



Faith for Living, Inc.

Christo et Ecclesiae

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

The purpose of pastoral or biblical counseling is to help you meet the challenges of life in a manner that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In an effort to make informed decisions about your counseling experience, the following information is provided. Below you will find pertinent information regarding your counselor's perspective and aim as well as your rights and responsibilities as you counsel with him. If you have any questions or concerns as it relates to the following, please feel free to ask.

Counsel Distinctives

Counsel is pastoral.

The aim of pastoral counseling is to glorify God by helping others to find abundant life in Jesus Christ. The content of discussions will revolve around your presenting issues and how those relate to life in Christ. Pastoral Counseling is not psychoanalysis. Nor is it psychiatry or psychological therapy. Your Pastoral Counselor is trained and experienced in many schools of thought and practice related to counseling. However, as a clergyman, a "doctor of the soul," he seeks to identify and treat spiritual maladies through spiritual means.

Sometimes your Pastoral Counselor will discern the need for medical or financial consultation. In such cases, he will refer you to a licensed physician or other professional who may or may not be Christian. Pastoral Counseling does follow psychoanalytic approaches for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. However, each of these areas of discernment are based upon diagnostic questions and pastoral wisdom and insight. The concern is for the healing of pathologies of the human soul and helping people find or return to a life in Christ. The Holy Bible is the revealed wisdom from God. Your Pastoral Counselor will draw from the Bible and, with you, apply that wisdom through listening, speaking, praying, and worshipping. Therefore, you will not receive "diagnoses" according to any category found in any psychiatric or psychology resource (e.g., *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV* or the *Physician's Desk Reference*).

Counsel is biblical.

Pastoral counsel is counsel consistent with the historic, revealed biblical faith passed down through the ages of God's people. In other words, "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Counsel you will receive is consistent with the excellent doctrinal summary found in the Westminster Standards (part of the accepted constitution of this church). It is the conviction of your pastor-counselor that the Scripture is sufficient for living (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that through its study and application we have all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

Counsel is often spiritually painful.

The seasons of life are rarely lived without some struggle and pain. Sometimes a crisis is a result of ourselves. Sometimes it is a result of an unhealthy relationship. There are even times when, because we live in a fallen world, that we cannot identify the source of the pain or problem. But in each of these cases, the Pastoral Counselor offers hope through life in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.

You have chosen to come to a Pastoral Counselor to help you respond to these challenges. In the event corrections need to happen (i.e., repentance for sin, adoption of new motives or behaviors) you might find this difficult or painful. This is consistent with what Paul revealed to us in the Bible when he prayed that he may “know Him [Christ] and the power of His resurrection and *may share in His sufferings* becoming like Him in His death” and “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh I am filling up what is *lacking in Christ’s afflictions*” (emphasis added; Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24, respectively). If necessary, your pastor-counselor will ask you to live according to God’s Word and you may find that difficult and daunting. The reality of any helping relationship is the truth delivered in love must be a centerpiece of that relationship. You expect nothing less from your pastor-counselor. We have hope in Jesus Christ through it all: Philippians 1:6.

Counselor Distinctives.

Your Pastoral Counselor is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America (www.pcanet.org). Dr. Michael A. Milton also holds concurrent credentials in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. He is a retired Chaplain (Colonel) in the U.S. Army and This is an official and professional clergy vocation. The Presbyterian Church in America is rightly recognized worldwide for its commitment to the historic Christian faith.

In his capacity as an ordained minister, your pastoral counselor is responsible to his ecclesiastical peers as well as the regional governing body, the Presbytery and General Assembly, for his conduct. He is also bound by ethical standards in both Christian and secular counseling agencies.

Your pastor-counselor may or may not be a member of other professional organizations.

Your Pastoral Counselor has chosen to not be licensed by the State. Dr. Milton’s credentials surpass the minimum standards for pastoral counseling in the State of North Carolina. However, he has chosen to minister under the authority of the Church and as a pastor; not a therapist. This means his source of wisdom and his authority is Biblical, pastoral, theological, confessional, ethical, and not, merely, “professional” as professional may be defined by secular theories of counseling (e.g., Psychoanalysis Theory [Freud], Non-Directive Therapy [Rogers], Cognitive Theory [Beck], Behavioral Theory [Skinner]). Dr. Milton was trained in Biblical counseling (as a form of one-on-one “intensive discipleship”) as well as in Rogerian non-directive therapy. Dr. Milton often seeks to discover the Providential narrative in your life—which will most often reveal the creative work of God, the fallen human condition, and the redemption in Jesus Christ—and locate an appropriate parallel Biblical narrative. In this sense, Dr. Milton seeks to walk with you into a new chapter in the story that God is writing in your life, a pathway that is evidenced-based in Scripture.

Your Pastoral Counselor does not require fees. You are provided suggested donations to the non-profit ministry, Faith for Living, Inc.

Your Pastoral Counselor does not take any form of insurance. If you need financial assistance to support a gift to the ministry, we will provide you with help.

By your signature, you indicate that you have read and understood this statement and any questions about this statement were answered to your satisfaction. By your counselor’s signature, he verifies the accuracy of this statement and acknowledges his commitment to conform to its specifications.

Parishioner’s Name: _____

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