

**Counseling Procedures**

**I. Philosophy**

As Christians, each of us are on a journey as we are being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ. There are times in our journey where we feel overwhelmed; it is during these times that many of us face emotional obstacles. Ebenezer Church Counseling Ministry seeks to assist the “stuck” and help them experience a healing encounter with Christ. The client, the counselor, and the Holy Spirit form a counseling team that will work together under the guidance of Scripture to bring healing to the client. The Spirit is the key component of this counseling team as it guides each of us in all truth (John 16:13), provides comfort (Acts 9:31), and renews each of us (Titus 3:5). In most cases, Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling (SFPC) will be the method of counseling used. The goal of our counseling effort will be to get the client “unstuck” and help them become the person whom God has created them to be.

**II. Policy**

Effective counseling has been attributed to three different qualities of the client. The first is the strengths that the client brings to the counseling team. The client and counselor will identify these strengths and use them to build a strategy for change. The second is the amount of effort the client is willing to invest into counseling, both during and between sessions. And lastly, the client’s hope and expectation for improvement. The effort and the expectation for change can be illustrated as Jesus asks a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years, “Do you want to get well?” (John 5:5-6). The client must desire a change in their situation, and be willing to provide effort if counseling is expected to be successful.

**III. Procedures**

1. Upon first contact (phone/office visit), the counselor will prayerfully assess if SFPC is the appropriate course. If a referral is necessary, the counselor will consult with the pastor to facilitate a referral. If this occurs, the counselor will still be available to help guide the client in spiritual disciplines to assist the healing process. If immediate/emergency referral required, the counselor will facilitate a handoff to an appropriate mental health facility. If non-emergency referral, the counselor will continue to meet with clients until they have begun treatment with the referred mental health care provider.
2. In general, the duration of counseling will be eight sessions, each lasting approximately 50 minutes. In limited circumstances where the counselor determines that more than eight counseling sessions are required, the counselor will seek approval from the Senior Pastor, who will make the determination whether counseling should be continued, the client referred to a different mental health provider, or be terminated.
3. The client’s case will be discussed with the Senior and/or Associate Pastor to provide oversight of treatment of the client. The Pastors’ Administrative Assistant may be involved in the scheduling of counseling visits. In both of these instances, only the pertinent information will be shared that is required to accomplish the respective tasks. Neither the counselor, pastor, nor administrative assistant will discuss or provide any information to anyone except as directed in writing by the client.
4. The counselor will assign “homework” to the client to be completed between sessions. It has been found that the most growth in counseling occurs when the client is actively invested in growth not only during sessions, but outside of sessions. Homework provides this opportunity.
5. Counseling is a service offered at no cost by Ebenezer Church. At times, the counselor will determine if study materials would be beneficial to the counseling process. If this determination is made, specific books will be made available to the client. These books may be provided to the client at no cost.
6. Counseling is available to all who seek healing, not just members/attendees of Ebenezer Church. While professing faith in Christ is not a prerequisite for counseling, Ebenezer provides counseling from a Christian spiritual perspective.
7. The counselor will keep two sets of records. One set is the client’s clinical record. This record includes intake paperwork, how their life is impacted by the problem, goals in counseling, and progress towards goals. The client will have access to their clinical record. The second set of records are the psychotherapy notes. These are notes used to assist the counselor in providing the best treatment for the client. These notes include contents of conversations, analysis of conversations, and impact on the counseling process. These notes are not available to the client and are separate from their clinical record.
8. Confidentiality will be broken without consent in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law, including circumstances where the client is considered a harm to themselves or others
9. Clients under the age of 18 must receive permission from their parent/guardian before they can receive treatment. Because privacy is a critical aspect of care, for children age 14 or older, the counselor will only provide general information to the parent/guardian regarding treatment. Once counseling is completed, the parent/guardian will be provided with a summary of what was accomplished in counseling. They will also be provided with a plan moving forward to help support their child in continual spiritual growth.

**Consent to Receive Counseling**

By signing below, I agree that I have received a copy of this policy statement and I am consenting to receive counseling from the Ebenezer Church Counseling Ministry. I am also consenting to the conditions in this policy document.

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| Counselor Signature | Date |
|  |  |
| Client Signature | Date |
|  |  |
| Parent / Guardian If Client is Under 18 | Date |

*John 16:13 - When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (NRSV)*

*Acts 9:31 - Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. (NRSV)*

*Titus 3:5 - He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (NRSV)*