed during the initial appointment.

### **What are the hours of operation?**

The Counseling Center is located in the First Church Counseling Center, and is open 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday, with all sessions by appointment only.

### **What is the cost of each session?**

The initial session is \$xxx.xx, and each session thereafter is \$xx.xx. As a ministry to our community, First Church underwrites a portion of the cost. You are expected to pay for services when rendered.

### **Do I have to be a member of First Church to schedule an appointment?**

No. Counseling is available regardless of church membership, denomination, age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

### **How do I make an appointment?**

Call XXXX at the First Church Counseling Center at (XXX) XXX-XXXX and leave a message, or email at XXXX@firstchurch.org. XXX will contact you to schedule an appointment.

### **How do I find you?**

The First Church Counseling Center is located in the office wing of First Church, and is entered through the single door near the back of the church property. This entrance will afford you the confidentiality that you desire. Once you're on the church campus, follow the signs to the offices.

If you still have questions after reading the information on this page, please contact XXXX.

# **First Church Counseling Center**

## **Counseling Ministry Information**

### **Welcome**

We are pleased that you have chosen First Church to receive counseling services. In order for you to make a fully informed decision about utilizing our services, we'd like to share some information about us, and what we do in counseling. Each one of our counselors is a highly trained professional in fields such as theology, psychology, counseling, marriage and family therapy, and pastoral counseling. The following information provides a brief description of our counseling philosophy, as well as an explanation regarding the nature of our professional relationship.

### **Counselor Values**

We consider ourselves to be Christian counselors. As such, our counseling approach is Christ-centered and biblically based, in addition to being clinically professional. While we meet and accept people where they are spiritually, we seek to involve God in the therapeutic process. Therefore, one of our primary goals is to encourage people to establish, develop, or enhance a meaningful relationship with God as they engage in counseling.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

The First Church Counseling Ministry is concerned about your privacy. As Christian counselors, we believe that God expects us to be trustworthy. We also believe that a sense of safety and security is a fundamental component of your healing process. So our goal is to provide an environment in which you can place your confidence and trust.

Under both federal and state law, communication with us, and any records pertaining to your identity, evaluation, or treatment, will be kept secure and private. Where federal and state laws differ, we comply with the stricter standard to ensure that your right to confidentiality is respected at all times.

However, information may be released in the following circumstances:

- 1) We will disclose information and notify the proper authorities or other appropriate parties if you admit to serious and imminent thoughts of suicide.
- 2) If someone else's life is in danger, we will report it to the intended victim and/or the proper authorities.
- 3) We may disclose your health information to appropriate authorities if we reasonably suspect that you are a possible victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence, or the possible victim of other crimes.
- 4) We are required by law to report any suspicion of child abuse. If we believe that a child is at risk of being abused, has already been abused, or that someone who previously abused children is still a threat, we have no choice but to report it to appropriate agencies and/or the police.
- 5) We are obligated by law to report suspected abuse of an elder person 65 years or older, or a dependent adult.
- 6) If you are engaged in family, marital, or couples counseling, information shared with us in any individual meeting may be shared, at our discretion, with the other party, if we believe it to be in the best interest of the work we are doing together.
- 7) We may use or disclose your health information to a physician, or other healthcare provider who is providing treatment to you, or who is coordinating or managing mental health care or related services.
- 8) If we deem that consultation is required in order to better serve you, we may disclose necessary information to our supervisor, peers, and/or ministers who may be directly involved in your situation.

- 9) We may use or disclose your health information to obtain payment for services that we provide to you. Confidentiality cannot be assured if you choose to utilize insurance benefits, managed care organizations, or other third-party payers who request information. For example, we may include information with a bill to a third-party payer that identifies you, your diagnosis, and any procedures performed.
- 10) We may utilize certain health information in connection with the business aspects of running our practice. This includes: quality assessment and improvement activities; reviewing the competence or qualifications of healthcare professionals; evaluating counselor performance; clinical supervision; conducting training programs; certification; and licensing or credentialing activities.
- 11) We may be ordered by a judge to release information if you are involved in a court case in which our professional relationship is deemed relevant.
- 12) If you were to file a formal complaint or a malpractice suit, your confidentiality would be waived.

We will disclose your personal information if you sign a written consent that authorizes the release of identified information to a specified recipient. If information in your client file also contains documentation related to a secondary client (such as a spouse, parent, and/or child, and so on) a release of information form must be signed by each responsible party.

Written records of client communications are stored in a way that protects confidentiality and privacy rights. Electronically stored records are protected by password restrictions, backup systems, virus security software, and firewall protection.

Office personnel may contact you (by telephone, voicemail message, e-mail, postcard, flier, or letter) to provide appointment reminders, or to inform you of other services that may be of interest to you.

If you have any concerns or questions about this policy, you should raise them with us at the earliest possible time so that we can resolve them in a manner consistent with your best interests.

## **Your Rights**

A recently implemented federal program called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) gives you the right to put into writing any request that you believe is necessary to restrict the possible misuse of your protected health information. All requests will be honored except as the law specifically outlines the use of your personal health information for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations.

HIPAA states that once you give your consent for the use of your personal information for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations by signing the Professional Services Agreement, you may revoke the consent in writing at any time, except to the extent that we have taken action based upon your prior consent. If we believe that we cannot honor your written request for restriction of healthcare information, we will discuss our reasons with you, and if necessary, terminate our professional agreement formally in writing.

Under HIPAA you have the right to receive and inspect copies of your protected health information held in this office through a request made in writing. HIPAA has guidelines regarding what information must be included in response to your request. If the information that you request is outside those guidelines, we have the right to deny your request. Requests within the guidelines will be honored; however, there is a reasonable charge for labor and copying charges. You must allow reasonable time for preparation as well.

You have the right to amend any of your protected health information by a written request. If your request is outside the guidelines of the law, we have the right to deny your request to amend records.

Copies of this document always will be available in our waiting areas or from our staff. If a revision to this document becomes necessary, updated copies will be available.

If you believe that we do not adhere to the stated intentions described in this document and/or you believe your right to confidentiality has been violated, please talk with your counselor or the center's director.

Address your concerns to XXXX, Director, First Church Counseling Ministry, 123 Any Street, Anytown, Any State, 01234. We will take your concerns seriously.

If there is no resolution, you may file a complaint with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights.

## **Fees**

Typically, an individual, marital, or family counseling appointment will last 50 minutes. Counseling fees vary, depending upon whether you are a member of First Church or not.

*FIRST CHURCH MEMBERS* – While First Church members are encouraged to make a financial contribution to help defray the costs associated with the counseling ministry, current and active members of First Church are eligible to receive their initial counseling session at no charge. Subsequent appointments, if necessary, will include a standard fee of \$xx.xx per visit, payable at the time of service.

*OTHERS* – Clients who are not members of First Church are charged a standard fee that is based upon the clinical credentials and qualifications of the counselor providing services, according to the following categories:

- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC):                   \$xx.xx
- Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT)       \$xx.xx

The length of group counseling sessions normally will run 90 minutes, but may vary depending on the nature of the subject matter. First Church members may attend most group counseling sessions at a reduced charge of \$xx.xx. For the participant who is not a member of First Church, the regular fee for most therapeutic groups is \$xx.xx.

## **Legal Matters**

If you request that we be involved in consultation related to a legal issue on your behalf, you will be billed at the rate of \$xxx.xx per hour for all the time spent on your case, including meeting with your attorney, court appearances, writing reports, travel, and preparation time.

Because we lack the required clinical credentials, we are not qualified to render child evaluations in matters of divorce, custody disputes, or other legal issues related to the assessment of children.

## **Financial Agreement**

Counseling fees will be determined prior to the initial session. Please understand that payment of your bill is part of your treatment. Payment is due in full at the conclusion of each session. We do not bill insurance companies for services rendered. However, we can provide you with the necessary paperwork for you to file a claim with your insurance company should you desire to do so. We accept cash or check.

Appointments will not be extended beyond any unpaid session, and additional counseling appointments will not be scheduled until payment is received.

## **Cancellation Policy**

The time scheduled for your session is reserved for you. If you miss an appointment without canceling, or if you cancel with less than a 24-hour notice, you will incur a fee of \$xx.xx. If you are late for a session, we will use the time remaining, but you will be charged the full rate.

## **Consent for Treatment**

You have the right to a clear description of the nature of our professional relationship. You also realize that you have treatment options other than those offered through the First Church Counseling Ministry, including no counseling at all, and that no guarantee or assurance has been made to you as to the results that may be obtained from counseling. In fact, it is not unusual that you may even feel worse during the early stages of the counseling process.

Your signature below verifies that:

- You have freely elected the counseling services offered by First Church in good faith and without duress.
- You are aware that counseling through First Church is not a crisis response service. Normally, you can reach us during regular office hours (8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. Monday through Friday) by calling (XXX) XXX-XXXX. After hours, leave us a voice message at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. In the case of a medical emergency or significant crisis, you should proceed to the nearest emergency room.
- You have been informed of the published fees for services provided by the First Church Counseling Ministry, and have made an individual financial agreement for services rendered to you.
- In order to help you most efficiently, we may ask your approval to audiotape select counseling sessions. Since your authorization is required, you would be notified prior to any recording.
- You realize that minors will not be counseled without the written consent of their biological parents, or the adult who has been court-appointed as managing conservator.
- You understand that you may request access to treatment information contained in your client file, and that this release will be authorized unless we deem it to be clinically inappropriate.
- Your signature holds harmless and indemnifies the counselor and this ministry from any and all liability, claims, or expenses related to the counseling you receive.

## First Church

### Counseling Practice Standards for Staff

First Church is committed to protecting the integrity of our staff and the reputation of our church. Scripture stipulates that church leaders are to be "above reproach," and that even the "appearance" of wrongdoing must be avoided. Therefore, the following counseling guidelines have been established for all staff members to follow:

- Never visit the opposite sex alone in a home environment.
- Observe appropriate precautions when engaging in opposite-sex counseling, or when visiting persons in the hospital (especially when the person is in a private room).
- Never counsel the opposite sex alone in a church office, room, or any other location.
- Never counsel the opposite sex alone on church facilities after normal working hours.
- Never counsel the opposite sex more than once without the counselee's mate present. Refer them to the Marriage Counseling Ministry.
- Never go to breakfast, lunch, or dinner alone with the opposite sex.
- Never kiss any church member or church guest of the opposite sex.
- Never discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex. Refer them to a same-sex ministry (such as a women's ministry, men's ministry, and so on).
- Never discuss personal marriage problems with any church member or church guest of the opposite sex.
- Never drive alone in a car with the opposite sex.
- Carefully respond to cards or letters from the opposite sex.
- Protect confidential papers that are on employee desks by keeping them face down.
- Employees who counsel on a recurring basis must become familiar with, and adhere to, the Counseling Sessions policies as found in the Personnel Section of the Church's Policies and Procedures Manual. These policies provide helpful guidelines on crisis situations and telephone counseling.

## First Church

### Counseling Risk Assessment

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Regardless of whether we have professional counselors on staff, do we have a written, communicated counseling policy for staff and lay people?			
Are our policies posted and shared with the congregation so that members and attenders know what their options are?			
Do we have ongoing, regular training for staff and volunteers on the scope of their counseling duties?			
Are our volunteers and staff clear on when they should refer a person to the next level of counseling?			
Does our church have a list of professionally trained and approved counselors in our community?			
Do we have guidelines regarding when and where people may be counseled?			
Are there guidelines in place that address counseling a minor or someone of the opposite sex?			
Have we considered a comprehensive plan that would provide clear levels of counseling to our members?			
Are all counseling records and correspondences secured at all times?			
Is there a central understanding regarding confidentiality through conversations within the church body and beyond?			
Have our counseling guidelines or programs been received by our insurance company and attorney?			
Do we have safeguards in place that will detect and correct any unauthorized counseling conducted by members, volunteers, or staff?			

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Verified by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **First Church**

### **Counseling Administrative Policies**

Employers and supervisors, as well as all other church employees, shall treat colleagues and all of those to whom they minister with justice, dignity, and respect.

- 1) Personnel and other administrative decisions made by church employees shall meet civil and canon law obligations and also reflect biblical teaching and practices reflected in these Counseling Conduct Policies, and any judicial system policies.
- 2) Church employees shall work in collaboration with:
  - other staff members;
  - the staff and people of other congregations and agencies;
  - and officials of the judicial system.
- 3) Church employees who work in a congregational setting shall strive to work in collaboration with other church organizations and groups, particularly the administrative ministries.
- 4) No church employee shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.
- 5) Each volunteer providing services to children, youth, and vulnerable adults must read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct before providing such services.

# First Church Counseling Ministry

## Symptoms Checklist

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

***Please check the answer that describes the level you experience each of the following symptoms:***

Symptoms	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Persistent feelings of sadness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Crying spells	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Increased irritability	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Feelings of worthlessness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Loss of interest in usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Outbursts of anger	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Insomnia - unable to sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Unusual desire for sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Decreased energy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Poor concentration or indecision	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Loss of appetite	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Increased appetite	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Decrease in sex drive	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Increased sexual activity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Hyper behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Out of control spending	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Mood swings	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Thoughts of suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Self-mutilating thoughts or behaviors	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Violent behaviors or thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Anxiety or nervousness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Phobias	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fear of being alone	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Avoiding people or social situations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Obsessive thoughts or worries	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Intrusive negative or horrible thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Symptoms	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Low self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Feelings of inferiority or shame	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Guilty conscience	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Loneliness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Perfectionism	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fear of rejection	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sensitivity to criticism	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Jealousy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Trouble getting along with others	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Problems at work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fear of "going crazy"	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Suspiciousness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Hallucinations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Feeling of unreality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Stomach trouble	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Heart palpitations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Chest pain	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tingling or numbness	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Seizures or convulsions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Dizziness or fainting spells	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Quality sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Overeating	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Binging	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Purging	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Negative body image	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lustful thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Viewing pornography	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual immorality	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Symptoms	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Infidelity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Compulsive masturbation	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Alcohol abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Illegal drug use	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Abuse of prescription drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marital conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Emotional intimacy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual fulfillment	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## **First Church**

### **Conduct for Pastoral Counseling**

When engaged in any form of counseling or spiritual direction, church employees must take great care to respect the rights, and advance the welfare, of each person.

Church employees shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.

Church employees shall carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (such as, employee, professional colleague, friend, and so on).

Church employees must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments. Nor should church employees engage in sexual intimacies with individuals who are close to the client, such as their relatives or friends.

Church employees assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.

Physical contact of any kind (such as touching, hugging, holding) between church employees and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.

Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times. Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.

Church employees ordinarily must keep confidential the information learned from counseling sessions.

Church employees who move to another parish or agency shall help make appropriate arrangements for the continued care of those whom they have been counseling.

# First Church

## Information on Counseling Groups

### Counseling

We are blessed in our community to have the First Church Biblical Counseling Center, which is staffed with licensed Christian professionals and numerous trained Christian lay people reaching out to our church family and community in their times of need. We are a no-fee facility and confidentiality is one of our major priorities.

### Counseling Intake Procedure

Call our office for an appointment at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Appointments often are scheduled two to three weeks in advance, but if a cancellation occurs, we may be able to get you in sooner.

After filling out our intake information, you will have an interview with an Intake Counselor. This usually takes about one hour. Through this process you help us determine how we can best help you, taking into account your needs and the availability of our different services.

### Services we provide on a limited basis and when appropriate

- Pastoral or Professional Counselor in-house
- Lay Counselor
- Stephen Minister
- Counseling Groups
- Christian Professional Counselor in the community
- Growth/Support Groups

We are not a crisis center, but rather a short-term counseling facility, which can provide care for about 8 to 10 weeks. If you are in crisis, call 911 or HelpOptions at 800-XXX-XXXX.

### Stephen Ministry

We presently have xx Stephen Ministers—men and women commissioned to serve our congregation and community with distinctly Christian care-giving. They are eager to meet confidentially with those who are experiencing a crisis, struggling with a life transition, battling a long-term illness, experiencing loneliness, or are in need of a Christian "friend."

To learn more about becoming a Stephen Minister, or if you would like to meet with a Stephen Minister, please contact the Counseling Ministry at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or email [office@firstchurch.org](mailto:office@firstchurch.org).

### Lay Counseling

The Lay Counseling Ministry provides Bible-based care and encouragement to the men and women of First Church and the community. The ministry is designed to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of hurting people. The Lay Counselors are prayerfully screened, and they attend a minimum of 30 weeks of training. Furthermore, throughout their time in this ministry, they are supervised by professionals and have regular educational opportunities in the area of people-helping.

### Staff Counseling

Counseling is available both from our Pastoral Counselor and Master's level counselors. These highly trained professionals are prepared to work with those who are faced with life's most difficult challenges. This service is reserved for First Church's regular attenders.

## Staff Counseling Groups

Counseling groups are led by our licensed professionals. Some are gender- and topic-specific, and some are mixed.

## Support Groups

### DivorceCare

DivorceCare is a 13-week video and support group series. The class is currently running. You can call XXXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX for more details.

### Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce

This series will communicate the pain inevitable in divorce, and will provide a forum for exploration before you divorce. Pre-registration is required. Contact XXXXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or office@firstchurch.org.

### Grief Share: Life After Loss

Loss through death comes to all of us. The word bereavement means to be deprived of something very important to one's life, which leaves one feeling desolated and sometimes violated. Feelings of sadness, regret, loneliness, fear, isolation, anger, and guilt are common the day a loved one dies—and for months to come. This is a part of mourning; it does not show a lack of faith in the love and power of God. Mourning is a functional necessity, not a weakness. Often there are questions and doubts about yourself, your future, God, and the church. This is a group where you can share your thoughts and feelings with others who understand. Keeping those feelings bottled up doesn't help the healing process. Isaiah said, "God will bind up the broken hearted." He used His people in the process. Come, be a part of the family and find comfort in your loss.

There is a group meeting currently in Jones Hall, Room 2 at 7P.M. XXXXX, facilitator. Information at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

### Lean Not On Your Own Understanding

If your relationships are confusing, painful, and causing you to question your relationship with God, consider visiting this group. For many, this is the healing community where acceptance, confidentiality, grace, and hope lead to change, recovery and growth.

We are a support group for all women in the community. Come share with other women in a safe place and learn about the roots of despair, hurt, anger, and hopelessness that overwhelm us in our relationships. Proverbs 3, our namesake, guides us to discovering the painful dependencies in our lives as a result of our leaning upon our own understanding, rather than trusting God and his plan for relationships.

- Tuesday group meets from 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. in Room 210.
- Wednesday group meets from 9 A.M. to 11 A.M. in Room 210.

Call XXXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX and XXXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX for more information.

Childcare is offered as it is available on Wednesday mornings from September through early May. To register call XXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Some of the topics covered: Boundaries; Need for Approval; Fear of Rejection; and more.

### Mending the Soul

Mending The Soul is a Bible-based program facilitated in a support-group setting. Women ages 18 and older who were abused as children or have left an abusive adult relationship will find Mending The Soul a safe place to continue their journey toward the wholeness that Jesus Christ offers each of us. This group is intended for women who, despite the hard work they have already put into their healing journey, find God's peace is still elusive and relationships are unfulfilling. Call XXX in the counseling center to see if the group is right for you at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Space is limited.

# John R. Doe

## Counseling Center

---

**The John R. Doe Counseling Center** is First Church's response to the mental health needs of its congregation and community. Enhanced by its role as a ministry of First Church, the center values all spiritual issues and respects all religious orientations.

### Services

Individual and couples counseling, including crisis intervention

Short-term support groups

Assessments and referrals

Educational seminar series on topics of general concern

Bimonthly premarital seminars and bimonthly premarital counseling

### Hours

Monday-Friday 9 A.M. to 8 P.M.

### Fees

Call the center at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to schedule an appointment. A member of the staff will discuss your concerns, explain our services, make recommendations, and determine your fee. Once this has occurred, you will be assigned to a therapist, and an initial appointment will be made. Clients are expected to take financial responsibility for services received. Fees are determined primarily by your resources. In many instances, services are included in your insurance coverage.

## First Church

### Conflicts of Interest Policy

Church employees should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

- 1) Church employees should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. In resolving the issues, primary attention must always be given to the protection of the person receiving ministry services.
- 2) Church employees should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The church employee must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.
- 3) When ministry services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the church employee must:
  - Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship;
  - Anticipate any conflict of interest;
  - Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict;
  - And obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.
- 4) Conflicts of interest may also arise when a church employee's independent judgment is impaired by:
  - Prior dealings;
  - Becoming personally involved;
  - Or becoming an advocate for one person against another. In these circumstances, the church employee shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services, and refer them to another person.
- 5) No church employee may take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

## **First Church**

### **Counseling Conduct with Youth**

1. All church employees working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between the young people and themselves.
2. Church employees should be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to manage youth activities.
3. Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should occur only when completely nonsexual and otherwise appropriate, and never in private.
4. If possible, one-on-one meetings with a young person should be held in a public area that is visible and accessible.
5. Church employees should refrain from the illegal possession and/or illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol at all times, and they should not use alcohol when working with youth.
6. Church employees should never give young people alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, videos, or reading material that is inappropriate.
7. Apart from emergencies, providing overnight accommodations for minors in rectories, personal residences, or hotel rooms is not to be done without other adults present.
8. In rare emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well-being of the youth, church employees should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all risk of harm. Use a team approach to manage such situations.

## **First Church**

### **Counseling Myths**

There are many common myths that hinder individuals from getting the help they desire. Listed below are several myths that you may have heard:

#### **It's too expensive.**

Yes, counseling has a cost. It is an investment of your money, time, and energy. Unfortunately, problems have a cost as well. Problems can "cost" us our relationships, or have "costly" impacts on our emotional, physical, or spiritual health. Counseling can help you deal with the roadblocks in your life, and help you reach your goals—what a wise investment and good use of your monies!

#### **I don't have the time.**

Yes, counseling takes time out of your day. Our problems also take "time" out of our day by causing us worry, sadness, or regret regarding past decisions. Each day has the same amount of time in it, and investing 50 minutes weekly, or every other week, to learn how to effectively manage problems in your life is a worthwhile use of your time.

#### **I'll be in counseling forever.**

Our goal is for you to reach your goals in counseling in the shortest amount of time that is effective. Many individuals and families reach their goals in just a few sessions, while others may be in counseling for several months. Your counselor will tailor their work to best fit your needs, while focusing on helping you successfully reach your goal in the shortest period of time.

#### **Counseling is just for the mentally ill.**

This is one of the most damaging myths about counseling, and in reality, the exact opposite is true. We all can benefit from counseling. In fact, counseling is most beneficial for all people facing everyday life. Responsible people deal effectively with normal stress by seeking help, and their efforts to seek help indicate their emotional health, not illness.

#### **I can talk to my family and friends just as well.**

This may be true, as our family and friends are a wonderful support. There are several key differences, though. A friendship is a two-way street, where two people give and take. In counseling, the focus is on you, and the problem you are facing. Your counselor will use their education; the tools of the mental health professions, such as different types of therapy and assessment tools; their own wisdom of life experience; and the truths of the Bible to help you grow and change. Your counselor is an unbiased third party, and will provide feedback to you that your family or friends may not be comfortable to provide. Your counselor also is bound by strict confidentiality laws that protect your privacy. This assurance of privacy helps create a trust between you and your counselor.

## **Additional Resources**

*Resources on local church counseling policies and practices.*

### **Organizations and Electronic Resources**

The **American Association of Pastoral Counselors** at [www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org) offers resources for clergy and lay counselors and counseling programs, both formal and informal.

**Christian Association for Psychological Studies** at [www.caps.net](http://www.caps.net) is the nation's largest nonprofit association of Christians in the counseling and behavioral sciences. The association offers educational programs for clergy and lay counselors and psychological professionals.

The **National Association of Children of Alcoholics** at [www.nacoa.net](http://www.nacoa.net) has a broad Faith Initiative program, which includes the Clergy Education and Training Project® (CETP). This effort includes Core Competencies, curriculum development, development of free materials for distribution through congregations for educational efforts, and partnerships with federal agencies. A special program for clergy: The Certificate in Spiritual Caregiving to Help Addicted Persons and Families.

The **Samaritan Institute** at [www.samaritaninstitute.org](http://www.samaritaninstitute.org) is a faith-based organization that provides affiliated centers with administrative and financial consultation, accreditation, management resources, educational events, leadership development, new program development, national representation, and research. It also offers consultation to groups interested in starting new centers.

**Church Law and Tax Report** at [www.churchlawtoday.com](http://www.churchlawtoday.com) offers online materials dealing with risks inherent in church counseling programs and the involvement of clergy in them.

### **Books and Printed Resources**

*A Primer in Pastoral Care* (Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series) by Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner (Fortress Press, 2005; ISBN 978-0800637606)

*Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, by Gary R. Collins. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988; ISBN 978-0849931246)

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR Fourth Edition*. (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; ISBN 978-0890420256)

*Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors*, by Dr. Larry Crabb (Zondervan, 1977; ISBN 978-0310225706)

*Giving Counsel: A Minister's Guidebook*, by Donald Capps. Chalice Press, 2001; ISBN 978-0827212473)

*Pastoral Care Emergencies* (Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series), by David K. Switzer. (Augbsburg Fortress Publishers, 2000; ISBN 978-0800632281).

*Pastoral Counseling: The Basics*, by James E. Dittes. (Westminster John Knox Press, 1999; ISBN 978-0664257385)