

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This thesis project is to educate the church staff, church members, and local surrounding community on the pastoral counseling practices of Good Shepherd United Methodist Church (GSUMC) and a licensed professional counseling center located on the church premises. The purpose is to ensure that those who attend the church, whether on a weekly basis or less frequently, are aware of the counseling services that are offered. Chapter one introduces the church's ministry context, the thesis statement, purpose statement, and any limitations to the research. A literature review in chapter two discusses the challenges and difficulties for individuals seeking counseling as well as the challenges of the counselors who seek to deliver that counseling. Action Research is the methodology used in this research project due to its ease of use when applied to the social aspect that must be considered. Chapter three outlines the plan of action that was continually modified in response to the ongoing challenges of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Chapter four contains graphs and charts that explores an in-depth analysis of the responses to an online questionnaire completed by fifty-two members of the congregation. The conclusion further examines the results, educates the congregation on the findings, and points the way forward for the suggested scenario of "what is best next." Educating everyone on the counseling services offered is crucial to ensure that both organization's counseling services are utilized to their fullest potential. This will ensure quality consultation to those who suffer from excessive stress or other issues that may occur.

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Illustrations

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
GSUMC	<i>Good Shepherd United Methodist Church</i>
LPC	<i>Licensed Professional Counselor/Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors/Licensed Mental Health Counselors</i>
AAPC	<i>American Association of Pastoral Counselors</i>
NCR	<i>National Capital Region</i>
SFT	<i>Solutions-Focused Therapy</i>
HFMC	<i>Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling</i>
CPC	<i>Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

When asked “What is pastoral care,” a research study that was conducted provided these answers from members of clergy from different denominations. “According to the respondents, pastoral care is understood primarily as a congregational practice where the main purpose is to lead people to God. Pastoral care can take place through conversation, a worship service, prayer or even choral singing. Being alone in a church building can also function as pastoral care for the soul. The practice of pastoral care can generally be divided into two parts: dealing with preexisting problems and preventing such problems.”¹ Tõ Lehtsaar and Maire Ivanova discuss in their study that the overarching point is that a comfort factor, free of condemnation was the major concern for those seeking pastoral care. This was especially true for those congregation members who were returning after an absence from the church. For the members, feeling comfortable in a familiar setting without the fear of a confidentiality breach or fear of condemnation was of most importance.

Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral Counseling is the chosen method to help with preexisting problems and can help in preventing such problems. Pastoral counseling will be defined and explored in its entirety later. According to Felicity Brock Kelcourse, “The primary role of pastoral counseling specialists in the life of the church is to support congregations and their leaders in their ministries of health and

¹ Tõ Lehtsaar and Maire Ivanova, "Opportunities for Church Related Pastoral Counseling in Estonian Evangelical Churches," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 15, no. 2 (2011): 282, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fopportunities-church-related-pastoral-counseling%2Fdocview%2F1114442354%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

healing.”² Kelcourse continues to explain that health includes physical well-being as well as integrity and right relationships. “Healing is the redemptive work of God through grace and by people of faith as co-creators of “shalom” (peace founded on justice and relational harmony).”³

Pastoral Counseling is a substantial part of the pastoral care program for churches, para churches, and other faith-based organizations that offer healing and restoration to hurting individuals. Gaining prominence are many independent agencies that also offer counseling incorporating religion as a part of the counseling process if the client so desires. The medical community relies heavily on science to explain away peculiarities, illnesses, or any out of the ordinary occurrences in human health. Pastoral counselors and other counselors are similar; however, there are differences. A major difference is that the church leaders and Christian counselors who provide counseling services rely heavily on the Word of God and the grace of God. Pastoral counselors rely on God’s love, the Holy Spirit, and the sacrifice of a risen Savior in Jesus Christ to deliver the necessary healing. A central goal is the reviving of hope for continued success as well as a restoring of joy and happiness to a suffering soul. Both professionals seek to diagnose, treat, and assist to restore the individual to the healed self before the catastrophic event entered their life. Restoration is the short-term goal, but the long-term goal includes a rejuvenation to the old self and a gaining of a new perspective of self-awareness. In several circumstances, a solo performance is sufficient; however, in many situations an all-out concerted effort requiring the assistance of many professionals may be warranted. It is paramount to have a knowledgeable and objective licensed professional counselor and or church counselor in order to

² Felicity Brock Kelcourse, “Pastoral Counseling in the Life of the Church,” *Encounter*. 2002;63(1):139, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fpastoral-counseling-life-church%2Fdocview%2F216768468%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

³ Ibid.

provide the best care possible for the hurting individual. Holistic care of body, mind, spirit, and emotional well-being of that individual is the main objective. Battles of credibility, professional stature, or any related issues become subservient to the paramount goals of restoration, healing, and relief from suffering for one made by God in His own image (Gen 2:27).⁴ Healing is the intent of both, but the individual's personal preference, the desired approach, methodology, and the associated problem will determine which specialist is best to deliver care at that time. Issues define the approach or counseling identity to utilize, but it does not ultimately define the individual receiving that care. "Following the wisdom of Genesis and its proclamation of the goodness of life, mind, body, and spirit, Jesus saw whole person healing as central to His ministry and as a sign of God's coming realm of shalom. Jesus affirmed the intricate interdependence of spirituality, embodiment, and social justice in His ministry of radical hospitality."⁵ A detailed study will help guide the decision process for future decisions for pastoral care for Good Shepherd congregants through a well-defined, informed understanding of the duties of each entity. The roles of each will be defined in detail later in the study.

This study identifies how an intervention from the commodity of a pastoral counselor's caring attitude offered in love can help restore balance to an individual's imbalanced existence. The result can be a rebirth of renewed hope and reassurance of God's love to relieve the pain, suffering, and stressors of life's challenges. The purpose of this study is to enlighten the church and congregation members of alliances to support them during this process. An alliance that can serve as a valuable resource to aid them in their journey to restore balance, creating a possibility

⁴ All Scripture was taken from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated. A list of all Scripture used is in the appendix. *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1984, 1996).

⁵ Bruce Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-First Century Clergy Self-Care* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 61.

for them to thrive and not just survive. As in any situation, the context, environment, community, and the individual(s) entrenched in that situation determine the parameters of the care received. The individual that is shaped and influenced by their surroundings and conditions becomes the subject matter expert in their own context.

Ministry Context

The ministry context is a small multi-cultural church in a suburb twenty miles from Washington, D. C. A young pastor had dared to venture into segregated neighborhoods to spread the word of healing through a risen Savior that is the source of all healing. Pastor Pratt went door to door, risking personal safety, injury, or even death to invite people of all races to a new church he proposed in the area. The location was not known, and all other details were sketchy at best, but God laid that vision on his heart, and he responded to the calling.

African Americans from the area recalled their parents responding by saying, “If the white pastor has enough nerve to risk personal injury to come here and invite us to his new church, then we have enough nerve to go.” The story is that many who were invited responded to his invitation. It seems that the young pastor may have been ahead of his time with a vision that would issue in new times. Mark Deymaz and Harry Li names the idea of the Good Shepherd attempt of a multi-cultural congregation as a “church mosaic.” They remark that a church like mosaic of different ethnicities worshiping together is a testimony to the grace of God. Li comments that “Like Mark Deymaz, I believe that the unity of diverse believers walking, working, and worshiping God together as one is at the very heart of God’s desire for the local church. Believers should and must come together as one in the local church despite personal preferences, challenges, and obstacles.”⁶ David Anderson expounded on the church mosaic idea

⁶ Mark Deymaz and Harry Li, *Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 31.

with more churches should reach out to the different cultures. He asks the poignant question, “Could it be that we cannot understand what the kingdom of God on earth is supposed to look like because we do not have a clear view of what the kingdom of God in heaven looks like.” On a visit to the All-Souls Church in London, Anderson encountered in his own words, “An array of nationalities that amazed me. They came from every nation and ethnic background. Should this not also be the picture of your church and mine here on earth?”⁷ Obviously, the young pastor of Good Shepherd had a vision of a similar portrait almost 40 years earlier than Anderson’s church visit to London.

Good Shepherd was started in 1966 but was not able to break-ground on their own church facility until 1968. In 1968 the Washington metro area was in turmoil following civil unrest in response to the assassination of the civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A few months after the devastation, the pastor and others would push forward to realize the dream of a new church.

Fifty- five years later, the congregation is a very diverse congregation. The demographics include senior citizens, young couples that are siblings and adult children of the original members, a predominately White American presence, Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans from the neighboring communities, and a substantial group of attending members from several African countries. Senior members of the church are comprised of the now adult children of the original members who responded to Pastor Pratt’s call to discipleship over fifty-five years earlier. Sunday worship services normally has 75-100 seniors for an early morning more traditional worship service and 50-75 members for a newly emerging more

⁷ David A. Anderson, *Multicultural Ministry: Finding Your Church’s Unique Rhythm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 21-22.

contemporary service. Due to its proximity to the nation's capital city, the congregation members range from local community members to executives in government, military, and CEOs from large corporations around the National Capital Region (NCR).

The small church parish offers many services to the community to include English as a Second Language classes. This researcher had the opportunity to serve in a variety of functions such as fitness instructor for the youth and the community, as musician with the praise and worship group, and as a Bible study teacher for new members and congregants who wish to study outside of traditional Sunday School classes. This relationship has been fostered over a nine-year period that initially started with a Christmas music performance at Good Shepherd followed by an internship while completing a Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling degree at Liberty University.

Counseling services are not normally performed by the pastors. A Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia (CPC) is housed in the church but functions autonomously from the church itself. The CPC website explains, "CPC counselors are fully certified or licensed mental health professionals, who respect the spirituality of our clients and never preach or proselytize. Although many of our centers are housed in churches, we are an interfaith organization, not affiliated with any one denomination or church. We also have offices outside of church settings for those who prefer not to be seen in a church related setting."⁸ Church members may use the services of the Center for Pastoral Counseling (CPC), or other professionally based centers around the area and not always pastoral counselors or counseling services conducted by the pastors.

⁸ "Who We Are," Center for Pastoral Counseling, accessed November 18, 2020, <https://pastoralcounseling.com/>

The National Capital Region (NCR) is a high cost of living area, which means that any service can add substantial financial strain on the average family, especially for uncontrollable or unforeseeable circumstances. Unfortunately, many families cannot afford the strain on their budget; therefore, they essentially suffer in silence until an issue is unbearable. The dilemma is why members do not choose to take advantage of an already existing familiarity and comfort level with the church counselors. Especially in consideration that the church staff and lay leaders continue to pursue personal excellence through further education to assist with the counseling of life's everyday problems and other difficulties that may plague families, especially in larger American cities.

Pastoral counseling as an integral part of pastoral care for any congregation is paramount for the life and vitality of that congregation, as well as the surrounding community. The church is a valued source and should be a presence with a large "footprint" entrenched in the local community. Ron Hawkins and Tim Clinton stress the importance of offering pastoral counseling as an integral part of that care. Their image of the hurting Christian is vividly pictured through their words, "The Christian counselor hears the cry of the soul, the past hurts, present struggles, and future hopes."⁹ When individuals or families come to the counselor broken, relief is one of the goals. The desired effect is the counselor serving as a co-creator to partner with God to direct or lead the hurting individual into a growing relationship with God. Hawkins and Clinton describe this work as holy work because it is soul work. To restore the individual, the counselor must avail of all available resources to include: "the eternal truths of God's Word, the power of the Spirit, and a growing understanding of human behavior."¹⁰

⁹ Dr. Ron Hawkins and Dr. Tim Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor: A Fresh Biblical & Transformational Approach* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2015), 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

To the Good Shepherd ministry context and other Christian organizations that engage in soul care, the following guiding definition offered through Hawkins and Clinton must be foremost. “Christian counseling in its purest form, is a covenant between a caregiver and a care seeker to labor collaboratively for the possession of the soul – through the power of the Holy Spirit, under the authority of the Word of God, and within a context of accountability and encouragement – for the purpose of the imitation of the Christ.”¹¹ Love, compassion, and acceptance as demonstrated through Christ form the foundation of the impending interaction. In the New International Version of the Bible, a section of Scripture entitled *Jesus Reinstates Peter*, Christ asked Peter three times a question, “Do you love me?” Jesus in turn answered that question in a profound way indicative of the caring relationship to be exercised by all Christians, but most assuredly pastoral counselors. Jesus said, “If you love me feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, and feed my sheep” (John 21: 15-17). In this way, action research attempts answering Jesus’ questions through addressing life problems and issues that impale individuals of this and any other congregation. With a thorough understanding of the context, the research can move forward to address the associated problem.

Problem Presented

The problem is that the congregation of the Good Shepherd Church may not understand the role of a pastoral counselor or counseling services offered through a pastor or minister; therefore, they do not readily utilize their services. Congregants may suffer in silence on general issues, resulting in minute issues compounding into substantial threats. Relief is not sought until the issue becomes unmanageable. In its infant stage, the problem is not sufficient or is not in the realm of issues to warrant professionally licensed counselor care through the CPC or another

¹¹ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 13.

professionally licensed counseling agency. In view of the availability of counseling at the CPC for more serious issues, congregants may wait for later treatment at that center or forego treatment entirely.

A significant drawback of this church may be that the senior pastor and the associate or youth pastor are assigned to the parish for one year at a time. Denominational conferences held normally each March decide the pastoral moves slated for that year which will be completed in July. This greatly diminishes continuity in leadership and almost totally negates rapport building through familiarity with the leadership. Outgoing and incoming pastors may talk via phone or video chat, but a formal working exchange of protocol, procedures, and programs may not be possible, as there is no overlap in service to broach such subjects. Congregation members may meet the pastors for the first time at the first worship service offered in August each year. The familiarity of the weekly face- to face interaction of the pastors and the congregation is negated or minimized, creating an apprehension for congregants to share intimate family details with them. This is possibly only one factor creating apprehension, but it does indeed warrant further exploration.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this action research project is to inform the congregation of the role of the pastoral counselor to promote pastoral care through pastoral counselors and the pastors. Only a few counseling sessions are permitted to be performed by church counselors in many circumstances; therefore, an informed understanding of the counselor's role will benefit both counselor and counselee. If the pastor is overwhelmed with other duties, those sessions may never happen. Pastoral counselors that are qualified and serve as a part of the volunteer pool at

the church can fulfill that role for the pastor to provide a valuable service to the suffering parishioner if that need arises.

In view of the session briefness of most counseling programs offered by pastors or ministers, an individual trained in attentively listening to diagnose, address, and assist in restoring the individual as quickly as possible is a must. “God designed the church as a means for people to show love to Him and to others. His vision for people focuses on how that individual can change the lives of others. God gives His vision to those who earnestly seek out His vision for their lives.”¹² The Christian counselor shares and participates in that vision for God’s created people. A comforting part to the vision is that Christians inherit the benefits of the vision and need feel no shame in needing help from others. God is the one who enables change, but all Christ followers are called to be “salt and light” in the world assisting others with the change God has initiated and wants them to feel the love He has for them.¹³ Words of encouragement are offered by Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann. “Ask God for focus in hearing His voice speaking directly to you about enhancing your relationships, strengthening your boundaries, improving your ability to manage stress, and managing and leading those under your care. As you do so, God’s healing light will shine on you, exposing all that needs attention in the deep places of your heart.”¹⁴ As there are limitations in the care that can be provided, limitations also exist in the research study of the proposed problem on which to tackle.

¹² George Barna, *The Power of Vision: Discover and Apply God's Plan for Your Life and Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992, 2003, 2009), 97.

¹³ Paul Pettit, editor, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2006), 23.

¹⁴ Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherdcare Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Books, 2007), 13.

Basic Assumptions

The basic assumption in this study is that there are many life challenges facing individuals, couples, and families within the Good Shepherd Congregation. Pastoral counselor and pastors are best suited to address and are professionally equipped to provide care and comfort for those who are broken, suffering, hurting or all three. In like fashion to the medical profession, car repair, or other fields that require specialized training, there are situations that are general in nature and a general practitioner will be able to diagnose and treat the problem. Also, one must be cognizant of the fact that some difficulties exceed the skill level of ability and the scope of training for some professionals and must be referred to one who specializes in that field of expertise. Of course, unless the problem is dramatic, persistent, and readily recognizable, a process of inspection, examination, diagnosis, or treatment is sometime undertaken before a referral to the specialist.

In this study, the pastoral counselor and the pastors are the general practitioners with specialized skills of varying degrees of proficiency and the licensed clinical counselor is the specialist who is trained in a particular area of expertise – namely mental health issues. The fact to remember is that both hold general knowledge in other areas, but their “tool set” or “skill set” applies to different situations. For example, your pastor may have substantial knowledge of clinical methodology, but may predominately approach the situation from the element of the supernatural or God. The licensed clinical counselor will be steeped in knowledge of differing methodology, but it is also highly likely that the licensed clinical counselor will be well informed from a religious viewpoint or perhaps even subscribe to a Christian worldview.

Often time the client determines the reasoning for who will best fit their need to conduct their counseling sessions. The intent of that individual will be of utmost importance. Couples

interested in counseling will sometime consult a friend, a pastor, or a professional counselor.¹⁵

The focus, intent, and information desired greatly influences the decision of which to utilize. A friend offers listening, comfort, support, and possible reassurance or rejection of their idea. The pastor can offer the same, but should offer sound reasoning from a scriptural basis, bridging the gaps of time, cultural differences, nationality differences, language differences, and other differences with pertinent information in today's context. A couple visiting a licensed professional expects to battle, combat, and reach a solution to a specific situation that is plaguing them.¹⁶ Regardless of the intent of the individual, the Christian counselor's approach is the same. Methodology may differ for the sessions; however, the intent of the counselors remains consistent throughout. That intent is to introduce, reintroduce or reacquaint the individual with the work of the Holy Spirit being performed in them to restore them, but ultimately to create them anew leading to a more Christlike life.

Definitions

There are terms unique to pastoral counseling that need explanations as to their use for the context of this research. This list is not exhaustive but focuses on a few terms necessary to understand.

- Hope-focused is the attempt to renew hope to replace the feelings of hopelessness.

Worthington states, "Hope-focused marriage counseling is my own blend of theories. The primary basis of the approach is my understanding of Christian marriage from Scripture."¹⁷

¹⁵ Everett L. Worthington Jr., *Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling: A Guide to Brief Therapy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 20.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., xxvii.

- “Christian Counseling (pastoral counseling) is an explicit or implicit agreement for the provision of help for a client, in which the counselor has at heart the client’s psychological welfare, but also the client’s Christian spiritual welfare and tries to promote those goals through counseling methods. The client can trust the counselor to do no harm and to try to help psychologically and spiritually.”¹⁸
- Individual Paradigms are “self-imposed rules and regulations that establish our personal ways of dealing with life.”¹⁹
- Solution Focused concentrates on finding a solution for the problem rather than totally focusing on the problem itself, becoming cocreators with the individual assisting them to envision a picture of themselves without the problem. “Solution-focused therapists emphasize collaborating with people rather than directing or coercing them. Therapists help clients discover their own solutions rather than trying to impose solutions.”²⁰
- Licensed Professional Counselors – Board certified counselors with specific licensing to carry out specific counseling duties.
- National Capital Region – The area surrounding the Washington, D. C. area to include the bordering parts of northern Virginia and Maryland.

¹⁸ Dr. Tim Clinton and Dr. Ron Hawkins, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling: An Indispensable Tool for Helping People with Their Problems* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2011), 11.

¹⁹ Charles Allen Kollar, *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling: An Effective Short-Term Approach for Getting People Back on Track*, updated and expanded (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011, 1997), 13.

²⁰ Ron Hawkins, PhD. and Tim Clinton, PhD., *The New Christian Counselor: A Fresh Biblical & Transformational Approach* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2015), 491.

- Action Research – “Action research seeks to develop and maintain social and personal interactions that are nonexploitative and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate.”²¹

Limitations

The context of this small ministry setting is easily recognizable as to which individual the information may involve; therefore, many safeguards must be followed to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Names will be omitted unless a false name is applied for the sake of relaying or reiteration of story and understanding. The nature of the context is such that names, race, nationality, and even age in years pose a threat of identifying an individual. Confidentiality will be maintained in all phases of the study unless general in nature, it substantiates a point, or rebuts issues that the individual wishes to disclose by written consent to do so.

For the same reasoning, a large pool of participants may be impossible to produce from a small number of eligible congregants from this parish location. As identified in other church organizations, the young to middle age groups are dwindling in number. This substantially limits the possibility of that valued participation to the questionnaire response. Furthermore, lack of participation from those age demographics poses critical limitation to the findings in view that it would include a substantial number of individuals possibly needing counseling for life’s issues. At least as opposed to more mature couples, individuals, or families that may be more established, entrenched and matured in Christianity, family, finances, and occupation.

One limitation imposed on this study is the sole use of the Good Shepherd population for the questionnaire completion. The denomination is densely populated with parish locations in

²¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, edition 4 (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014), 23.

the immediate conference area; therefore, their inclusion could be possible for this study. Most assuredly, since those parishes utilize the same system, similar problems may exist within their own church; however, because of constraints, their inclusion will not be possible at this time.

The COVID 19 Pandemic has created adverse and unique situations within the church community as a whole; thus, the normal has been relegated to a back position. Reaction and action from the church community has resulted in a weekly and sometime daily adaptation to combat the unusual situation thrust upon everyone. Flexibility has become the new norm, with adaptation serving as the new “buzz word” for everyone to embrace whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Although addressing another counseling dilemma, Worthington provided the best adaption for this situation, “Hope involves a motivation to endure when we cannot change circumstances. Hope involves a vision of a way through suffering; willpower and way power to endure, with the help of the triune God. Faith depends on a history of fulfilled promises.”²²

Delimitation

Participants for the study will include the senior pastor, youth pastor, and lay leaders from this parish location. At the time of the completion of the questionnaire study, that leadership may have relocated to duties at another parish. This becomes a limitation of the study; however, it does not have to be a self-imposed deletion eliminating valuable feedback from sources present during the observance phase of the proposed problem for this church. All other eligible and consenting congregants from the general church population will be approached and encouraged to participate in this study intentionally designed for them.

This research will examine the basic particularities, definitions, differences, weaknesses, and strengths of pastoral counseling and licensed professional counseling; however, it will be

²² Worthington, *Hope- Focused*, 31.

brief and not exhaustive. The intent is to understand why the congregation members are not utilizing the services of an available resource, by way of the pastors and pastoral counselors. This study cannot and is not intended to enter the ongoing debate of credentials, professional requirements, qualifications to treat individuals, or the debate of licensed professional counselors versus trained pastoral counselors. That also includes pastors who inherit counseling duties as part of their soul care program but receive little to no training in that capacity. Pastoral counselor in this study will refer to the counselor with university training and those who receive specialized training of some nature to qualify them to perform such duties. Following the guidelines of the study, basic assumptions, gained knowledge, and held presuppositions, this study's vision is to yield a particular outcome beneficial to the congregation's well-being.

Thesis Statement

If the congregation understands the role of the pastoral counselor and counseling services offered through pastors or ministers, they may embrace them and utilize the services provided. Substantial literature will be discussed and reviewed to attain additional knowledge, and to examine precedence to find suitable cause for the identified problem. Hopes of a solution will be reached; however, if additional research is needed, a firm foundation will already be laid for future dialogue and future interaction with the information gained at Good Shepherd. The quest is to not only provide a solution for the problem, but to grow leadership that can assist in combatting growing issues for individuals and families. Our present time amplifies challenges that will require concerted efforts on all fronts from all participants, as well as leaders. Present circumstances magnify the need from a "should be" to a "must be" situation. Following is a detailed explanation of the person(s) needed to accomplish the task at hand.

Leadership Qualities

Some may see the senior pastor as the leadership position in need of the most giftedness for offering pastoral care. Whereas this may be true, it is not the only position that warrants and deserves a level of professionalism. Author Reggie McNeal explains a desperate need for leaders throughout our society in all sectors, especially great spiritual leaders.²³ This in no means infers that there are few great leaders already. Societal growth, population increase, and an invasion of issues not prevalent in past decades warrant a substantial amount more to combat issues.

Humility, willingness to serve, and most importantly, effectiveness are qualities evident in great leaders. The seven disciplines to be practiced by spiritual leaders (pastors, church staff, counselors, or others) are:

1. The Discipline of Self-Awareness. “The discipline of self-awareness is the leader’s intentional quest for self-understanding. Self-awareness touches all the other disciplines because it is foundational to every element of greatness.”²⁴ In essence, it is the most important discipline of any leader. Self-awareness in a counselor is most crucial. To engage the hurting individuals of any parish, the counselor must be cognizant of past hurts and unresolved self-issues so as not to superimpose those issues onto an already suffering, broken, or hurting individual.

²³ Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders* (San Francisco, CA; 2006), 5.

²⁴ Ibid., 11.

2. The Discipline of Self- Management is exactly as listed. Managing self requires exercising certain emotions (concern and empathy) and reserving the display of others – anger, hostility, bitterness, etc.
3. The Discipline of Self-Development - in agreement with other sources, greatness or any measure of effectiveness comes through a commitment to life-long learning.
4. The Discipline of Mission – “The life mission of great leaders determines the contents of their days, of their work, of their energies and talents.”²⁵
5. The Discipline of Decision Making involves asking the right question(s) also.
6. The Discipline of Belonging – Spiritual leadership is done in community with others.
7. The Discipline of Aloneness – Aloneness is the time spent in solitude to build a personal relationship with God and to focus on the tasks He has prepared for your calling. Jesus spent much alone time with the Father as his preparation process and expression of love.

The context and other particulars of this project have been explained; therefore, the progression leads into examining findings established from writings and research of other professionals. Chapter two thoroughly explores the conceptual framework of prior findings.

²⁵ McNeal, *Practicing Greatness*, 11.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Pastoral care of God's people is mandated through Scripture. Sometime there are significant challenges that prohibit or at least causes inhibition for pastors, ministers, and pastoral counselors to offer pastoral care to others. The question of incompetence to counsel members, especially on issues not related to spiritual matters occasionally arise from licensed professional counselors (LPC) and are even voiced from Christian counselors questioning the ability of other Christian counselors. Coincidentally, those concerns create an element of indecisiveness, doubt, and fear for pastors to offer the vital resource of pastoral care to church members or the surrounding community. A substantial review of literature outlining some of the reasoning fueling that concern is warranted to gain valuable understanding of the problem's background. Understanding the background can help the process of eliminating the problem, and ultimately reveal the best way-forward for the Good Shepherd Congregation.

To reiterate the thesis statement is crucial to ensure the literature review remains focused toward obtaining the necessary information to eliminate the problem. "If the congregation understands the role of the pastoral counselor, they may embrace the pastoral counselor and utilize the services provided." Later, shedding further light on competence versus incompetence of the delivering counselors as a contributing factor must be a crucial understanding of the review. This review will cover pastors, ministers, and those individuals who choose pastoral counseling as a career path. In some situations, the pastor will provide the counseling care, an individual trained in pastoral counseling in some, and a tandem operation of both in certain situations. A complete understanding of the challenges they face to offer pastoral care through

counseling must complete the discussion. After a discerning look at defining pastoral counseling, an exploration of those who provide that counseling will follow.

Literature Review

What Is Pastoral Counseling

The first area of discussion within the literature is essentially, “What is pastoral counseling?” Hawkins and Clinton, among others have offered varied versions in the attempt to define pastoral counseling. Their description of Christian counseling is that it is dynamic, collaborative, and interactive between the counselor, the client, and the Triune God of the Bible.²⁶ It is not a static or sterile environment in which the counselor is the expert, and the client receives information or correction on his/her condition or struggles. Hawkins and Clinton describe it as purposed specifically for transformational change aimed at the purpose of holistic healing – psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually.²⁷ The foundational truth is the Word of God assisted by the aid of the Holy Spirit operating within that individual.

Hawkins and Clinton reviewed the definitions of two other authors along with their own definition. They accredited the best one-line definition to Siang-Yang Tan. Siang-Yang Tan defined pastoral counseling as “counseling conducted by a Christian who is Christ centered, biblically based, and Spirit filled.”²⁸ This definition captures the idea behind Christian counseling, but it does not include many crucial elements that come into play. All Christians are commanded to be disciples and to respond in love in the way of Jesus. Equally important is to

²⁶ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 41.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 51-52.

recognize the dedication of individuals who devote study hours, or advanced degree completion toward the express purpose of professional service toward assisting God's suffering people.

The authors then commented on a long, elaborate definition with several elements attributed to Everett Worthington Jr. to include these essential elements:

1. It is an explicit or implicit agreement for the provision of help for the client with the client's psychological and spiritual welfare being foremost in consideration by the counselor. This is still in conjunction with the methodology chosen by the counselor.
2. A relationship of trust between the counselor and client is attempted to assure the client of no harm (*no malfeasance*) to them.²⁹

Hawkins and Clinton's definition must also be unpacked to display the elements that are somewhat akin to the two others profiled, but it also contains differing aspects of great importance. In "unpacking" their essential elements the reader discovers:

1. It must be a collaboration between the caregiver, care seeker, and the Triune God.³⁰
2. Counseling moves forward under the Word of God.
3. Change is enabled by the Holy Spirit who orchestrates and adds longevity to that change.
4. The client is held to a responsibility of accountability for their own commitment to the process. They are also given encouragement throughout the process that God is there for them, and he/she is deserved of the respect and care afforded by His demonstrated grace to them and love for them as His own creation (Gen. 1: 27).

²⁹ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 52.

³⁰ Ibid.

5. Christian counseling's goal is "the possessing of one's own soul for the purpose of pursuing the imitation of Christ."³¹

As is seen in the varied responses of the different authors, defining Christian counseling is a monumental task within itself, but the commonality is the inclusion of the spiritual aspect in treatment. The counselor acts on the idea that the Triune God gives the sufferer "free will" to make his/her own decision in the progression of the process; therefore, the individual must invite God into the process. In tandem with that invitation, the counselor acts in a prayerful manner along with the client to solicit the Holy Spirit to intercede. This invitation is answered in a helping relationship known as "*parakaleo*" which means "coming alongside."³² Notice that it mimics a helping relationship rather than the relationship of the expert guiding or totally advising the sufferer as may be applied in a different counseling methodology. Charles Allen Kollar in his counseling model explains that God is already active in the counselee. The counselor must come alongside the counselee and serve as a co-creator with the counselee under the work that is already being done by the Holy Spirit initiating change.³³ "God desires that his children see change in their physical and spiritual lives. God desires nothing less than to transform or reformat our lives."³⁴

³¹ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 52.

³² Ibid., 22.

³³ Kollar, *Solution – Focused Pastoral Counseling*, 85.

³⁴ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 18.

Changes to Fit a Modern Worldview

Pastoral counseling has been named in the past, but like many other professions, has undergone attempts at updating that name to reflect the most prominent attitude of the time. Pastoral adds a dimension to the titling that conjures up certain predisposed thoughts, especially with individuals who may or not prescribe to the Christian worldview. Pastoral counseling, Christian counseling, and spiritual counseling are three of the most identifiable terms used over the years. There has been an attempt by some agencies and organization to move away from the Christian or pastoral label to embrace the label of spiritual. Presently, individuals may identify as not Christian or religious, but claim spiritual as an identifier. Essentially, they believe in the intercession of a higher power, but do not subscribe to the rigidity, formality, or confines of organized religious practices. A title of spiritual counseling is more in keeping with their practices and beliefs. They may rebuke and refuse the assistance of the Christian counselor but may tend to embrace a counselor with the same worldview, with a different office sign denoting flexibility of methodology, and a more accommodating methodology that is symbiotic to their own understandings. Methodology, experience, personality, and ultimately spirituality, or lack thereof, may all play a role in the decision-making process.

Lack of Specified Training Challenges

Pastoral counseling can be offered at churches, para-church organizations, hospitals, fire departments, police departments, and through a varied list of other institutions. The wishes of the individual(s) determine the reasoning of the counseling and in part, the methodology used within the counseling environment. The reader may anticipate that a pastor delivers pastoral counseling; however, that is not necessarily true in all circumstances. While a pastor is the most likely candidate, church lay leaders or other church personnel, or a designated pastoral counselor

trained expressly for that purpose, may serve in that capacity. Johnson and Johnson reveal that the pastor or minister may be the only one that congregants suffering psychological disorders will allow into their private lives.³⁵ This poses special problems for the minister and is directly attributable to some of the reasoning why some pastors avoid counseling members of their congregation. Reasons given will be examined more closely later.

According to Johnson and Johnson, survey data suggest that when people experience distress, 40 percent go to their pastor first.³⁶ In a 12-month period, roughly more than 60 million adults suffered from mental or addictive disorders. This equates to about one-fourth of the United States population.³⁷ That means “pastors can spend from 10 percent to 46 percent of their time counseling parishioners.”³⁸ Ministers are called upon to actively shepherd a wide range of fallen human beings along with preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and administering the local church, coupled with establishing a local community presence.³⁹ “The pastoral care tradition in Christian Ministries is always associated with the image of the shepherd. For clergy called to the profession of ministry, pastoral care involves the responsibility of caring for the whole community, including those with all manner of emotional distress, problem behavior, and even acute mental illness.”⁴⁰ Ministers may find themselves faced with a myriad of situations from behavioral problems of family members, addiction problems, abuses of different kinds, and

³⁵ W. Brad Johnson and William L. Johnson, *The Minister's Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge Publications, 2014), 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

mental difficulties that plague parishioners. A closer look will reveal substantial challenges for the counselor.

Not being properly trained is a major concern for many pastors. Seminaries have only recently included professional pastoral care skills to seminarians, and this may include only one class.⁴¹ One can understand the apprehension when pastors face such daunting odds to present informed care. Johnson and Johnson point out that some pastors are gifted in the arena of counseling, but many may fear, or even loathe the demands of counseling parishioners.⁴² In a poll conducted for ministers by Thom S. Rainer, not being qualified was a major factor in avoiding counseling. Pastor responses included not being trained in counseling, not being equipped to handle the intense issues presented, and being totally “out of their element” of expertise.⁴³ That reveals a substantial deficiency in the shepherd care training. As part of a solution, pastors may develop a list of trusted individuals who are competent and proficient at counseling and refer their parishioners to that individual.⁴⁴ Referrals to others presents an even greater challenge that will be explored later in the competence section. In turn, these reasons tend to surface a growing list of other difficulties for pastors who counsel to learn to negotiate.

On a more promising note, John L. Young, M.D., Ezra Griffith, M. D., and David Williams, PhD queried 99 African American pastors in a metropolitan area. The pastors stated they are involved in counseling an average of 6 hours weekly. Counseling sessions included addressing serious problems consistent with issues addressed by secular mental health

⁴¹ Johnson and Johnson, *The Minister's Guide*, 1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Thom S. Rainer, “Seven Reasons Why Many Pastors Avoid a Counseling Ministry,” *Church Answers* (October 22, 2018), 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

professionals. “Many of the respondents reported having and maintaining specialized education for their counseling work, which they described as including both spiritual and psychological dimensions. Most of the pastors reported that they observe and address severe mental illness and substance abuse in their congregations and that they also counsel individuals outside their own denominations.”⁴⁵ This adds a positive element to the idea of lifelong learning for growth.

Other Challenges

The ever-growing list can extend to reasoning such as:

1. Liability concerns – part of the first session and interview phase of the counseling should include the counselor informing the client what must happen if certain information is divulged during counseling. Admission of criminal activities or unlawful activities, sexual misconduct or crimes toward minors, and other activities must be reported; with each state having differing requirements to be learned by the pastoral counselor. Some pastors are not certain of what they are legally required to report, a fear of lawsuits present a problem, and confidentiality issues may surface.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, Hawkins and Clinton offer that churches are notorious for divulging shared secrets.⁴⁷ If a past counseling session resulted in a breach of trust, congregants are very guarded against trusting deeply held family secrets to others, to be broadcast about the church. This presents an extremely important statement that must be quoted, “Never promise your clients

⁴⁵ John L., Young, M.D., Ezra Griffith, M.D., and David Williams, PhD., “The Integral Role of Pastoral Counseling by African American Clergy in Community Mental Health,” *Psychiatric Services* 54, no. 5 (1 May 2003): 688, <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.54.5.688>

⁴⁶ Rainer, “Why Pastors Avoid Counseling,” 1.

⁴⁷ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 65-66.

or patients absolute confidentiality, but disclose to them the major exceptions to the rule – child or elderly abuse, suicide threats, and homicide threats.”⁴⁸

2. Not being fruitful and being time-consuming pose problems. As previously mentioned, some pastors may loathe the responsibility of counseling others. The poll taken by Thom Rainer revealed that some pastors did not see the counseling session as being fruitful. They could not determine if they were helping, hindering, or hurting. Others decided it was a total waste of time for them to counsel.⁴⁹ Time constraints is another mitigating factor as many pastors are overworked, especially in a small church setting, a multi-church charge in some denominations, or the absence of trained lay personnel. Pastors work from 60 to 70 hours on average weekly.⁵⁰

A decrease in counseling duties is common to occur when pastors must reduce their hours to prevent compassion fatigue, burnout, or other health issues that may occur when intentionality is not addressed for self-care. Teaching, evangelizing, and making disciples are duties of the pastor. Fulfilling these requirements can provide another element to pastoral self-care by way of grooming lay personnel and others for service to God’s Kingdom; thus, reducing stress and fears for the pastor. Paul Pettit tells that when Jesus chose *The Twelve* to be his disciples, forsaking the large crowds and various other individuals, He knew exactly what he was doing. He built time with Him into their lives as he built knowledge into their lives of the way to go.

3. Fearful of Blame – often time the most-needy person(s) within the church avail themselves of much of the pastor’s time. This is in a formal and informal counseling

⁴⁸ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 55-56.

⁴⁹ Rainer, “Why Pastors Avoid Counseling,” 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

environment. These same individuals may assign blame if the sessions do not proceed as they may expect.⁵¹ Another problem surfaces when the congregant must be referred to another counselor, the number of sessions is exhausted, or the expertise of the pastor does not weigh the dimensions of the crisis. The congregant may develop an attitude of mistrust toward the counselor and voice those concerns in an unhealthy way, damaging the pastor's credibility, as well as harming pastoral relationships with others.

Controversies Within the Counseling Profession

Along with the challenges already explored, a real concern surfaces that is counter-productive to counseling, is damaging, and may present an even greater challenge to counseling than other concerns. This is the issue of competence and incompetence within the pastoral counseling profession. Pastoral counselors may view other pastoral counselors as being incompetent and the licensed professional counselors may view all pastoral counselors as being incompetent in all respects, except for spiritual guidance.

According to Brian Jackson, there has been an avoidance between the clergy and professional counselors.⁵² Jackson writes of Stanley Vespie's article, "Ever since the 1970s, modern counselors have held the notion that religion could never help an individual avoid becoming apprehensive, dejected, or aggressive, and that it seriously damages mental health."⁵³ Vespie and Jackson agree that congregants generally turn to pastors first for counseling.

⁵¹ Rainer, "Why Pastors Avoid Counseling," 1.

⁵² Brian K. Jackson, "Licensed Professional Counselors' Perceptions of Pastoral Counseling in the African American Community." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 69, no. 2 (June 2015): 85. doi:10.1177/1542305015586773.

⁵³ Ibid.

Vespie's article brought up an even more pertinent question. Namely, how does a conservative pastor's view of professional counselors affect congregants? This is in direct correlation to the referral process. Whereas some issues can be addressed by the pastor, more complex or mental health issues are best referred to licensed counselors. Vespie sought through his research to determine if a pastor's belief, education level, and size of the congregation determined a pastor's view of the licensed counselors.⁵⁴ A particular concern involved if the view of the pastor toward the counselor prohibited referral to the professional counselor; thus, potentially prohibiting the best care for the suffering congregant. The interesting concept is the modern science view of pastoral counselors or religion as antiquated, infantile or naïve in thoughts, and incompetent to address problems or care for sufferers. In fact, there may exist an attitude of condemnation toward the pastoral counselors as being prohibitive in the members receiving needed care.

Research conducted by Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, Speight, et al surfaced many concerns in terms of the African American approach to pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Undeniably, the clergy has been an extremely important part of the African American community. "They aid individuals with addictions (Sexton et al. 2005), socio-emotional problems (Blasi et al. 1998; Stansbury and Schumacher 2008; Taylor et al. 2000, 2004), and serious mental disorders (Stansbury et al. 2009; Sussman et al. 1987; Taylor et al. 2000, 2004; Young et al. 2003). A majority of individuals seek assistance from clergy exclusively and do not seek additional care from physicians or specialty

⁵⁴ Stanley Paul Vespie, "Attitude of Southern Baptist Pastors Toward Professional Counselors" (PhD diss., Walden University, 2010), 3.

mental health personnel (Taylor et al. 2000, 2004).”⁵⁵ The researchers furthermore convey that many times this is beyond the scope of skills and training of the pastor or counselor, but the pastors and counselors will not seek assistance from a mental health specialist. Stansbury, Harley, King, Nelson, Speight, et al suggest that there may be a lack of trust due to a history of negative stereotyping of African Americans by the social sciences. An ideal situation would have the pastor work in tandem with the mental health provider to the point of attending the sessions with the individual if necessary. This does indeed delay specialized help for that individual.

⁵⁵ Kim L. Stansbury, Debra A. Harley, Lois King, Nancy Nelson, and Gillian Speight, "African American Clergy: What are their Perceptions of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling," *Journal of Religion and Health* 51, no. 3 (09, 2012): 962, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fafican-american-clergy-what-are-their%2Fdocview%2F1040776990%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

Anthony J. Blasi, Baqar, A. Husaini, and Darrell A. Drumwright, "Seniors' Mental Health and Pastoral Practices in African American Churches: An Exploratory Study in a Southern City," *Review of Religious Research* 40, no. 2 (1998): 168, Accessed April 24, 2021. doi:10.2307/3512300.

John L. Young, M.D., Ezra Griffith, M.D., and David Williams, PhD. "The Integral Role of Pastoral Counseling by African American Clergy in Community Mental Health," *Psychiatric Services* 54, no. 5 (1 May 2003): 688, <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.54.5.688>

Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda Marie Chatters, and Jeff Levin, "Religion in the Lives of African Americans: Social, Psychological, and Health Perspectives," Newbury Park, CA: *Sage Publications*, 2003.

Kim Stansbury, PhD and Mitzi Schumacher, PHD. "An Exploration of Mental Health Literacy Among African American Clergy," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 51. No. 1-2 (October 12, 2008): 126, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01634370801967596>

Pastors on the other hand, viewed science as not taking into consideration the whole person concept, with spiritual well-being as an integral part of that individual's identity. Jackson writes,

The history behind this conflict of religion and counseling can be best summed up in this manner: the discrepancy is about the representation of the meaning of humanity. Contemplate the question: Are we alone in the universe? From the pious convention, the retort is a reverberating rejection. From the secular scientific tradition, the answer is yes or yes, as we know it. This inquiry shows just how diverse philosophical anthropologies are in comparing contemporary scientific and spiritual formation of humans.⁵⁶

Human formation, creationism, and evolutionism play a crucial role in the argument.

That argument follows along with spirituality or the need for spirituality being obsolete in today's post-modern worldview. Jackson asserts that both counseling fields can be beneficial to the other in that, "Pastoral psychology is positioned in a field of rigidity between a morally realistic psychology and directness to a divine facet and to man's inclination for divine existence. Pastors are theologians. They strive to narrate the therapeutic and redeeming meaning of the Gospel to their flocks."⁵⁷ According to Jackson, the problem is the transfer over the years from a predominantly theological framework to an emphasis on psychology, or the sciences as well for pastoral care.⁵⁸ In the modern society of today the gap between yesteryear and today must be bridged to maintain pace with an ever-changing population in an ever-changing world.

⁵⁶ Jackson, "Licensed Professional Counselor's Perception," 85.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Referral Challenges

The final word on the referral issue remains open for debate, but several sources weighed in heavily on the subject. Science versus the spiritual plays an important role; however, is not the definitive role in the decision-making process. Hawkins and Clinton asserts that it is an honor for Christian counselors to partner with God to provide help to those who are broken and suffering, but most importantly, it is incumbent upon the pastoral counselor to remain vigilant in the pursuit of learning to “maintain paces with advances in research, practice, and treatment.”⁵⁹ Although the Christian is obligated through Christ to offer counseling, Hawkins and Clinton state it best, "To consistently achieve demonstratable gains from treatment, every Christian counselor must embrace the ethical challenge of doing good (beneficence) while doing no harm (non - malfeasance) to all those served."⁶⁰ This includes constant study toward life-long learning.

When the counselor is incapable of providing the care necessary, referral is not only necessary, but is morally and ethically demanded. Several reasons demand referral to others: “an inability to forge a therapeutic alliance, a values differential, or lack of counselor training for the issues at hand.”⁶¹ Christian congregants may opt for a referral to a Christian counselor, but the issue of competence surfaces again. Johnson and Johnson asserts that in some small towns or rural areas, Christian mental health practitioners (MHPs) may be few and the ones there may be incompetent to handle the

⁵⁹ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 62.

⁶¹ Ibid., 57.

issues.⁶² They expound by explaining that the Christian mental health provider may not have a reputation of excellence.⁶³ Furthermore, very few clients are referred for spiritual concerns, but most likely for mental issues that are the problem.⁶⁴ With that in mind, they believe that secular MHPs can perform more effectively for the Christian sufferer. The thought process is better a secular counselor that is effective, professional, and competent than a Christian provider that is ineffective, if not incompetent as well.⁶⁵ Johnson and Johnson end with, “We have found that God uses the gifts of such excellent professionals (secular helpers) to bring relief to His people.”⁶⁶ Hawkins and Clinton continue in this argument in that, resources whether Christian or secular are given through God. They remark, “We gain critical insights from a variety of gifted counselor’s and author’s theories and practices. We view all the resources available to us as God-given, and we rely on the Word of God, and the Spirit of God to produce genuine, lasting change in us and our clients.”⁶⁷ Guiding is the Spirit, even if the Spirit chooses another or an unlikely ally to accomplish the initiated changes. The best effective care for the suffering Christian is paramount in the process.

Another important issue to address in terms of pastoral counseling within the Good Shepherd multi-cultural congregation is essentially cultural awareness or cultural

⁶² Johnson and Johnson, *The Minister’s Guide*, 12.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 6.

differences, whether perceived, imagined, or actual, but this will be discussed in the theoretical foundations section. Lack of cultural awareness may not be applicable to the Good Shepherd situation, but it must be explored. First is an exploration of theological implications that serve as the “guiding light” for pastoral care.

Theological Foundations

In his article *Love: A Philosophy of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Frederick J. Streets conveys that “There are many reported moments in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament when God spoke words to humankind. There are also conversations between God, Jesus and human beings. Perhaps the first dialogue, and I think pastoral conversation, between God and human beings is found in Genesis 3.”⁶⁸ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done” (Genesis 3: 9-13). Streets admits that his reference to this Bible story serves several purposes. “My reference to this story is for the purpose of suggesting that in pastoral counselling the counsellor listens for at least four things from the one who comes to them for help, namely:

- How does he or she express their understanding of hearing God in their spirit - their view of their divine nature?

⁶⁸ Frederick J. Streets, "Love: A Philosophy of Pastoral Care and Counselling," *Verbum Et Ecclesia* 35, no. 2 (2014): 3, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Flove-philosophy-pastoral-care-counselling%2Fdocview%2F1636192200%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

- Of what are they afraid? This is a question of vulnerability and mortality.
- What and / or who is telling them who they are? This is a question of identity and self-understanding.
- What does it mean for them to feel naked? This is a question of feeling defenseless or unprotected.”⁶⁹ Pastoral care, or “taking care of my sheep” (John 22:16) becomes a reoccurring theme.

The image of the shepherd is reiterated throughout the Bible. “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them” (I Peter 5: 2). “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20: 28). “It was He who gave some to be apostles... and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 5: 11-13). Dr. Tim Lane explains, “The way leaders shepherd and equip the flock is by using Scripture and prayer. That is why elders must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). This teaching is marked by a skilled and redemptive handling of the Word of God that brings people face-to-face with Christ. Since all of Scripture points to Christ, our use of Scripture must connect people and their problems to Christ.”⁷⁰ Pastoral care is essential to those individuals with problems because it is essential to the body of the church. The essential idea is that not only is the charge to deliver comfort but to receive comfort as well for the caregiver and the care receiver. In doing so, care

⁶⁹ Streets, “Pastoral Care and Counseling,” 3.

⁷⁰ Dr. Tim Lane, “A Biblical approach to Pastoral Care,” *Care Leader, Strategic Real-World Pastoral Care* (June 9, 2016), <https://www.careleader.org/biblical-approach-pastoral-care/>

receiver and care giver must be cognizant and mindful of the warning given in Proverbs and Isaiah: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Prov. 3: 5). “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55: 8-9). One must consider the following guidance given.

Matt Perman asks a question and proceeds to answer it with several explanations, “Does God give us more than we can handle?” He uses the words of the Apostle Paul to explain:

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,^[a] about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

The reasoning for this is that God wants His people to rely on Him and His glory shines through in what is accomplished. Perman voices that “God undercuts our inclination toward self-sufficiency by placing us in situations where we have no choice but to look to Him for energy and strength and help. God asks of us more than we can do but he does not require of us more than we can do without His strength and power.”⁷¹ Another interesting concept from Perman is that God makes it hard for individuals to execute good on a large scale. The reason given is that to do good on a large scale, that person must be extremely dedicated; therefore, those who succeed in doing good on a large scale are exceedingly dedicated. They are so dedicated and willing that they persevere through obstacles placed in front of them regardless of the magnitude of the task. This begs to ask the question, “What is a way that God assists His people to achieve

⁷¹ Matt Perman, *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done*, expanded edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014, 2016), 331-332.

beyond their own capability?” The Holy Spirit or “the called to one’s aid,” the “summoned,” the “comforter,” and the “consoler” is the answer to that question.

The Work of the Spirit

An image of God is as the care giver of pastoral care through love and grace. The image of Jesus is through sacrifice, perfect obedience, love, caring for others, healing, and other ways. The Holy Spirit in this case, shares a unique position as a part of the Trinity. The Spirit indwells within us; therefore, it is the godhead of the Trinity presently active within us to serve as conscience, comforter, initiator, and perfecter of lasting change. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth” (John, 14: 15-17). The Christian counselor works through the “Spirit of Truth,” counsels through the “Counselor,” and is under His guidance and auspices throughout the process. “The Holy Spirit is our companion (our helper, John 14: 16-17). He is the empowering presence of God who works to transform us into the image of Christ according to the will of the Father. We have received from God the Holy Spirit who knows the depths of God. So, we have a direct connection with God through the Holy Spirit in our human spirit.”⁷² The Spirit of God is not one of frailty or weakness, but one of power, love, and grace toward others. As made in His image we are recipients of that same benefit through potential escape of stress, problem, and progress toward wholeness.

Knowing the Spirit

Christian counselors work under the foundation of Scripture but are guided and assisted by the work of the Holy Spirit, within self as well as the Holy Spirit already at work within the suffering individual(s). The work of the Spirit is crucial in understanding for several reasons

⁷² Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 60.

because of His special significance. “One is that the Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer.”⁷³ Millard J. Erickson explains that the Father seems somewhat unknowable as He is considered far off in heaven. Jesus is unknowable because of His life being so far removed in history. The Spirit is resident within us and active in the life of the believer serving as the Triune Godhead currently working in and through us. “Second reason is that we live in the period in which the Holy Spirit is more prominent than that of the other members of the Trinity. The Father’s work was the most conspicuous within the Old Testament period. The Son’s within the period covered by the Gospels and up to the ascension. The Holy Spirit has occupied the center of the stage from the Pentecost on, or the period from the Book of Acts throughout church history until the current time.”⁷⁴ Since Jesus asked the Father to provide the “Comforter” for all believers, the Spirit has taken a prominent and active position in the lives of those believers. A third reason explained by Erickson is “In a culture that stresses the experiential, it is through the Holy Spirit’s work that we feel God’s presence within, and the Christian life is given special tangibility.”⁷⁵ God’s human creation are thinking, emotional, feeling beings that operate in comfort when those senses are engaged. Human understanding is possible through an experience of the knowing of the mental or the satisfying of the individual through the heart-felt emotions provided by Christianity.

Scripture at Work in Counseling

Spiritual concerns are important for Christians; however, that is only one part of the Christian worldview as the mental, physical, and emotional must be present also. The attempt is

⁷³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1983, 1998, 2013), 773.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

to assist in the creation of a whole person through spiritual formation and Christlikeness and view the person under the whole person concept as Jesus commands of us. Pastoral care for the Christian counselor through self-care and the counselor's care for the congregation becomes soul care with the express goal of "spiritual formation." "Spiritual formation is the holistic work of God in a believer's life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ. The change or transformation that occurs in the believer's life happens best in the context of authentic, Christian community and is oriented toward God and others."⁷⁶ The Scripture, "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke, 2:52) sets a guiding principle for the counselor to aspire to be more like Christ while instructing and assisting others to be the best person possible in Christlikeness. As Jesus grew in understanding and human attributes, all Christians must undergo that same transformation of life throughout one's whole life.

There are Scriptures that guide the counselors into their work for God and for the individual, but some are more crucial. "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This philosophy of Scripture lays the foundation for the work of Christian counselors, but every counseling session is approached with a central idea, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 1:27 demands that the hurting individual is given respect, grace, and love separate from and despite of the condition. Jesus Christ defines the individual, not the present condition of the individual. Jesus is the model of Ministry.⁷⁷ Jesus

⁷⁶ Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 19.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

expressed to people, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11: 28). Rest included mental rest through demonstrated compassion. Spiritual rest through closeness to Him and the Father. Emotional rest through relief from anxiety, stress, and the like. Physical rest was through increased comfort, relief from sickness, and other ailments He alleviated from those He encountered.

Christian Counseling Further Explained

Counseling from a Christian perspective covers a variety of problems for people: helping people deal with severe loss, conflict resolution, stress management or elimination, and other issues that plague individuals. Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins interject that the main objective is, “Helping clients become more like Christ and grow into a deeper intimacy with God and with one another.”⁷⁸ Because of these most important goals, the authors explain that Christian counseling has become a worldwide enterprise consisting of professional clinicians, pastoral counselors and others who deliver such services.⁷⁹ As examined earlier, counseling can be offered by pastors, lay leaders, staff members, other church officials, or even Christians attempting to offer comfort to other hurting individuals. The authors explain, “Christian counseling is a triadic form of counseling that implicitly honors Jesus Christ and believes the Holy Spirit is always present in the counseling relationship with the counselor and the client.”⁸⁰ Referring back to Charles Allen Kollar, a guiding assumption is that “God is already active in the counselee.”⁸¹ The premise behind this idea is for the Christian counselor to prayerfully seek the

⁷⁸ Tim Clinton, PHD and Ron Hawkins, PHD, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling: An Indispensable Tool for Helping People with Their Problems* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2011), 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Kollar, *Solution-Focused*, 63.

assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to pair with and assist the Spirit with the work already started in that individual.

Functioning in Community

Restoring an individual to a renewed self is a goal, but ultimately renewing their relationship with God and others in community is also of utmost importance. Part of that restoration process is to enable the individual to effectively deal with current problems or problems that may crop up at other times. Being able to personally function is important; however, being able to function in community as a vital contributing member is essential as well. That person is not restored until they can become a functioning, contributing member to themselves and their Christian community in whatever capacity they are able to perform.

Author Paul Pettit highlights many reasons for functioning in community. A particularly important reason is accentuated in his writing, “The spiritual journey is not to be a solitary walk but a community pilgrimage. We draw wisdom and comfort from one another; we encourage and are encouraged by the example of our fellow Christians.”⁸² Through this, Christians not only comfort and encourage each other, but also provide a safeguard against spiritual imbalance. A community in Christ embodies the teachings, life examples, compassion, and other qualities performed through example by Jesus. “Balanced spiritual formation is cultivated in the company of like-minded comrades and serious confidants. To pursue spirituality alone is folly, and ultimately misses the point of being the body of Christ.”⁸³ The testament of Jesus portrays a life of teaching through example, counseling through story or displayed actions, providing comfort, healing, and compassion as needed. One must remember that most of the consoling was offered

⁸² Pettit, *Spiritual Formation*, 78.

⁸³ Ibid.

in a communal setting and served as the basis for teaching others in the “way to go” after He departed. After which they would carry on His healing ministry and assist others on their journey toward salvation. “As we follow him (Jesus) obediently in discipleship (living as he lived), we are increasingly conformed to his image.”⁸⁴ This not only includes His demonstrated love for the Father and others, but the outpouring of comfort, compassion, and counseling He administered to others as He met them wherever they may be in geographical setting, or mental or spiritual state.

The Work of Christian Counselors

Pastoral counselors and all those who spiritually counsel work under the authority and guidance of God’s Word and operate under the guidance of the work of the Holy Spirit. The counselor works under guiding principles that must be the theological foundation of their workings as are these principles expressed by Dr. Ron Hawkins:

1. People are profoundly fallen. The fallen state further separates the fallen from God, but it does not permanently separate one from God, as God through a “sacrificial lamb” has made provisions to redeem the fallen to enable them to escape the curse of that separation.⁸⁵
2. Pastoral counselors need wisdom. That wisdom only comes through a relationship that is growing in Christ (spiritual formation).
3. “Counselors are under the authority of the Word of God.”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Pettit, *Spiritual Formation*, 43. This direct quote was copied as written.

⁸⁵ Dr. Ron Hawkins, “Guiding Principles for the Pastoral Counselor” (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, 2012).

⁸⁶ Hawkins, “Guiding Principles for the Pastoral Counselor.”

4. Pastoral counselors (Christian counselors) must love people and are motivated under a model of love. The guiding commands are “Be imitators of God; therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us...” (Eph. 5:1-2) and “Love the lord your God with all your heart.... Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39).
5. Pastoral counselors are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are necessary elements in any transformation, especially lasting transformation.
6. The imitation of Christ is the goal of all Christian counseling.⁸⁷ Christ accepted the fallen where he found them and responded with love and compassion. This is not to say he accepted their sinful actions, but he did accept them as “made in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27) and commanded them to “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8: 11).

Further Exploration of the Theological Foundation

God has a vision for all. A plan if you will, and that plan is to prosper His people. Suffering is a part of life, possibly even prolonged suffering; however, God’s love and grace are ever present to heal, sustain, and provide hope. The healing is a holistic healing of body, mind, emotional, and of course, the spiritual. This is demonstrated through the expertise of the Christian counselor with the assistance of the Holy Spirit at work. Flourishing is the desired goal. Any individual that is not flourishing is floundering and needs an intervention to correct the imbalance.⁸⁸ God in love has set a plan in motion for all his people. Living holistically as a

⁸⁷ Hawkins, “Guiding Principles for the Pastoral Counselor.”

⁸⁸ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 14.

whole individual and functioning in community to forward the Kingdom of God requires one to become the individual that God wants them to be. Essentially, not the “me that I want to be” but the “me that God wants me to be.”⁸⁹ Gary Thomas writes that, “The true Christian life is a life in which holiness is a serious pursuit and a believer earnestly makes himself or herself “useful to the Master and are prepared to do any good work.”⁹⁰ Protecting your health is the same thing as protecting the vehicle through which God wants to change the world.”⁹¹ This includes all forms of health, the mental, as well as the spiritual, physical, and emotional because “everybody (every body) matters.” Therein lies another foundation for the care of others.

Another Element Added to the Pastoral Counseling Context

A situation that exists within the Good Shepherd context that adds a different dynamic is the presence of a counseling center on the church premises. The attempt of this section is to provide information on the Pastoral Counseling Center of Virginia (CPC). This format does not allow adequate assessment of the CPC or other professional centers and is not applicable to this research. The CPC boasts of exceptional expertise through its professional counselors, several locations throughout Virginia, and counseling services that are offered:

We provide professional counseling that is sensitive to relational and emotional issues, as well as to spiritual issues. Our counselors bring traditional psychological training to their work, with additional expertise in working with clients from a spiritual frame of reference. CPC counselors are fully certified or licensed mental health professionals, who respect the spirituality of our clients and never preach or proselytize. We are equipped to help the person who comes to counseling looking for their spirituality to be a part of their healing, and completely respectful of the person who comes to counseling not wishing to address spiritual issues at all. Although many of our centers are housed in churches, we are an interfaith organization, not

⁸⁹ Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 14.

⁹⁰ Gary Thomas, *Every Body Matters, Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2011), 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

affiliated with any one denomination or church. We also have offices outside of church settings for those who prefer not to be seen in a church related setting.⁹²

The CPC informs that they do not preach or proselytize. Proselytize, as defined in the dictionary, means to convert, or attempt to convert. A proselyte is a person who has changed from one opinion to another, religious belief, sect, or the like to another, convert.⁹³ CPC counselors will touch on the spiritual if the client requests that format; however, the spiritual element will be avoided if the client wishes to do so. An interesting fact is that the counselors are usually not a part of the church at which their counseling service is housed. This means that denomination's doctrine may be absent from the healing process. The center started in 1996 and has eleven centers listed across the state of Virginia. CPC centers, except for three, are in a church building. Patrons wishing to avoid a church altogether, can request to be seen at one of the three locations not in a church building.

Whereas the privacy of clients can be further protected utilizing that system, it may deter some clients from visiting the center, especially if a firm spiritual foundation is the client's intent. To restate important findings expressed by Everett L. Worthington, Jr., clients go to counselors that fit the specific need of the problem that confronts them. They seek the pastor for spiritual, the friend for friendly advice, but the professional counselor is sought out to help alleviate the symptoms of the problem that plague them at that time. This misunderstanding of intent could potentially cause hesitance on the part of some Good Shepherd congregants to seek counsel. Preliminary research findings have revealed a misunderstanding by congregants of the role of the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia. Several questions must be entertained to

⁹² Center for Pastoral Counseling, "Who we are."

⁹³ Random House Publishing, *The Random House Dictionary*, revised edition (New York, NY: Random House, INC, 1980, 1979, 1975).

clarify that misunderstanding. What is the denominational affiliation of the center housed within your church premises? What is the referral process to visit the center and who initiates the referral process? What is the intent of the center to provide services? Is the center based to solve mental difficulties, aimed toward spiritual problems, or both? What fees are associated with visits to the center and who will pay those fees? Answers to those questions were not known or misinformed from a source; therefore, what other information is being misconstrued?

Theoretical Foundations

Since the Good Shepherd church is a multi-cultural church with African American and African congregants, it is important to touch on the black church experience to gain understanding. The church for the community has always been an important component in the life, struggles, growth, socio-economic, political, and sometime, financial well-being for Black people. Pastors served a prominent role in the African American community. Due to this relationship, the church, and God cannot be separated from the black experience, but must be considered as an essential part of the whole. The black church engages in pastoral care, but in a different format than that of other churches. God, the church, and most notably the pastor as the representative have always held a central role in individual development. This also included financial endeavors for some, community growth, battling oppression, racism or other oppositional issues. The researcher must understand the intricacies of that cultural phenomenon and relationship to truly grasp the total situation. This subject has been approached by other authors; however, for this discussion, Loren Townsend's writing presents a thorough understanding of some of the applicable issues warranting further discussion.

The Debate Among Pastoral Counselors

Townsend introduces “pastoral counseling as a twentieth-century expression of North American Protestant clergy.”⁹⁴ He explains that due to this fact it is mainly a Euro-American context with non-Euro Americans taking a background position or the “invisible” position as he labels it. He reveals that although black churches hold a strong tradition of pastoral care and contributed to the pastoral counseling field in its earlier years, that contribution is downplayed or is almost invisible. Townsend lists Brooks Hollifield’s *Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* as a standard for graduate studies since 1984. The problem is that Hollifield attributed early care to being a Euro-American tradition with blacks in a receiving or supporting role only. “African Americans are mentioned only as recipients of white religious care and as a concern of abolitionist churches. AAPC’s (American Association of Pastoral Counselors) self-published history highlight only Euro-American leaders and contexts.”⁹⁵ Black churches again are relegated to a mere supporting role in terms of pastoral care. The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* follows a similar pattern with references to articles defined by race or ethnicity segregated from the main section of general articles. Whereas black contributions were reportedly significant to the black church tradition, they seemingly offered little to no “theological or practical contribution to the larger body of the church.”⁹⁶ Townsend reveals that a 2005 revised edition of the Dictionary has no articles written by African

⁹⁴ Townsend, *Pastoral Counseling*, 40.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Americans, and it overlooks a segregated history of pastoral counseling.⁹⁷ It does include a supplement sensitive to race, gender, class, and ethnicity in pastoral counseling.⁹⁸

There are other examples supporting Townsend's research of lack of contribution by non-Euro- Americans. Other issues were mentioned as to part of the problem:

1. Pastoral care emphasis differs in black churches so it may be deemed as non-existent.
2. Lack of economic or political privileges may have prohibited black leaders from the training deemed necessary by their counterparts. Black leaders may become more relevant as an education level in the field is achieved that is more consistent with white counterparts.⁹⁹

Townsend explored reactionary opinions voiced by Edward Wimberly, Archie Smith, Jr. and Vergel Lattimore.

1. Wimberly – Black counseling experience differs from the white experiences but contains the same healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling that characterized care and counseling throughout Christian history.¹⁰⁰
2. Lattimore – Black cultural values made positive contributions to pastoral counseling.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Townsend, *Pastoral Counseling*, 40

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 42.

3. Smith, Jr. – “The *Relational Self* is written from a black church perspective, but the message is not limited to the black church.”¹⁰²

The authors proclaim that black history is not to be segregated by race or ethnicity. The communities cannot be seen as theologically or culturally disadvantaged. Pastoral counseling tradition cannot be seen as an assimilation of other cultures into the Euro-American tradition but must be seen as a cross-culture experience with notable contributions from all. Overlooking of the significant contributions and other reasoning has negated other cultures and races from prominent leadership positions throughout history. Research has “revealed pastoral counseling in the past as deeply segregated.”¹⁰³

Townsend’s book includes a section entitled *African American Voices* in which he discusses his findings from a case study. The alarming facts are that non-white counselors were recruited for training programs or counseling firms but not given an even playing field to become successful. Practices included low caseloads reducing the opportunity to earn income for the agency, resulting in poor performance reviews, denied promotion potential, and lack of continued employment. Others were assigned to low-income communities unable to pay for services. Even more detrimental was counselors being allowed to service only like culture individuals and being denied the opportunity to work cross- culturally, especially with wealthy white clients or those clients from affluent communities. “Supervisors were reluctant to assign white clients to African American therapists for fear they would not return for further counseling. They were told, “You, are not the best match for this client.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Townsend, *Pastoral Counseling*, 42.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 48.

Townsend finishes this study with feelings of despair brought on by unfair practices. He explains that some black counselors have circumvented racial practices through entering private practice or working satellite programs in African American communities. Most importantly, despite research as late as 2005 and 2007 suggesting otherwise, hope remains that the practice of racial inequality would cease. Non-white counselors remain hopeful and continue working to end racial inequality in counseling. This was an amazingly honestly constructed research from the author. A final quote, “It is striking that despite marginalization, tokenism, and institutionalized racism, most African American pastoral counselors interviewed were passionate about their training and work.”¹⁰⁵

Institutionalized racism, lack of formal training, lack of opportunity, incomplete or insufficient education, and a lack of educational certification are challenges. These are but a few of the challenges that prohibit counselors from some ethnicities from being successful within that environment. Whereas that is not necessarily the problem in some cases, it can be problematic quite often. Whether perceived, imagined, or erroneously aspersed information, the results are damaging and can be catastrophic to the success of that individual. It is crucial that all counselors dedicate themselves to effective learning and preparation as well as a commitment to lifelong learning practices to stay competitive with the ever-changing profession of helping others become their God given best. Stressors of life, mental anguish, depression, mental illness, and the effects of crisis or trauma affect without regard to ethnicity, cultural identity, or other human attributes. Relief must be enacted with that same aggressive intensity and resolve. Slander, malicious attacks, or the like, whether within the field or outside, creates unnecessary hardships for all counselors.

¹⁰⁵ Townsend, *Pastoral Counseling*, 50.

Diversity

The congregation leadership is mostly from non-ethnic cultures and may not understand some of the difficulties associated with the scenario presented. In a situation where there is racism, that racism does not have to be the only cause affecting that community. Cultural differences can be as much of an inhibitor as many other reasons. Unfortunately, this is seen from both sides of the argument, and travels horizontally from the care giver to the care receiver as well. The care receiver may elect to see a caregiver of the same race ignoring other totally competent caregivers. This is as detrimental as caregivers only seeing the same race client. Relationship building comes through understanding and frequent interaction. Understanding comes through knowledge, but also willingness to acquire and exercise that knowledge toward successful interaction processes.

Pastoral leadership, staff, and others at this multi-cultural church as well as any other organization, must understand the monumental undertaking of being culturally sensitive. Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung define culture as “A learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings and symbols that are passed on from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community.”¹⁰⁶ The resulting factor is that there are traditions and values being taught to members of the society. It is highly likely that these customs are different from those of others and may seem quite strange or even odd; however, they are a part of that culture. This essentially makes it a part of that person’s identity. Cultural identity is an identifier in much the

¹⁰⁶ Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung, *Understanding Intercultural Communication* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012, 2005), 16.

same way as a name identifier or a personality trait that can be used to identify a person. It exists as a part of the person, not separately from the person.

Two extremely important factors that affect identity is being from an “individualistic” or a “collectivist” society.” David Livermore explains that, “Individualism versus collectivism is, at its core, a difference in identity.”¹⁰⁷ He elaborated that individualist cultures teach their children to be responsible for themselves and cultures that are collectivist cultures teach their children “for the good of the entire family” or “for the sake of honor.”¹⁰⁸ Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien expound saying, “A critical value in this sort of culture is preserving “face” or the honor associated with one’s name. People are more likely to choose right behavior based on what society expects from them. The Thai word for being shamed, for losing face, literally means “to tear someone’s face off so they appear ugly before friends and community.”¹⁰⁹ The problem associated with mores of any culture is that they may be mentally understood by that culture and not verbally expressed leaving the guest cultures or visiting individuals oblivious to their existence or meaning. Those mores add to the accepted view or worldview of that culture. Worldview includes the cultural values and other accepted truths by that culture. Richards and O’Brien explain using the analogy of an iceberg to explain that the visible part of the iceberg is not as dangerous as the part of the iceberg below the waterline. That is, the unseen part of a culture that is understood mentally and not spoken verbally but nevertheless, shares as much

¹⁰⁷ David Livermore; forward by Soon Ang, PH.D., and Linn Van Dyne, PH.D., *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success*, second edition (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2015), 100.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 101.

¹⁰⁹ E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blindness to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Books, 2012), 116.

importance.¹¹⁰ This creates an entirely different understanding in the ways to deal with the different cultures within that multi-cultural situation. Even the differences in treatment of others, teachers, or professionals and most especially, elders within the society require learning. Loyalty to one's family, group or colleagues, and social harmony can be highly prized in collectivist societies.¹¹¹ These are considerations that must be known for successful interactions in this environment.

The Divide

The "Divide" so titled by David Anderson and Brent Zuercher is the divisiveness between cultures or races that exist. Divisiveness exists because of mistreatment of a people, misunderstanding, marginalization of a race, racism, or any other ill treatment that has perpetuated the widening of the gap between their acceptance of each other. Unfortunately, this country and others have historically and presently engaged in treatment that has perpetuated and fueled that divisiveness. Anderson and Zuercher created a dialog in the form of letters to embrace discussion of some of those issues. A very important issue voiced by Anderson is that forgiveness must be an important part on both sides. Cultures cannot exist long-term in a situation where animosity still reigns. Anderson shares that unresolved anger affects the relationship with God, a spouse, and others; thus, shutting off the heart to God's work in our life and our country. This negates the possibility of relating intimately with anyone. Three ideas must be remembered, "A minor thing for us may be a big deal for others. Two, humble oneself

¹¹⁰ Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture*, 12.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

and ask forgiveness from those we have offended. Three, forgive those who have offended us.”¹¹²

The argument cannot be complete without remembering Deborah Pegues’ explanation that confronting those that offend us is Godly and is mandated by Scripture. Retaliation against them is ungodly and not of the Christian way.¹¹³ Therefore, it is an individual’s Christian duty to inform others of their wrongdoing, even if there are differences. This comes as a teaching moment or a learning moment for both cultures regardless of the worldview they may hold. Christians, especially are mandated to confront in a godly way when they have offended someone, someone has offended them, or when another individual is heading down a “destructive path.” “Conflict always provides an opportunity to glorify God, that is, to bring Him praise and honor by showing who He is, what He is like, and what He is doing.”¹¹⁴ In this, we draw attention to His grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom. We achieve this in four ways:

1. You can trust God and not rely on your own abilities.
2. You can obey God and follow His commands; especially as they are laid out for your path.
3. You can imitate God and demonstrate love to others as He demonstrates underserved love to His people.

¹¹² David Anderson and Brent Zuercher, *Letters Across the Divide: Two Friends Explore Racism, Friendship, and Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 30-31.

¹¹³ Deborah Smith Pegues, *Confronting Without Offending: Positive and Practical Steps to Resolving Conflict* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 16.

¹¹⁴ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, revised and updated (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991, 1997, 2004), 31.

4. You can acknowledge God as God gives grace for His people to rise above despite circumstance.¹¹⁵

Multi-cultural Counseling Awareness

Another phenomenon to consider is culturally sensitive counseling. Danica G. Hays and Bradley T. Erford point out that counseling has added a fourth and fifth dimension – multiculturalism and social advocacy. These dimensions are in response to the changing faces of America and the need for cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, and cultural diversity knowledge to become a part of the counselor’s tool kit. America was often referred to as a “melting pot” of many different cultures. This researcher sees that as correct, but not entirely. Correct in the assumption that it is a mixture of many diverse cultures that make up this country. The fallacy of thought is that in a melting procedure, the predominant element can totally consume other elements making them a combined version of themselves. A more congenial understanding is that of a meshing or intricate weaving. All the elements weave together to form a closer, tighter knit version, but each can maintain essentials of what makes them entirely different from the other. In that way you get a facsimile thereof and not a carbon or exact copy which strips of the identity of that individual or culture. These assumptions will be detailed further in later research. This point of the discussion heads forward to the methodology utilized, the method for obtaining the data to be used, and the best ways to implement the use of the data after it is gathered.

¹¹⁵ Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 31-33.

Chapter 3

Intervention Design

Reiterating the associated problem is beneficial: The problem is that the congregation of the Good Shepherd Church may not understand the role of a pastoral counselor or pastors who provide pastoral counseling; therefore, they do not readily utilize their services. The purpose of this action research project is to inform the congregation of these roles to promote utilization of pastoral care through these valuable resources. If the congregation understands their roles, they may embrace them and utilize the services provided. It is at this point the researcher moves forward with the other player's total input.

To be successful at this phase the setting and structure of the organization must be understood. Structure for this organization includes a bishop, a district superintendent, a senior pastor and a youth or associate pastor at the parish, fulltime church staff, lay leaders, and church volunteers. Whereas some churches are a part of their denomination but function autonomously as an individual entity in most circumstances, this church is influenced, governed, and for lack of better terminology, controlled by a united denomination governing body. Ordaining of pastors and selection of key leaders are completed through a process by the governing body of the churches. This adds a bit of formality to any process and may impede moving forward on a project as well as deter some from initiating a project at all unless all issues are addressed first.

The Tasks to be Done.

This project was successfully initiated with very little resource requirement either financially or material wise. The work was completed via phone interview and the online questionnaire. Data necessary for this research was disseminated and collected through an internet format with minimal information being generated in a physical copy format. This not only eased the collection of data but also reduced the possibility of leakage of sensitive

information or others becoming aware of a participant's collected personal information. In any case, information collected did not need to be stored at the church and was kept on the researcher's dedicated home computer with a locked password for protection. Information is being safeguarded by the researcher and disposed of as per safety protocol at the end of a three-year period.

The Timeline

The period from January 2 through February 15, 2021, served as the designated timeline for the collection of data. A desired target number of 50 participants from the congregation resulted in acquiring 52 participants as a representative cross culture of diversity as well as the available demographic representation of the congregation itself.

In view of its nature, the research proceeded with very general information of the pastoral counseling practices of Good Shepherd and did not need to delve into the extremely personal information of the participants. Educating the congregation depended first and foremost on learning of the current practices. Several questions emerged: (1) How were those practices being applied with congregation members? (2) How does the pastors and staff manage counseling? (3) What is the role of the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia at this church location? The general nature of information collected provided another measure of confidentiality as the consent forms were simply used as informational guides. An online delivery negated the return of the consent forms allowing for an added measure of anonymity. The pandemic limited most data gathering to the online format which eliminated the requirement of other devices for recording and serves as a working copy for the researchers to revisit later.

Data Analysis

The search engine program completed the first draft of analyzing the research data requiring the researcher to fine tune and create variations to alleviate redundancies in the presentation. The algorithm provided groupings that helped the researcher identify trends, silences, group patterns, and other tendencies that affected the research. Action research by its design incorporates action toward the research for the researcher as well. The researcher and participants can closely observe and monitor group interaction allowing them to form hypotheses toward solving their own problems. Ernest Stringer writes, “Observation in action research is more ethnographic,¹¹⁶ enabling an observer to build a picture of the lifeworld of those observed and to develop an understanding of the way they ordinarily go about their everyday activities.”¹¹⁷ The researcher being a part of the stakeholders, provides ample opportunity for observation to take place as well as provides substantial understanding of the situation. Stringer informs that this allows the observer to formulate ideas and record important details during the process.

Questions within the questionnaire for this project were mostly multiple-choice questions. This provided the researcher with more specific information pertinent to the project; thus, allowing the researcher the understanding most applicable to this ministry context. A couple of open-ended questions were included to allow the participant to provide feedback unique to their own thoughts or situation. Again, excessive open-ended questions in this format can result in an individual being more identifiable, especially in a small ministry context with fewer members. The questionnaire format can provide a vast amount of information that can be

¹¹⁶ Ethnographic relates to the scientific description of peoples and cultures with their customs, habits, and mutual differences. Google, *Google Dictionary*, https://www.google.com/search?q=ethnographic+definition&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS924US924&oq=ethnographic&aqs=chrome..69i57j35i39j0i433l2j0l6.6608j1j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

¹¹⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*, 113.

used as the basis for implementing desired changes. In this context the questionnaire provided preliminary findings; however, the true picture will not fully emerge for a long period of time. The purpose is to entice utilization of available church counseling ministry programs. Observation, tracking, and detailed recording of an increase or a decrease in usage will provide the researcher with the most accurate assessment of success or reasoning to regroup if necessary.

Participants Included

The action research project involved the pastors, church staff, lay leaders, volunteers, and congregation located at this parish location only. As previously stated, there are many parish locations in the district; however, it is not feasible to involve them at the present time. High school aged participants would have been very important in the research because of the intricacies they face daily with social issues, peer pressure issues, bullying, and unfortunately, suicide attempts or ideation, among other serious issues. The conditions existing with the COVID 19 Pandemic did not lend for the inclusion of individuals under the age of eighteen as there was not a substantial change in the pandemic conditions in our local area conducive to more research opportunities.

Group Participation Possibility

Good Shepherd has several excellent educational developmental programs for discipleship. One such program is the “Pastor’s Coffee Hour” between services each Sunday. It provides a relaxed more comfortable atmosphere for the new church goer. New members that come to the church and members who use English as a secondary language can go to Pastor’s Coffee to further explore the Bible, but in a more flexible, less rigid format for their understanding. Pastor’s Coffee is also beneficial in that the Bible and biblical history are explored along with current events, social issues, community issues, and other topics pertinent to

social issues of the day. In the book written by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, Mark Strauss relays this comment about the authors, “The authors affirm that the Bible is not just a history of religious people doing religious things, it is the self-revelation of God, inspired by His Spirit and teaching us his ways in the past so we can live in the present.”¹¹⁸ With those thoughts in mind, functioning as the facilitator for “Pastor’s Coffee,” this writer attempts to explore the Bible with the congregation, with an ulterior motive of bridging the gap of time, culture, language, and society to provide relevance to today’s issues of life, be it social, financial, or other issues that affect today’s Christian. A survey of the history of the people and times is a great part of that. Participants of the Pastor’s Coffee group readily provided rapport for the research due to the past weekly interaction between the researcher and the participants for the Bible study. The format of this group is excellent because of its natural tendency to explore varied issues. Caution was taken to not display an attitude of preference for this group or its members due to the familiarity and convenience factors.

Research Interrupted by the Crisis Situation

Crisis in the form of COVID 19 has polarized the world through its viciousness and element of uncertainty. Such uncertainty has presented forward movement, or in fact, almost no allowable movement to a degree of massed hysteria. Many problems may surface during the lifetime of individuals, groups, or organizations. The smallest of those problems can be squashed with a minimal amount of effort; however, the most major problems or those problems involving many participants may require further investigation. A problem to one person can be a growing moment for that person, but a debilitating occurrence for another. There is sometime only a minute difference in a crisis or a traumatic event for an individual. Dr. Norman H. Wright

¹¹⁸ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, third edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001, 2005, 2012), 12.

explains that “Often, a crisis is just one step away from a trauma. It is when a person can move toward growth, enrichment and improvement; or can move toward dissatisfaction, pain, and in some cases dissolution.”¹¹⁹ The person’s coping mechanism, the occurrence of other sudden events, and other factors impact a person’s response to a situation. A crisis left untreated can manifest itself in other ways over time.

Scott Floyd uses the words of others to provide a few definitions of the word “crisis.” Individuals may use the word “crisis” in different everyday contexts. According to Floyd, “Most often, *crisis* connotes a negative or problematic state, event, or series of events, or an unstable time period with an uncertain outcome.”¹²⁰ Floyd using the words of Oden explains, “Thomas Oden observes that the word crisis is derived from the Greek word *Krinein*, meaning “to decide.” Generally a crisis is a turning point or crossroad in the development of something, a crucial time, a decisive point.”¹²¹ The importance of this is that knowing how to recognize an incongruence in an individual’s life and effectively responding as a counselor, friend or fellow Christian is important. “Caring for those in need reflects God’s character, it imitates Christ’s work, and carries out specific scriptural injunctions. It is an essential function of the body of Christ.”¹²² The pandemic has created the need for this understanding.

¹¹⁹ Dr. Norman H. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What To Do and Say When It Matters Most*, updated and expanded (Minneapolis, MN.: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 129.

¹²⁰ Scott Floyd, *Crisis Counseling, A Guide for Pastors and Professionals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 24.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 18.

Location

Response to COVID 19 issues has been ongoing in many countries. Due to that fact, Good Shepherd along with many other churches have not held in person worship services but two or three times in over eleven months. That was a significant problem for the research. It was not possible to relocate to the church, so a questionnaire on an internet format was one of the only means to conduct the research. While this was a suitable option, it was not the best procedure, especially in comparison to “face to face” interviews. A survey engine was devised with a series of questions; however, the internet requirement diminished the participation for a substantial number of participants. A period of a few weeks to reply to the survey increased the likelihood of more participation. The researcher functions as a participant, facilitator for the process, and a subject matter consultant on issues pertinent to research and pastoral counseling. Along with the other participants, he/she also stands to benefit from the findings. The main purpose is not only to build cohesion in the group, but also to pursue a lasting solution beneficial to the congregants.

A Model of Love

Pastors at the parish stand to gain if the process is successful by “sending more workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:38) and stress reduction for all involved. To provide relevance for Scripture in today’s context or environment, there must be intentionality toward “bridging the gap” for congregants to see the results. Pastoral counselors or in fact, anyone who delivers spiritual consultation to the congregation are to display a model of love toward healing and restoration for God’s hurting or suffering people. Philip J. Henry et al and Everett Worthington provide guidance in their counseling for married couples that is highly appropriate for understanding toward any counseling. Henry et al reveal that “love in Scripture is a command

and not an option. Christians should take the commands of God seriously. God gave a command, not a request “to love our neighbors as ourselves” (Matt. 22, 29).”¹²³ This is most crucial and truthful from the aspects of any counselor involved in God’s work and sets the foundation of the research.

Instilling Hope

Hope is crucial to counseling. Worthington displays a model of helping to build hope for the individual(s). His model is simply stated as, “Hope = Will power + Way power + Wait power, even if change is not happening.”¹²⁴ In this model God provides the hope and the mental power to wait for that change. The fact is the individual(s) must provide the work phase of the process. All “stakeholders” must be an integral part of the entire process from start to finish to create the work necessary to build toward hope. Demonstrating an atmosphere of love throughout the process along with instilling hope for a successful project are the ingredients necessary for the plan forward.

Quite assuredly this situation is not of that same magnitude; however, all must be forever mindful of the early years of Christianity. Douglas Groothuis makes these profound statements, “Of all the world’s religions, Christianity alone purports to be based on the resurrection of its divine founder. No other religion or worldview makes such an audacious and consequential claim.”¹²⁵ The historical significance in those statements is remembering a broken, bewildered, shattered, dispersed, confused, fearful, and anxious group of Jesus followers suffering despair

¹²³ Philip J. Henry, PhD, Lorie Marie Figueroa, MS, David R. Miller, and Associates, *The Christian Therapist’s Notebook: Homework, Handouts, and Activities for Use in Christian Counseling* (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 169.

¹²⁴ Worthington, *Hope-Focused*, 31.

¹²⁵ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 527.

and loss of all hope. Hope was replaced by hopelessness, despair, and fear among other emotions. Restoring hope would take a miracle and Christians believe in that miracle through a risen savior. Jesus' resurrection provided the basis of all hope in historical Christianity and provides that same hope for Christians today.

Obtaining Support

Several preliminary procedures were warranted to conduct the study. An extremely important fact to remember is that organizations have different organizational structures. Those structures may be organized through a rigidly formal system or in more of an informal system. Often, systems will include a combination of both where the staff and leaders hold to a formal organization structure, but there are others not in those positions who, nevertheless, hold a great deal of influence despite lack of formal title. In some cases, especially in situations where the leadership rotate on a one-year or two-year basis as is this current parish, those individuals may hold even a more influential status than the actual leaders themselves. More assuredly full-time staff members who normally do not rotate with the leadership, are the most influential part of the equation, because of their vast institutional knowledge. Long time members, community leaders, business owners, and major donors or contributors undoubtedly factor into the influential equation. Soliciting the support of these key leaders added credibility to the project. This eased the process of informing the congregation and obtaining their support as well. It is important to include all in the process, to learn of the nuances of the relationship held, the positions held, and to avoid the perception of being an outsider threatening the authority of key leaders or attempting to assert one's own agenda.

Good Shepherd congregants educate themselves through teachings offered in educational series and books by pastor and author Adam Hamilton. Hamilton lists service as one of his

essentials of the Christian life. “God’s primary mode of working in the world is through people.”¹²⁶ Hamilton reflects on, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me” (Isaiah 6:8). A regular musical favorite of Good Shepherd (*Here I am Lord*) reverberates the words of the prophet Isaiah in which he accepted God’s commission of service for him: Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

Corporate Vision and Prayer

Vision serves as a binding glue for this project and any other project. The confusion lies in if it is the vision of God, the pastors, the researcher, or the congregation. The clarification is in that all are intricately laced and should be a collective, concerted effort from all being on the “same page.” God gives the vision, but it is up to his people to breathe life into that vision. The researcher(s) must remember the power of prayer to understand, convey, and implement the vision to self and others. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter tells us that prayer is our greatest strategic response and our greatest resource because it brings us close to God, acknowledges our dependence on Him, and expresses our will to glorify Him with our efforts.¹²⁷ Lingenfelter explains the intricate relationship held between vision and corporate prayer as:

- God clarifies vision within and through corporate prayer.
- God motivates people to action through corporate prayer.

¹²⁶ Adam Hamilton, *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2019), 67.

¹²⁷ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 41.

- Prayer is the body of Christ humbling itself before God, worshiping God, listening to the Holy Spirit, and submitting in obedience to the will and purpose of God.¹²⁸

Methodology

A caution expressed by Tim Sensing was the “De theologizing” of a Doctor of Ministry thesis project. In this the understanding is that relying too heavily on the social sciences for theory, practice, and measures of success for a religious project results in the reputation of the degree suffering. In examining methodology models, He states, “I identify most with Bevans’ “The Praxis Model” or action-reflection-action activity that is in process and moving forward.”¹²⁹ The chosen model of action research to be profiled later will highlight those very principles. The major concept from Sensing that should be expressed in its entirety is that “The DMIN (Doctor of Ministry) student functions as a resident contextual theologian who is initiating a ministry intervention within a particular context in order to address critically a discrete problem so that the community will continue its journey of becoming like Christ for the sake of the world.”¹³⁰ Defining research and dissecting the methodology chosen for this research follows.

A methodology designed to conduct research is most crucial. Ernest Stringer provides the definition of research and later gives a detailed explanation of the research methodology that will be utilized in this study. “Research is a systematic and rigorous inquiry or investigation that enables people to understand the nature of problematic events or phenomena. It can be characterized by a focus on a problem or issue to be investigated, a systematic process of inquiry,

¹²⁸ Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 41.

¹²⁹ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research, A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), XIX.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

and a development of explanations that lead to increased understanding.”¹³¹ Whereas there are differing research methodologies, action research is applied in this research rather than quantitative research, due to its more flexible application toward social world issues. Stringer explains, “Experimental and survey research sometime called quantitative research is intended to provide generalizable explanations that provide the basis for predicting and controlling events and phenomena through rigorous application of numerically based hypothesis-testing procedures.”¹³² The very definition implies being problematic when dealing with social aspects or social issues involving many people. Stringer insists that quantitative research has its place in predicting phenomena in the physical world, but its rigidity poses problems in investigating social world issues which “requires a different set of assumptions and procedures.”¹³³ The solution to addressing social issues is inherent in action research. The assumptions and procedures of action research will be explored, but first – What is action research?

In its simplest form, “Action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives.”¹³⁴ To unpack the action research qualities, one can appreciate the flexibility of that model’s use in the ministry context.

- It seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in a social context.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Stringer, *Action Research*, 5.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

- Action research uses continuous cycles of investigation of issues and problems in specific situations or localized settings.
- It has been used successfully in schools, hospitals, health clinics, churches, and other applications where social dynamics must be considered as a part of the investigative technics to render useful findings. Factory workers, students, youth groups, teachers, urban and community planners, doctors, senior citizens, and other entities have successfully utilized and benefitted from the components of this research.¹³⁶
- Action research is a collaborative approach that involves the equal input of those involved in the situation to identify the problem, investigate the problem, and arrive at a unified conclusion beneficial to their unique situation. This can provide ownership of the problem resulting in active work toward finding and implementing a solution. The benefits directly apply to that location; therefore, are realized first-hand by the participants, rather than vicariously through others, but other locations or organizations may also capitalize on the available solution.
- Look, think, and act constitutes the framework of this research and can be understood as:

Look

 1. Gather information.
 2. Describe the situation.

Think

 1. Explore and analyze.

¹³⁶ Stringer, *Action Research*, 11.

2. Interpret and explain.

Act

1. Plan a course of action based on the look and think stage.

2. Implement that plan.

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.¹³⁷

- Action is the dominant word and requires action on the part of the individuals to investigate, plan, implement the plan, and evaluate the results of the plan. Action is also required on the part of the group to follow through until successful results are obtained, or if necessary, abandon the plan to repeat the entire process.

The look, think, act routine becomes an integral part of each stage and assures that investigation is done in each phase of the process. This continuous repeating of effort returns to the start process if necessary. It can progress in either direction to proceed with beneficial results or regroup if the results are not yielding results toward a solution to the pertinent issue.¹³⁸

Stringer provides information that is crucial for the understanding of the participants and the researcher. Programs or activities that do not involve all participants in the planning stages generally “fail to capture the interest or commitment of the people they serve and are often ineffective, inefficient, or both.”¹³⁹ The problem is that the vision becomes that of the planner and his/her idea of help for the people involved. This procedure fails to allow the people to chart the best way forward to solve their own situation. An authoritative approach toward the situation or an uninformed approach will usually create resistance from the individuals the

¹³⁷ Stringer, *Action Research*, 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 73.

planner was trying to help. The most vital information to consider is this quote from Stringer: “Because this activity brings people’s work lives and sometimes private lives, into the public arena, it requires a great deal of tact and sensitivity. Construction, consensus, and negotiation need to take place in conditions that recognize the impact of these activities on participants’ pride and dignity and enhance their feelings of unity, control, and responsibility.”¹⁴⁰

This is most crucial especially in the arena of pastoral counseling. One must remember Johnson and Johnson’s information that “when in distress 40 percent go to their clergyperson first” and “the minister may be the only one that the suffering parishioner may allow into their private lives.”¹⁴¹ These facts are coupled with the Hawkins and Clinton statements, “Church settings are notorious for divulging shared secrets, and a person’s resistance to allow you to consult with a pastor or former therapist can be a significant problem.”¹⁴² This is at best a “recipe for disaster,” if not handled professionally. Not displaying an atmosphere of the person’s best interest can also derail the entire process, whether in the initial stages or even well into the process. Attempts to build rapport or to establish a relationship with the individual are compromised in that situation.

An outline can chart the best way forward toward the engagement of all interested parties. This directs the execution of the upcoming phase in an upward motion toward success, while delivering the aspects of love, grace, inclusion, and respect to all involved.

1. Establish contact with all involved in the action project.

¹⁴⁰ Stringer, *Action Research*, 76.

¹⁴¹ Johnson and Johnson, *The Minister’s Guide*, 2.

¹⁴² Hawkins and Clinton, *The New Christian Counselor*, 66.

2. Identify “stakeholders” or those groups or individuals most affected by or most benefitting from the action research project.
3. Gain access to the key people that will be involved in the project.
4. Make known to all that the role of the action research researcher is more of a facilitator as opposed to that of a supervisor, boss, or team leader.
5. Inform others of the purpose of the researcher.
6. Create a neutral stance of being a skilled, supportive, resourceful, purposeful facilitator engaging with a process to help all involved. Since the research in this ministry context is a familiar context for the researcher, he/she does in fact, stand to gain benefits from a successful project as well.
7. Remember that all participants hold an equal position of input into the project; therefore, the facilitator must maintain a similar position of equal access to all those involved. No one group will supersede another in importance, input, planning authority, or other.¹⁴³ The research should then be sufficiently poised to enter the next phase of the action research project.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

Stringer explains of the importance of getting to know the interacting networks of social groups pertinent to that organization. Caution is to also remember that schools, hospitals, government agencies, businesses, and churches may have a more rigidly formal structure with individuals, groups, or offices assigned to a specific function within that organization.¹⁴⁴ To infringe upon the authority of such, overstep boundaries, to circumvent or usurp the authority of

¹⁴³ Stringer, *Action Research*, 76-85.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 85.

any can be devastating to the success of the study. It could inconceivably thwart the research before it can commence. The researcher must gain permission to enter that leadership world as much as gain permission into the world of all others through transparency, forthrightness, availability, and willingness to share in the planning, implementation, and execution as another stakeholder in the process. The wise plan forward for the researcher is as follows:

- Present oneself as a resource person.
- Be aware of dress and appearance – fit the style of the situation and not one's own personal style. This is extremely important as well from a counselor's perspective. Clients who feel belittled, demeaned, bossed, reminded of extreme differences in finances, culture, or life's circumstances may be extremely reluctant to engage in any type of treatment. Even if the treatment is for their own benefit and will make monumental changes in their own well-being.
- A researcher must establish an understanding of intended purpose in nonthreatening terms. Associate with all groups whether in a formal or an informal manner being accessible to all participants. Meet in places where each stakeholder group feels at home and maintain a visible presence to negate the possibility of impropriety.¹⁴⁵

This is a most noteworthy statement to adhere too when at all possible. Once this researcher was observing a work situation in which the groups were at odds with each other because the leadership engaged some participants in after work parties, drinking engagements, and other activities that other workers were not invited to attend or would not attend because of personal obligations or otherwise held convictions. Consequently, through familiarity, the social participants progressed ahead in leadership positions because of receiving more favorable

¹⁴⁵ Stringer, *Action Research*, 85.

evaluations. Whether deserved or not, the appearance of impropriety was already established. The ostracized group even gave a name to the recipients that was not professional and not deserved in all cases. The leadership was aware of the nickname, the dissention within the ranks, but allowed further resentment to occur through lack of action and refusing to restrict actions to a more professional relationship. Unfortunately, this is not an ideal or appropriate situation in any type of organization. Of course, this was an extreme occurrence in a different organization; however, even a minute setback can be catastrophic for the researcher and any success of the research. Assurance of transparency is crucial to all participants and is another crucial element that will be a comfort factor for all the participants. Stating purpose, answering questions upfront for participants, and providing escape clauses for them from the research is a must.

The Revised Plan of Data Collection

Data collection for the study was collected through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire provided insight into the perceived education of the congregation in terms of the role of pastoral counseling. It was attached to a survey engine that recorded and analyzed the findings of the questions. Some questions were directly applicable to the research that was performed; however, some questions were utilized to gauge the frequency the members were present for worship services and other events at the church. This gave an indication if that person was supportive of church activities and provided an estimation as to if they would support additional programs at the parish. If one is not engaged in activities, then further participation may be another issue to deal with entirely. The questionnaire revealed valuable insight for the project at hand and served to open the channels for increased dialogue to ascertain knowledge toward a solution. Questions were formulated to provide the best information toward obtaining vital information for successful implementation of the project. To test the questionnaire before disseminating it to participants, several versions were written. The search engine provided input into choosing questions. Comparing the chosen questions against the

search engine suggestion as well as receiving feedback from the mentor led to changes being made for clarity. Additionally, an attempt was made to eliminate any questions that may prove uncomfortable for some participants or may infringe upon their privacy at an unnecessary level. These questions along with the feedback from the congregation provided a detailed look into the problem associated with this group. The researcher, pastors, and lay leaders received the questionnaire first to alert of any potential errors or questions needing to be revised. A sample of the questionnaire is in the appendix.

The unfortunate drawback was church closure and restrictions set forth due to the ongoing COVID Pandemic and the rise of reported cases of affected individuals. The Good Shepherd congregation is comprised of an extremely dedicated core of supporters; however, as is true in many situations, that core of supporters is mature in age. This of course created several problems as the members were certainly wise to not participate in group gatherings or to venture far from home to ensure their own safety. Getting participants for the research was difficult as the research already focused on a determinate number of individuals in a particular setting.

The pastors set aside time at the church on Tuesday morning through early afternoon for parishioners to visit the church to rejuvenate themselves and strengthen their faith, revive hope, and maintain a sense of community during an extremely difficult time. “What is happening” and “Why” are questions asked by all during a time of crisis. This is true as well for Christians, especially, those Christians less mature in their faith through being young or young in the Christian faith. The plan to stay connected was a brilliant plan for the church members providing a degree of comfort during this time of uncertainty and doubt. This time also provided an opportunity to pass - along information to the members concerning the pastoral counseling research. A flyer was generated to give to individuals announcing the need for participants to gain valuable information on counseling or their needs in terms of spiritual counseling especially amid the present conditions. A copy of that flyer is included in the appendix. This would have

been a valuable opportunity to solicit support for participation in the survey. The senior pastor was proactive in assisting with dissemination of the questionnaire; therefore, participation was obtained through a big part due to her efforts.

Each member was asked to participate in the research by logging onto the search engine website to complete the questionnaire. Members needing more information than possible on a flyer were asked to provide an email address to receive detailed information. That email included all the particulars of the research, a consent form, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission to conduct research, and the permission letter from the senior pastor for the research to be conducted through contacting and soliciting information from church staff and church members.

There were two questions that warranted further investigation on the project: What was the best way forward to implement the project? Question two was “What measuring tool would be utilized by the church leaders, staff, and researcher to chart the progress?” An understanding had to be made to the researcher and participants that the implementation must be done in stages. First understanding was that there are two implementation stages that must occur, and both are considerably different from the other. One was the implementation of the data gathering stage which provided pertinent information. The second phase involved the implementation of any work to be initiated after collecting the data. A feedback question that surfaced from participants was, “What happens after the data has been collected?” Phase one was completed in a timely manner; however, phase two is an ongoing project to initiate the process, evaluate the progress, and to continue charting the way forward with implemented changes.

Preliminary Findings Revealed

Preliminary findings from the data gathering have revealed a gap in the necessary knowledge base (informational charts in chapter four will further explain). Findings indicate that

whereas the congregation is familiar with pastoral counseling whether delivered by a pastor, pastoral counselor, layperson, or staff member, there is uncertainty of the format for this church. Creating the confusion is the presence of the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia (CPC) located at the church. Church members have some information concerning that center; however, they do not know how the CPC tandems with counseling at churches where counseling is normally performed by the pastors.

The leadership and staff here are famous for and extremely capable of delivering outstanding sermon series and religious educational series as demonstrated in several past series. A course of action must be to have an information series to fill in information gaps between the roll of church counselors and the CPC counselors. That series can provide a knowledge base that will eliminate some of the confusion.

Questions that need to be answered are:

1. What is the procedure for seeking counseling through the pastors at the church?
2. What is their knowledge base, area of expertise, or preferred area of counseling?
3. What methodology is followed in treatment?
4. How many sessions are normally permitted before referral to another source?
5. Will the church counselors be the first line of counseling with most issues?
6. What issues will constitute immediate referral to the CPC?
7. What services are offered by counselors at the CPC?
8. How do they differ from the church counselors?
9. What fees are involved with the CPC and the counselee's options for payments?

These are but some of the questions that will need to be addressed on an ongoing basis for church members due to new members and church leadership changes. Church leadership needs to know the answer to all these questions as well, especially if they are newly assigned to the parish. The work of the questionnaire has been completed, now findings from that study will reveal if the theoretical plan of implementing the second phase is indeed the correct plan to follow.

Possible Course of Action

A possible way for the counselors to gain familiarity with the congregation is to implement a program as a volunteer counselor occasionally assisting the youth pastor with the young adults of the congregation. The group meets on Sunday afternoons for a few hours (when permitted to do so again) and participate in outreach projects across the local and sometime outreaching areas of other states. Youth pastors are always in need of additional support for the myriad of issues that may occur within those age groups. Gaining knowledge of this entity and passing on your purpose, intentions, and desires to function as a helping source, can go a long way toward soliciting acceptance with other groups as well. Youth group acceptance can lead directly into ingratiating oneself to the parents of the congregation, staff, and other groups throughout. This is a most important group, not only because of their future achievement or contributions, but the necessity of preparing them for life issues that may later impact them. Others recognize genuineness when it is displayed and is offered as such, but by the same token, falseness of actions, deceit, or attempts to use others to get ahead or for personal gain will be readily recognizable as well. Be forthright in all dealings.

Another group that can use as much assistance as possible are young couples looking to be married or those struggling with problems. They can benefit immensely from programs

designed at teaching, educating, or demonstrating a biblical side to being couples (married couples). Les Parrott and Leslie Parrot elaborate on issues that every couple looking to be married or is married should know. The common fallacy is that these couples may enter the most committed part of their life without sufficient knowledge and holding preconceived generalizations or expectations that are far from realistic. Parrott and Parrott acknowledge that less than one fifth of marriages in America involve preparation. Planning for the wedding day supersedes planning for the wedding which sometime may equate to failure. “Of the 2.4 million couples who will get married this year in the United States, it is predicted that at least 43 percent will not survive. A study of those who recently tied the knot revealed that 49 percent reported having serious problems and half had doubts their marriage would last.”¹⁴⁶ This is a compelling argument for strengthening already existing couple’s programs and establishing one if one does not already exist.

Philip J. Henry, Lori Marie Figueroa, David R. Miller et al follow suit in this conversation with their articles, *Love Is... A New Beginning: Premarital Counseling for the Second Marriage. and Nothing Like the Brady Bunch*. The truth is that the meaning of love has escaped being defined by many. In all actuality, the experience of true love may have alluded them also. Parrott and Parrott maintain that even if premarital counseling is done, couples may still enter marriage with unrealistic expectations of anything from being made complete, financial stability, securing a provider, acquiring wealth, and yes, even obtaining a storybook image of love itself. The problem is not knowing each other, how to love, and how the roles of men and women truly are played out. Four common myths are: we expect the same things,

¹⁴⁶ Les and Leslie Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before – and After – You Marry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015, 2006, 1995), 12.

everything good in our relationship will get better, the bad will disappear, and the spouse will make them whole.¹⁴⁷ Even premarital counseling can sometime not prepare the informed couple for the discrepancies in the ideation of marriage and the reality of true marriage.

Henry, Figueroa, Miller et al add that regardless of what views you hold as a religious organization toward divorce and a second marriage, couples contemplating a second marriage for either partner is most in need of premarital counseling.¹⁴⁸ The debate on second marriages will be avoided in this format; however, the need for counseling knowledge must be emphasized. In the event of a second marriage, in many cases there will be kids involved. The idea of “nothing like the Brady bunch” is a too real situation when personalities of parents, new siblings, in laws, relatives, and friends from both sides are thrust into a relationship and told “play well together.” This is idealistic at best, unrealistic at most, and impossible in the worst sense of it all in some cases. A mediator is needed if not only to chart progress to “accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative” leading to a stress-free environment for all. As one can see, there are many situations in which a trusted source of knowledge can present itself if the needed individual only knows that source exists for the express purpose of relieving their troubled mind if possible.

Chapter four outlines each category of the questionnaire explored in detail and provides a more complete picture of the path to follow, after the extent of knowledge of the participants is learned. Graphs, charts, pie charts, and written commentary, when necessary, will explain the results collected from the participants through the questionnaire. A major concern is the revelation in chapter two that some pastors feel uneasy about providing counseling to their

¹⁴⁷ Parrott and Parrott, *Saving Your Marriage*, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Henry, Figueroa, Miller et al, *Christian Therapist's Notebook*, 177.

congregation. This ministry context has a unique situation in that professional counseling may be possible on the church site when needed. A real dilemma in this situation must be for the pastors to decide how they will approach the subject in tandem with the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia. A protocol must be arrived upon to avoid misunderstandings on the part of congregation members as indicated through preliminary findings. Examining chapter four thoroughly will answer many of the questions needed to explore.

Chapter 4

This portion of the study examines the results of the data gathered. In this study, due to the present pandemic situation, the principal data gathering method was the emailed questionnaire over a search engine. While a variety of data gathering methods are desired, it was not possible without delaying the completion of the study. Furthermore, the present conditions present an unfortunate but excellent opportunity to gauge the mental state, mental coping ability, and the mental resolve of the congregation. Pastoral care by way of pastoral counseling may be at a peak high in response to the situation.

Action research has inherent particulars to that model that must be reiterated during the next chapters of the study.

1. The researcher begins with an idea that there is a problem and addressing that problem will benefit the people involved.
2. It examines the social and emotional concerns of the participants which adds another dimension to its methodology that can be quite different from other research.
3. The researcher as well as other stakeholders in the research hold equal input and shares. Benefits that may be earned from the implementation of corrections provide equal shares to all involved (if a problem is deemed sufficient for changes to be made).

A revisit to the problem, the purpose statement, the thesis statement, and the basic assumptions are warranted to provide greater understanding throughout chapters four and five. Chapter four examines the results of the data collection and chapters four and five together explore the “what’s next” in the forward progression.

The problem is that the congregation of Good Shepherd may not understand the role of a pastoral counselor or counseling services offered through a pastor or minister; therefore, they do

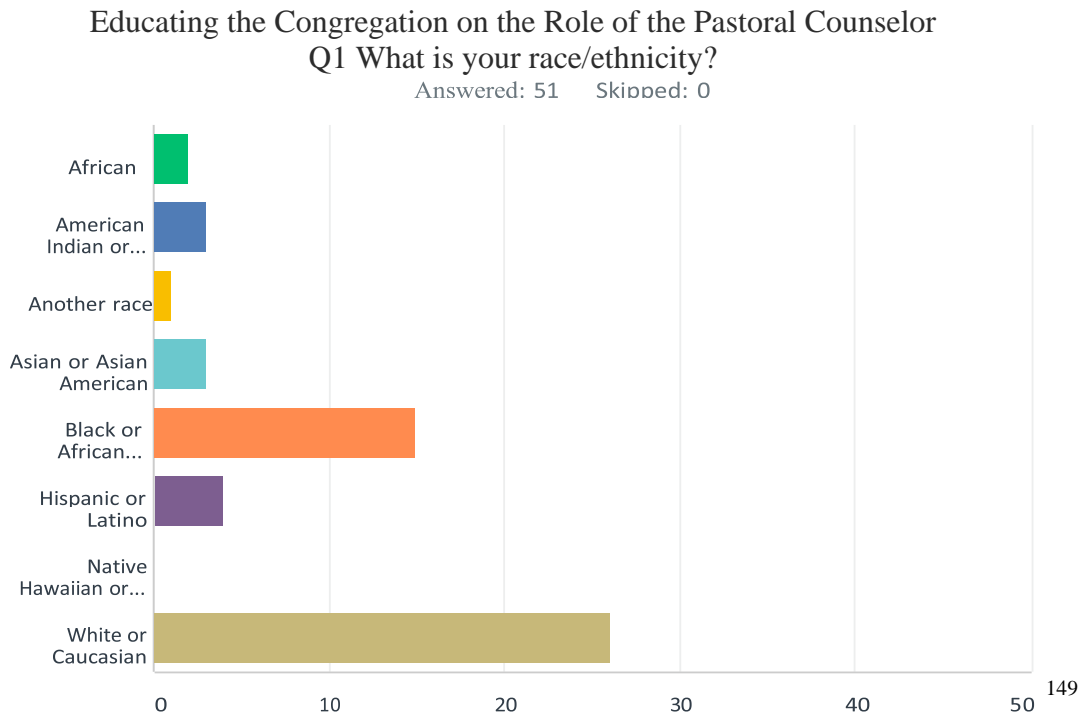
not readily utilize their services. The purpose of this action research project is to inform the congregation of the role of the pastoral counselor and others at the church who counsel to promote utilization of pastoral care through pastoral counselors and the pastors. If the congregation understands the role of the pastoral counselor, they may embrace the pastoral counselor and utilize the services provided. The basic assumption in this study is that there are many life issues facing individuals, couples, and families within the Good Shepherd Congregation and surrounding community. That assumption is followed with the idea that the pastoral counselor and pastors are best suited to address the problem and are professionally equipped to provide care and comfort for those who are broken, suffering, hurting or all three. After revisiting the particulars of this ministry context, an exploration of the data follows.

Results

Good Shepherd boasts of a multi-cultural presence throughout its congregation. The research goal was to gather feedback from around fifty individuals that have gone to Good Shepherd during the leadership of the present pastors as well as the preceding pastor. Participants who completed the questionnaire are highly indicative of the demographics of the congregation. Search engine data analyzation is offered in a groupings format or can be viewed as an individual reply to the thirty-one questions asked. It is quite useful for the researcher to examine both ways; however, the group format will be the only displayed format for this reporting. It was useful to divide the questionnaire into four parts for clarity. Each part includes a grouping of questions that approach different aspects of inquiry from the responses documented. Of the fifty-two respondents that represent one fourth to one third of the percentage of regular congregants, the following charts display the findings.

Part One - Participant Information - Demographics

Graphics one, two and three reflect the demographics of the research participating individuals from Good Shepherd in terms of race, age, and gender. Question one explores the race/ethnicity of the participants. The only category polled with no response was Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. It is uncertain whether there are no congregation members who are native Hawaiian or if there were no participants who elected to respond. An extremely well diverse population was represented by the other respondents. Good Shepherd displays a giant automated sign on the church property on which is written, “Come for the Diversity, but stay for the love.” This is highly indicated by the diversity of the membership of its congregation. The two largest response categories are also the two with the largest number of members at the church.



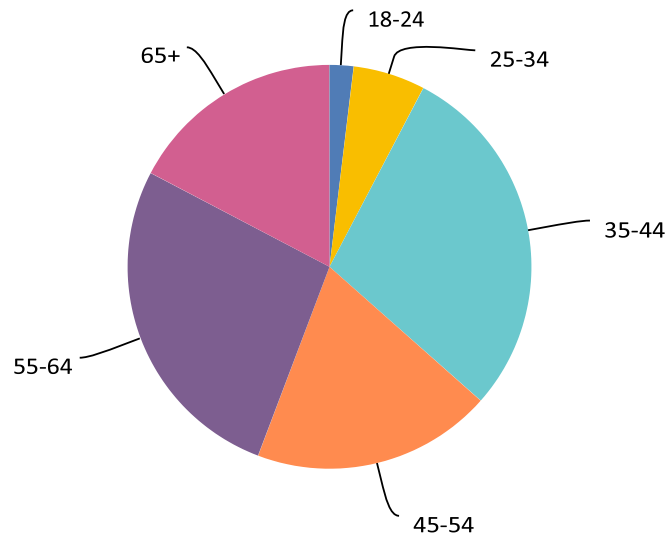
¹⁴⁹ All graphics included in this chapter were taken from the Richard Wilkins Research Questionnaire Summary from Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey.com, *Survey Monkey* (1999-2021), <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/aboutus/directors/>

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
African	3.92%	2
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.88%	3
Another race	1.96%	1
Asian or Asian American	5.88%	3
Black or African American	29.41%	15
Hispanic or Latino	7.84%	4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
White or Caucasian	50.98%	26
Total Respondents: 51		

Question two captures a picture of the age of the participants. The interesting fact is the age maturity reflected by the participants to the survey. Since this is a church born prior to 1970, the congregation consists of more mature members. This is undoubtedly a factor that will need to be revisited during the conclusion part of the research. The under 18 category shows no participation as that age group was intentionally not included in this study. The pie chart reflects a situation that is occurring throughout churches all over. That is the decline of attendance of certain age groups. The literature study in chapter two alerted that many individuals have elected to claim “spiritual but not religious” as an identifier. This has revealed a conscious effort to avoid the rigidity or rules of formalized religious practices or regular attendance at a church.

Question 2 results:

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
 Q2 What age category are you included?
 Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	1.92%	1
25-34	5.77%	3
35-44	28.85%	15
45-54	19.23%	10
55-64	26.92%	14
65+	17.31%	9
TOTAL		52

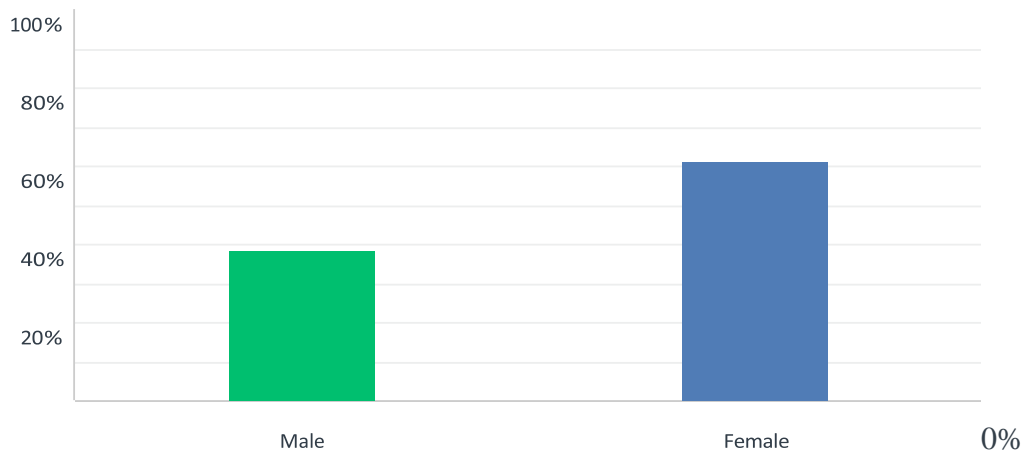
Question three completes the demographics portion. There was an overwhelming response to the survey by females as witnessed by their over 61% response rate versus a slightly over 38% rate for male participants. The females polled were willing to complete the survey and solicited other female congregants to participate also. Female participants were also more forthright in adding additional feedback that added greater understanding to the researcher.

Societal norms may be a factor. Additionally, the cultures represented tend to have differing views on the possibility or uncertainty of “airing family secrets in a public format.”

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q3 What is your gender?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0

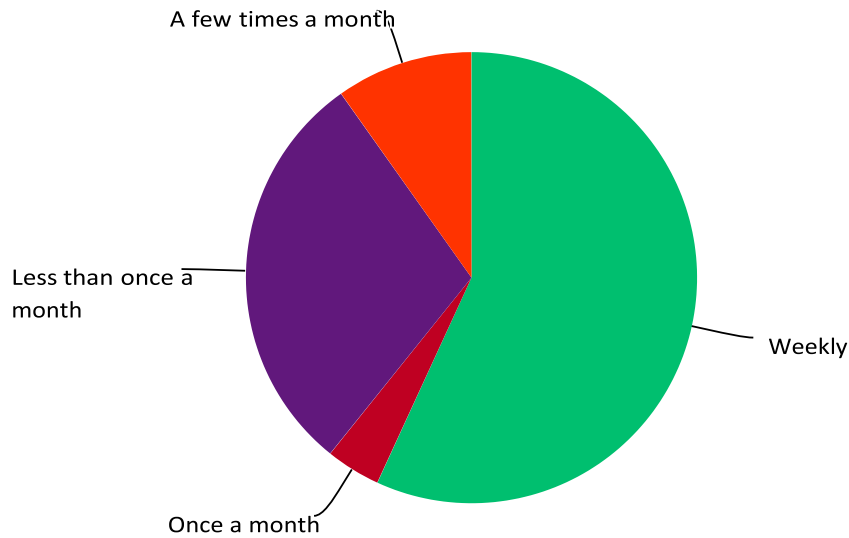


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	38.46%	20
Female	61.54%	32
Total Respondents: 52		

Part Two – Participant Information – Involvement

Part two provides additional information pertaining to the involvement of participants in present activities at the church. Church members already involved in activities, leadership positions, and community activities sponsored by the church should have more of a complete knowledge of its daily operations. This can give the researcher a more complete picture of the knowledge base of the congregation. Stands to reason that if those most involved are lacking understanding of some of the procedures, then others are quite uninformed. The next group of questions will educate the researcher on the congregation’s collective and individual understanding of how Good Shepherd works.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
 Q4 How often do you attend worship services at Good Shepherd?
 Answered: 51 Skipped: 1

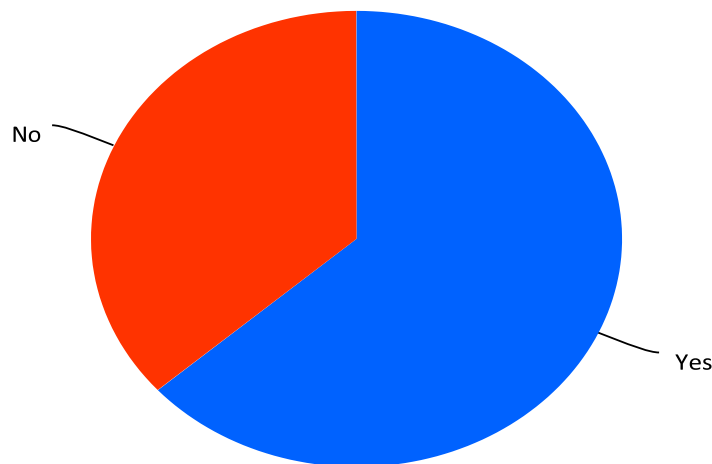


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Weekly	56.86%	29
Once a month	3.92%	2
Less than once a month	29.41%	15
A few times a month	9.80%	5
TOTAL		51

The individuals participating in the survey represent a large core of extremely dedicated members who faithfully attend Good Shepherd. Northern Virginia, which is often included when discussing the high cost of living in the Washington DC metropolitan area is further inflated by salaries of high ranking executives, senior military officials, and government officials. Many church members work on Sundays, before or after the worship service or alternate weekend work schedules. Secondary incomes are needed for most, whether it is from all the adults of a family working or one family member working at more than one job.

The next two graphs portray that church members are highly supportive of programs offered at the church. Good Shepherd offers several ministries in support of the local community that are exceptional and a great benefit to the surrounding community. Those services range from fun days in the park for kids, food provided weekly to area schools for student lunches and weekend meals, English classes that require minimal financial obligation for participants, holiday celebrations, and animal petting carnivals for the kids as an example of the many worthwhile programs. The pie chart displays over 60% participation; however, this researcher has personally witnessed a much higher participation rate from the collective congregation. Members of the congregation have been blessed themselves and graciously extend those blessings to others. It is quite remarkable to witness their enthusiasm toward giving to others.

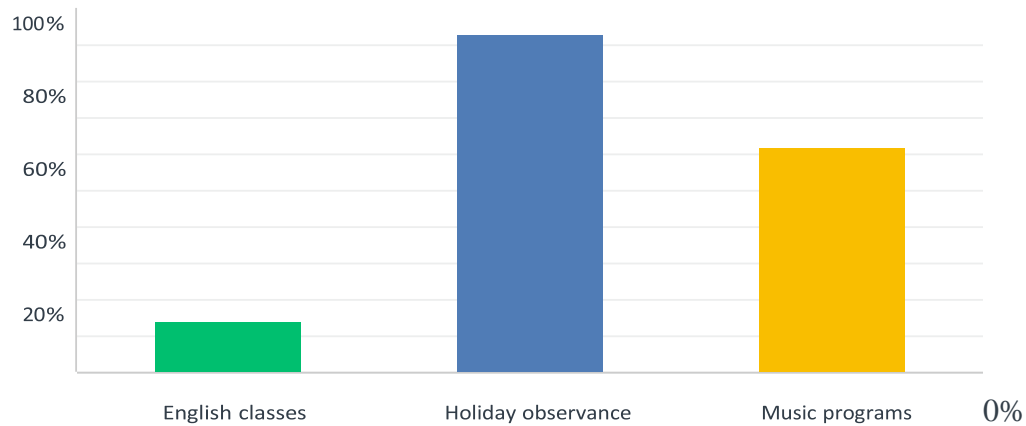
Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
 Q5, Do you attend other programs, events, or use other services offered at the church?
 Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	63.46%	33
No	36.54%	19
TOTAL		52

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q6 If yes, what type of events? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 29 Skipped: 23



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
English classes	13.79%	4
Holiday observance events	93.10%	27
Music programs	62.07%	18
Total Respondents: 29		

Holiday observance events often include special programs geared toward the kids in the surrounding community and are very well attended by an appreciative community.

Part Three – Participant Knowledge of Pastoral Counseling

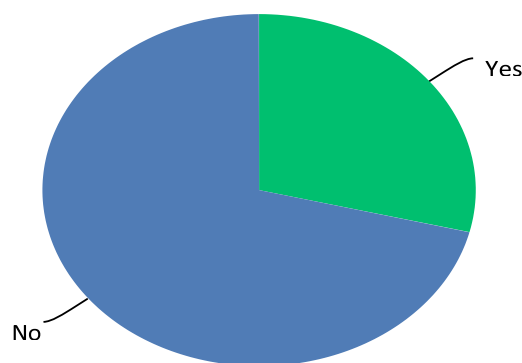
Congregation members revealed a lot of information in response to questions pertaining to the counseling practices performed at the church whether performed by the pastors, staff, lay leaders, or another individual. Most importantly, an attitude of comfort and extreme confidence in the ability of the Good Shepherd counselors to perform counseling duties while maintaining confidentiality of its members was expressed by most of the questionnaire respondents. Of course, there were a few participants that expressed concerns; however, it was not a concern of competence or the threat of leaked information due to negligence on anyone's part. The major concern was the small size of the congregation not providing enough anonymity of individuals

seeking counseling. Concerns range from a fear of being personally discovered as needing assistance or a family member needing assistance from issues that life may present during some periods.

Good Shepherd is a well-educated congregation scholastically and in terms of knowledge of their denomination, its history, doctrines, and other information. There are many educational programs that occur at the church; therefore, its members are well informed on different issues. Also, there exists an insatiable appetite for further learning. Feedback from the members who answered yes to question 7 revealed recent unexpected situations beyond their control. Family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker sickness, stress, and uncertainty during the pandemic has exacerbated stress levels amplifying already increased levels of anxiety experienced by some.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q7 Do you frequently suffer uncertainty about life, spirituality, family, or your own spiritual growth?

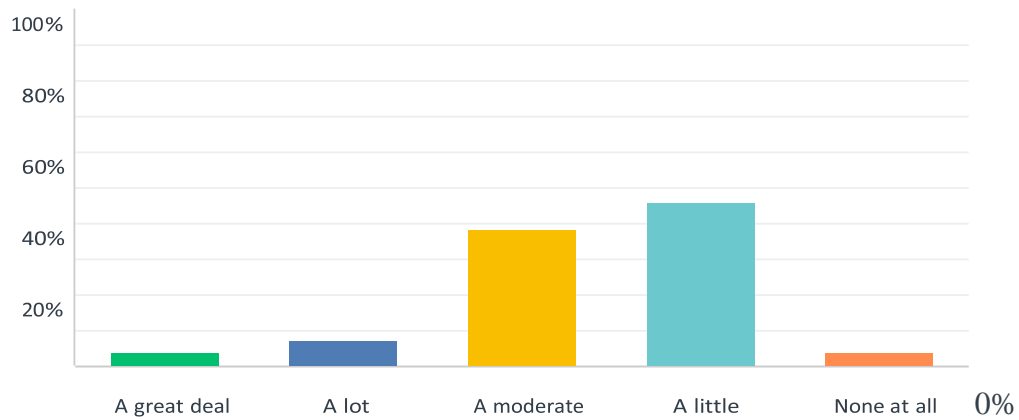
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	28.85%	15
No	71.15%	37
TOTAL		52

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q8 How often do you feel stressed or overwhelmed with life's events?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	3.85%	2
A lot	7.69%	4
A moderate amount	38.46%	20
A little	46.15%	24
None at all	3.85%	2
TOTAL		52

A response of 3.85% great deal and 7.69 % answering “a lot” are quite low percentage rates for the situation that exists. This can represent great faith and maturity in the face of adversity and uncertainty from the members answering the questionnaire.

Questions nine, ten, and eleven are extremely important questions for the sake of community and not functioning alone. Following the example of Jesus, having trusted confidants, functioning in community, collectively worshiping, and honoring each other through love and caring for the welfare of another are essential Christian attributes. Author, Paul Pettit expressed, “The spiritual journey is not to be a solitary walk but a community pilgrimage. The isolated, self-guiding ascetic is vulnerable to spiritual imbalance. Balanced spiritual formation

is cultivated in the company of like-minded comrades and sensitive confidants.”¹⁵⁰ Pettit follows with advising that we draw wisdom, courage, and comfort from each other and to pursue spirituality alone is folly.¹⁵¹

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q9 Are there trusted confidants that you can contact for guidance or listening to your concerns?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 1

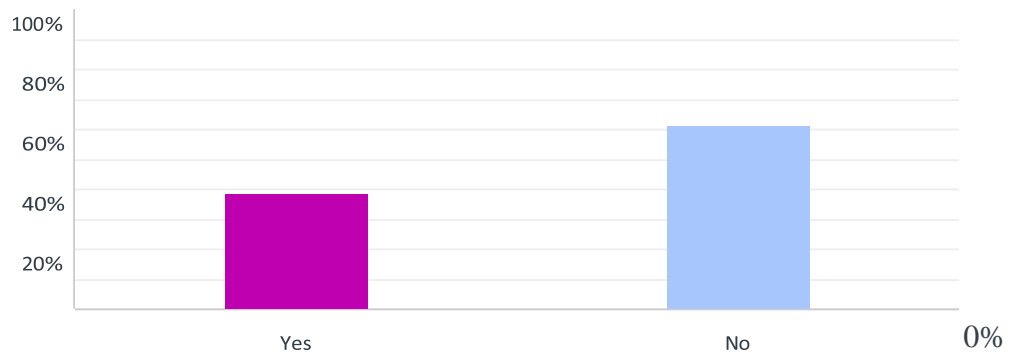


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	86.27%	44
No	13.73%	7
Total Respondents: 51		

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q10 Do you sometimes wish to talk with someone, but do not know who to contact?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



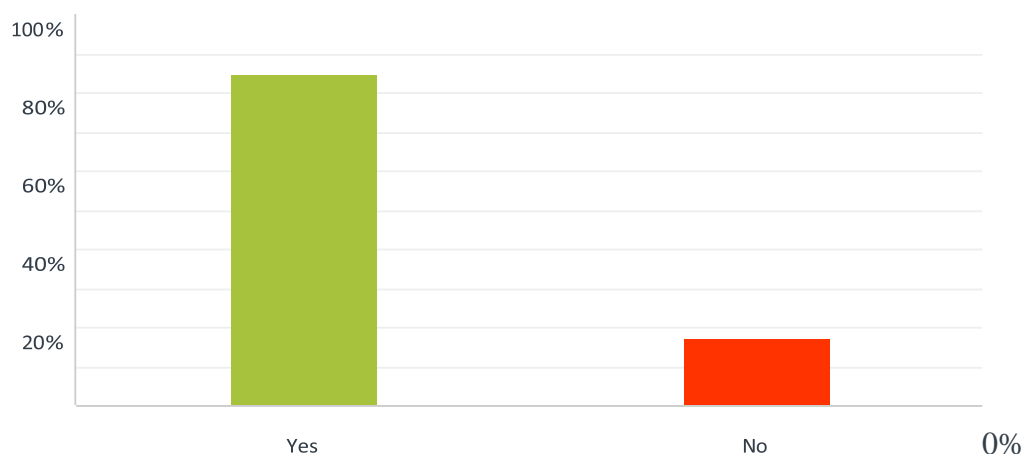
¹⁵⁰ Pettit, *Spiritual Formation*, 78.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38.46%	20
No	61.54%	32
Total Respondents: 52		

Question 11 response highlights an over 84% approval rating for the confidence in the Good Shepherd leadership. A 100 % rating is always desirable but not ascertainable in most cases and could reveal another problem with the survey response. A margin of error is allowable for variables not able to account for in this format.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q11 Would you feel comfortable contacting the church leadership for counsel, listening, guidance, or advice on an issue?
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.62%	44
No	17.31%	9
Total Respondents: 52		

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q12 What is your reasoning for either answer?

Answered: 44 Skipped: 8

Question 12 will not be included in its entirety in this forum. It is one of the two questions in the questionnaire that allows for participants to express their own opinion rather than respond to a multiple choice. The nature of those responses decreases the chances of members remaining anonymous, especially due to the size of the congregation and participants to this research. A small rendering of some of the most common answers will be included below as part of group responses instead of the individual responses recorded.

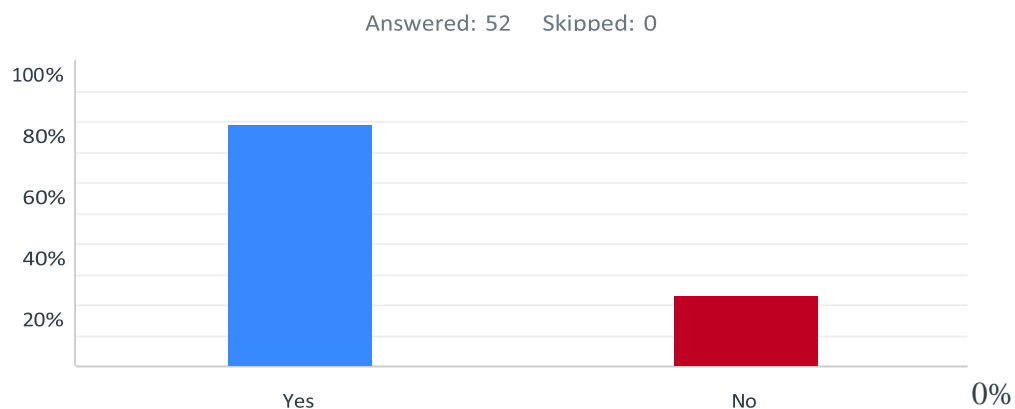
Participants stated that they have trust in the leadership and staff of Good Shepherd. There has been a concerted effort to build an atmosphere of trust, demonstrated competency and spiritual maturity, godliness, and love for others through personal care for them. Several participants relayed that where there is trust there is comfort and they are comfortable with Good Shepherd, its programs, and its people.

Problems mentioned by many were child rearing problems, especially teens and the difficulty of the times. Stress was high on the list. Family emergencies, family crisis, family sickness or death were not surprisingly, big concerns.

Some participants responded that they would not feel comfortable visiting the parish for counseling. Fear of being found out, fear of being labeled, and fear of losing credibility in the community, the job, or in their leadership position were the most common answers. Another problem mentioned that deserves exploration at another time is the inability for church members to rearrange their schedule to visit the church during the hours posted due to strict work schedules or a long commute to and from work.

The next grouping of questions thirteen through twenty-five asks the question, “What is the congregation’s present knowledge of counseling.” To educate the congregation one must first learn what is the present understanding. This research “Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor” must tackle two issues due to the ministry context. Pastoral counseling by the pastors, staff, lay leaders, and pastoral counselors must be addressed, but the licensed counselors of the CPC must be included to deliver a well-rounded complete understanding of counseling at Good Shepherd. Graphics 13- 25 examines participant’s knowledge of the church counselors followed by graphics 26-31 to explore the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia. The discussion commences with Good Shepherd counseling first.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q13 Do you know what a pastoral counselor does?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.85%	41
No	23.08%	12
Total Respondents: 52		

Response for this question reveals a need to educate the congregation to bring the percentage into the ninety to one hundred percent range; hence, the reason for the study. Over

78% could be an adequate range, but how is that affected when the complete congregation is factored into the total? Undoubtedly, there will be a considerable amount of change as many of the study participants were already more familiar with the inner workings of Good Shepherd.

Questions 14 and 15 attempts to understand if the congregation is aware of counseling at the church and who conducts that counseling. Interesting enough, a trained pastoral counselor offering counseling was given a higher percentage rating than the senior pastor. Considering that there is no pastoral counselor assigned to the church, the confusion lies in that the licensed pastoral counselors at the centers are considered as the “go to” source for counseling.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q14 Is pastoral counseling offered at the church by the pastors, a pastoral counselor, or other staff member?

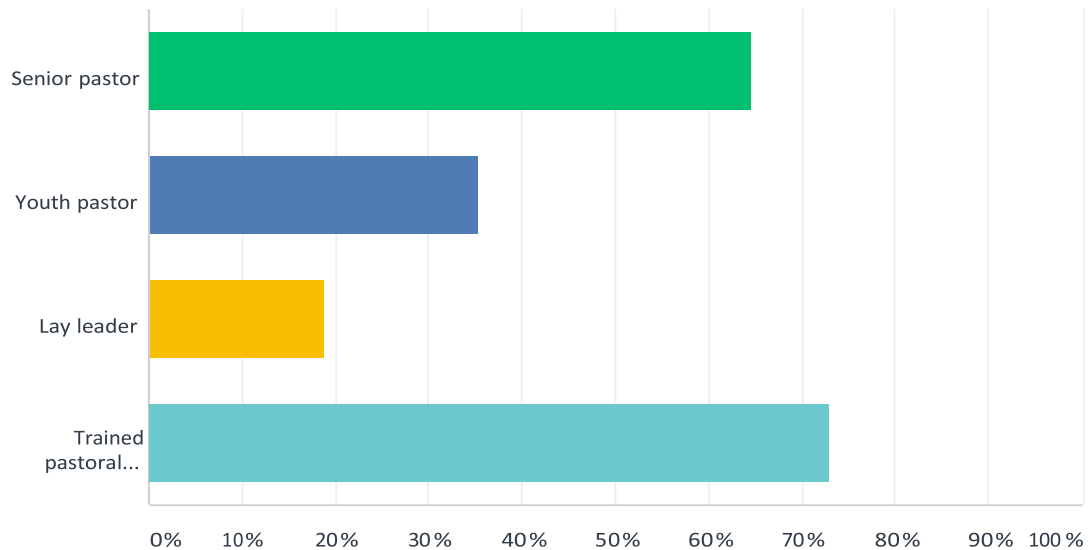
Answered: 46 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	89.13%	41
No	10.87%	5
TOTAL		46

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q15 Who conducts counseling sessions? You may check more than one answer.

Answered: 48 Skipped: 4



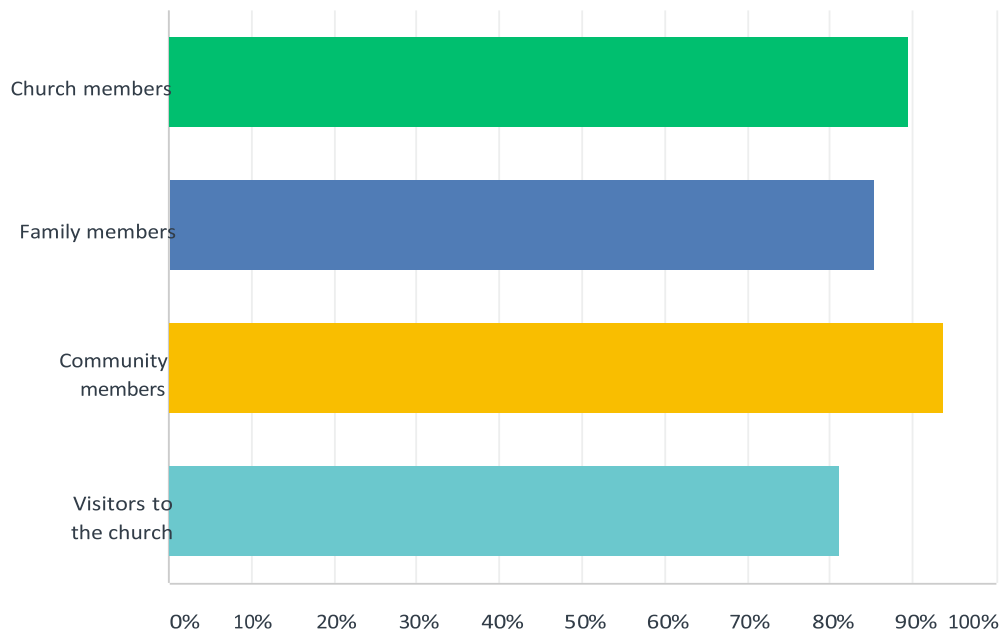
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Senior pastor	64.58%	31
Youth pastor	35.42%	17
Lay leader	18.75%	9
Trained pastoral counselor	72.92%	35
Total Respondents: 48		

The Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia seems to receive the overwhelming vote as the first source for counseling at the church. In reference to the literature review in chapter two, Johnson and Jonson revealed that 40% go to the clergyperson first and the church may be the only one an individual or family may visit to discuss personal difficulties.¹⁵² This makes this unique situation a deviation from the norm.

¹⁵² Johnson and Johnson, *The Minister's Guide*, 2.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q16 Who is eligible to request a counseling session? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 48 Skipped: 4



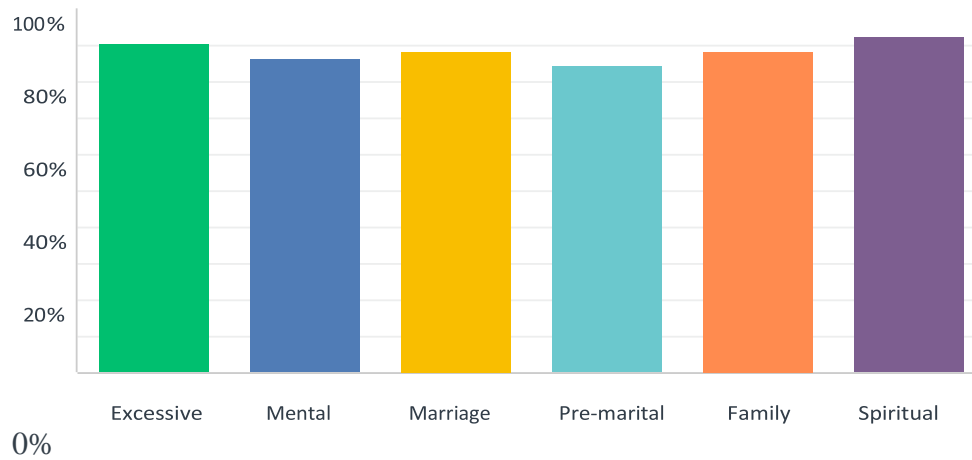
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Church members	89.58%	43
Family members	85.42%	41
Community members	93.75%	45
Visitors to the church	81.25%	39
Total Respondents: 48		

Interestingly, community members scored a higher percentile than any other category.

Four individuals skipped answering the question signaling further uncertainty for this subject.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q17 What are some reasons to request pastoral counseling? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0

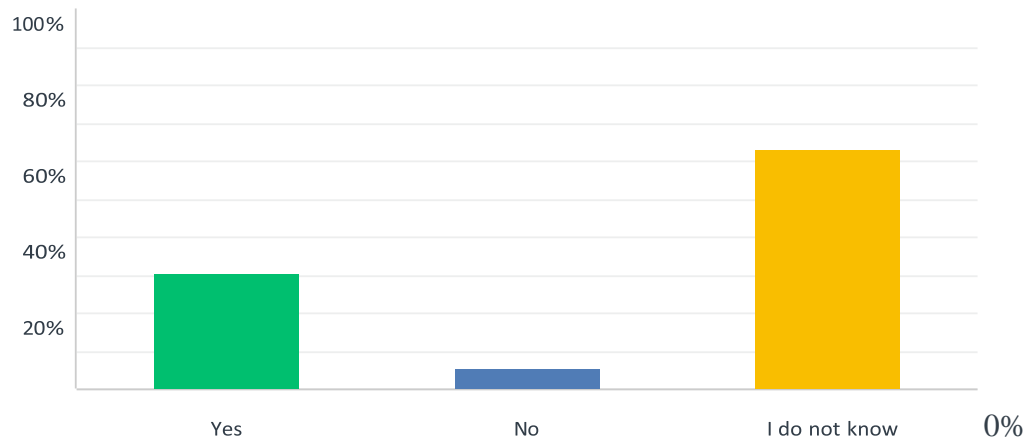


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Excessive stress	90.38%	47
Mental health concerns	86.54%	45
Marriage counseling	88.46%	46
Pre-marital counseling	84.62%	44
Family issues	88.46%	46
Spiritual concerns or questions	92.31%	48
Total Respondents: 52		

Considerable understanding is demonstrated through the consistent answers to question 17. Feedback given listed the Center for Pastoral Counseling as the source for mental health concerns whether small or more significant. Many couples have been married for decades; therefore, marriage counseling and pre-marital counseling were slightly lower in rankings.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q18 Can you request a particular person for counseling?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0

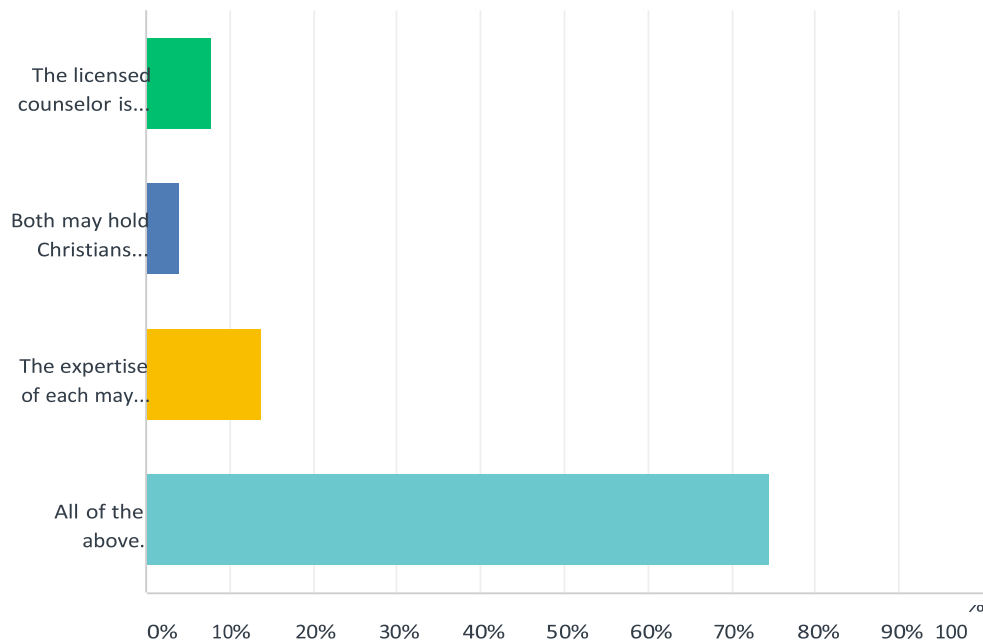


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	30.77%	16
No	5.77%	3
I do not know	63.46%	33
TOTAL		52

A percentage of 63.46% answer of “I do not know” gives the research firm footing for an educational need. The remaining sections consistently produced numerous answers of uncertainty as the response.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
 Q19 What is the difference between a licensed professional counselor and a pastoral counselor?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 1



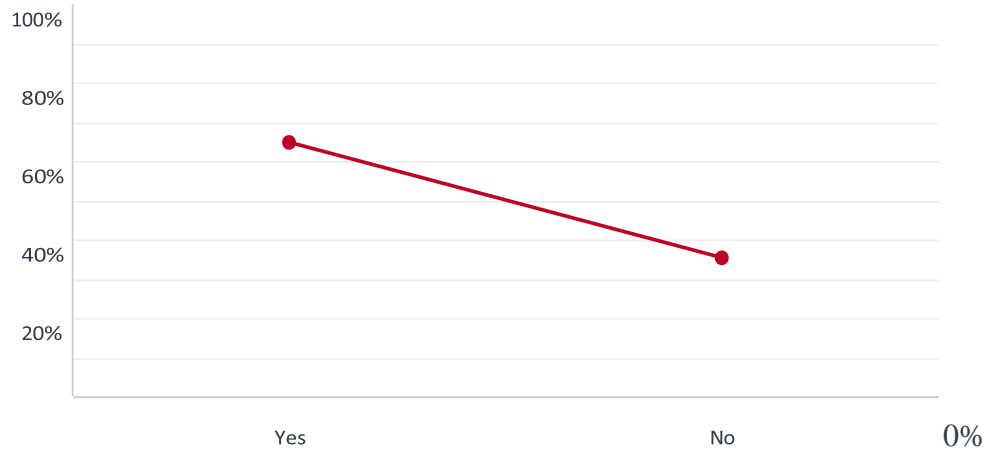
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The licensed counselor is licensed by the state.	7.84%	4
Both may hold Christians views.	3.92%	2
The expertise of each may differ according to the problem and their particular training.	13.73%	7
All of the above.	74.51%	38
TOTAL		51

Answers to question 19 shows that many understand the differences in the counselors. An almost 75% rating of understanding reveals a great deal of knowledge on the part of the participants.

The next question accentuates the idea that stress and related issues, or personal problems are affecting many today. Almost three fourths of the participants answered yes to having concerns of problems or excessive stress that warranted seeking additional help.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q20 Do you sometimes have issues with self or family that are not spiritual concerns but are mental health or emotional concerns?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 1

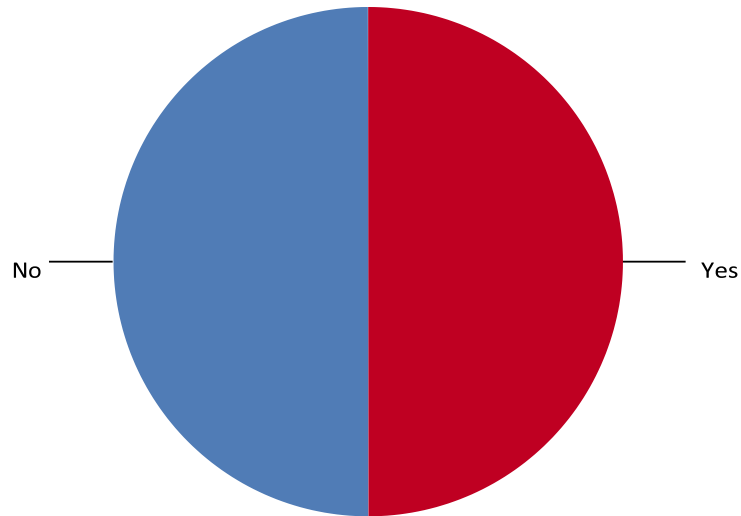


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	64.71%	33
No	35.29%	18
Total Respondents: 51		

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q21 Will you briefly explain with any information pertinent to this research?
Answered: 28 Skipped: 24

Question 21 is another non-multiple-choice question that is eliminated in this format to protect confidentiality as some participants divulged information unique to their own situation.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q22 Are there issues that are not life-threatening, but you would like to get guidance or advice on from a biblical perspective?
Answered: 52: Skipped: 0



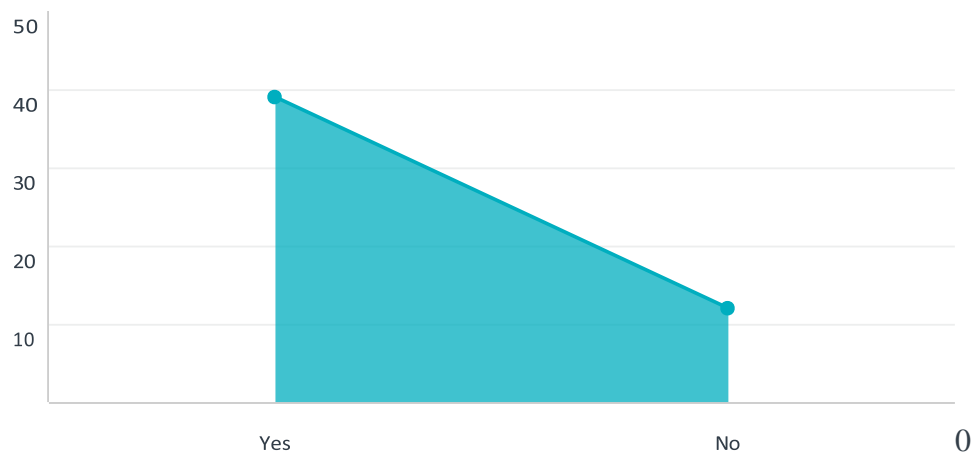
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	50.00%	26
No	50.00%	26
TOTAL		52

A 50 % equal yes or no response can indicate a true lack of difficulties for some at the present time. It may also mean that others do not wish to consult advice because the problems do not warrant that yet or they wish to consult other sources.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q23 Are you aware that many pastoral counselors are trained for brief intervention in marriage issues, marriage counseling, family issues, spiritual concerns, anxiety concerns, life stresses, and many other concerns for congregants?

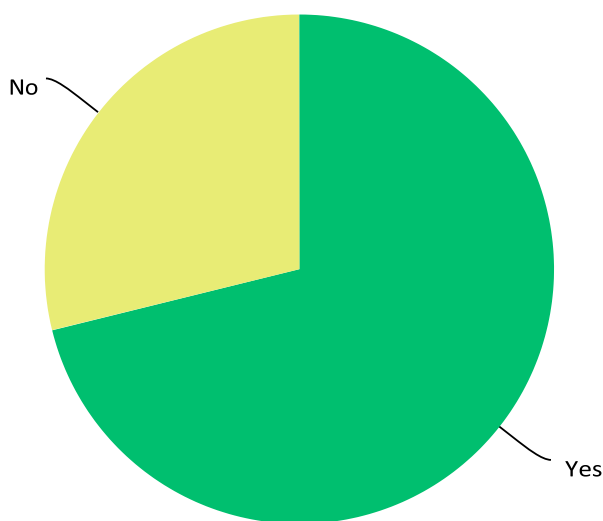
Answered: 51 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	76.47%	39
No	23.53%	12
Total Respondents: 51		

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q24 If you could better understand the role of the pastoral counselor, services offered, issues addressed, and be assured of safeguards to maintain confidentiality and privacy, would you use more frequently pastoral counseling services offered?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



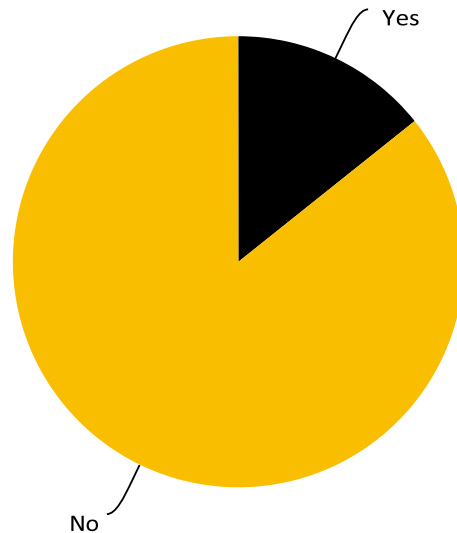
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	71.15%	37
No	28.85%	15
TOTAL		52

Positive answering of over 70% from respondents presents a promising picture for this research as well as the counselors at Good Shepherd. The response from the staff and leaders will strengthen support and confidence from the congregation or could erode that confidence if no actions are taken.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q25 Is there a problem that you presently have that you need to contact counselors at the church?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	14.29%	7
No	85.71%	42
TOTAL		49

An over 85% response of no to not having difficulties and no need of a consultation. signals a healthy state of the participants polled.

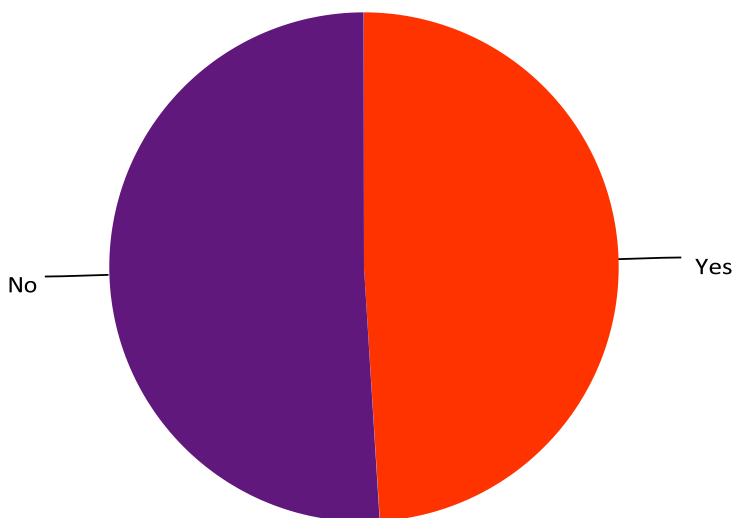
Part Four - Participant Knowledge of the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia

Results from this section of the research presented the most alarming results. There is a significant amount of uncertainty and confusion when it comes to information concerning the pastoral counseling center on the church premises. An unfortunate part is that misinformation and uncertainty of information concerning the CPC was consistent from most of the participants polled. Herein lies a crucial area to be explored. A general knowledge that the CPC exists on the property was expressed; however, information past that point was rather sketchy at best. Almost an equal

number of participants had very little knowledge of the center, if any at all. Graph 26 displays the first alarming fact. More individuals answered no than yes for being aware that the center is there.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q26 Are you familiar with the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia (CPC) located here at Good Shepherd?

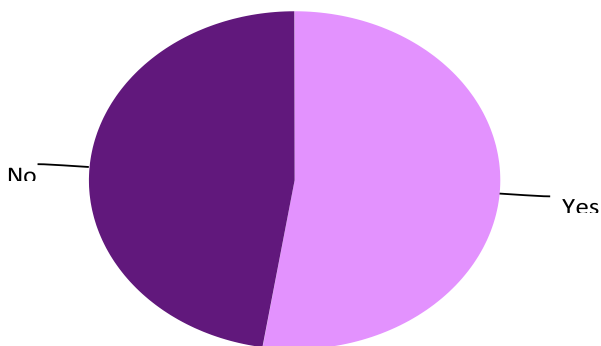
Answered: 51 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	49.02%	25
No	50.98%	26
TOTAL		51

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q27 Is the center part of Good Shepherd?

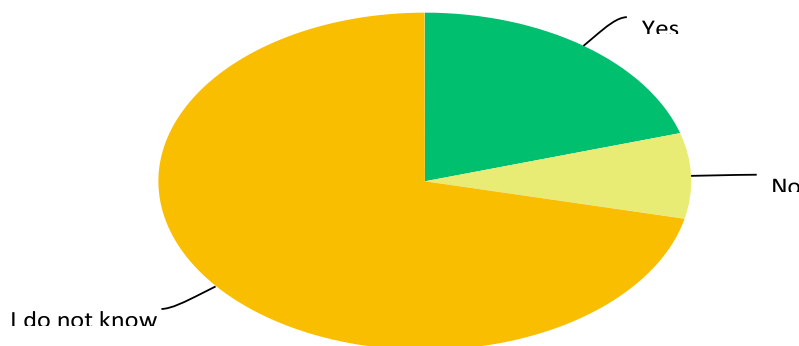
Answered: 40 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	52.50%	21
No	47.50%	19
TOTAL		40

Additional information will be addressed in chapter 5 for the answers to questions 27 through question 31. The answers given to part three (knowledge of the church counselors) and part four (knowledge of the Center for Pastoral Counseling) highlight many of the discrepancies in understanding that need to be explored in the next chapter. Answers from the participants has given several areas that warrant information to be given to the congregation concerning both. “I do not know” was a common answer for the last few questions which leaves a large portion of the pie chart graphs empty. A large piece of the pie is missing, which means that is a part of the potential pie that the congregation and community are lacking.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q28 Is the center part of the United Methodist Denomination?
Answered: 49 Skipped: 3

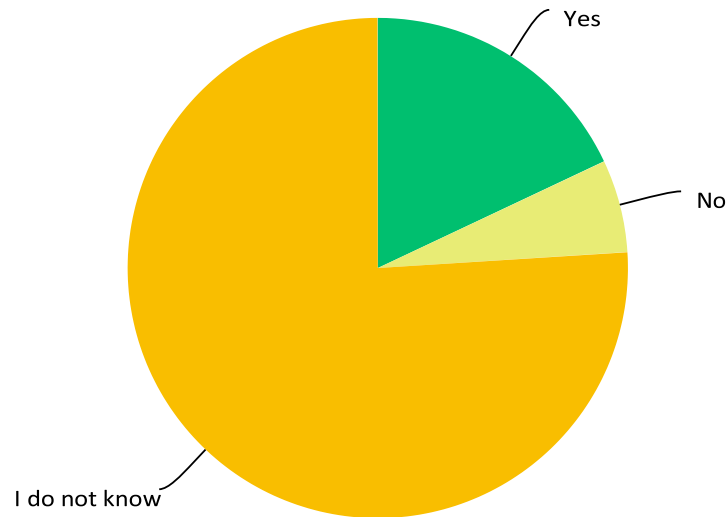


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	20.41%	10
No	8.16%	4
I do not know	71.43%	35
TOTAL		49

Three persons skipped answering this question which potentially adds more percentage points to the “I do not know” category.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q29 Do they offer pastoral counseling for many of the same concerns as the Good Shepherd pastors?

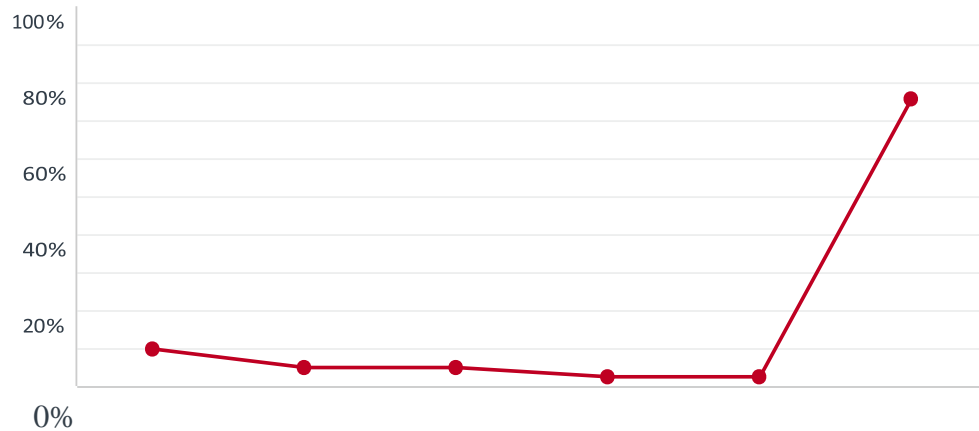
Answered: 50 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	18.00%	9
No	6.00%	3
I do not know	76.00%	38
TOTAL		50

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor
Q30 How do they differ from Good Shepherd counselors?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

They are licensed professional counselors.

9.76%

4

They have multiple locations throughout the state.

4.88%

2

You can request to have spirituality to not be a part of your counseling.

4.88%

2

You can visit a location not at a church.

2.44%

1

They are not a part of any one denomination.

2.44%

1

All of the above.

75.61%

31

TOTAL

41

An overwhelming number of 11 out of 52 persons skipped answering question 30.

Several participants to the survey were not regular attendees to Good Shepherd, but utilizes the church for community services and events. This still warrants introducing them to this program and other programs at the church that may prove beneficial to them or family members.

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Q31 Are there fees for services by the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	17.65%	9
No	1.96%	1
I do not know	80.39%	41
TOTAL		51

Graph 31 depicts a major source of confusion considering this is the question pertaining to fees charged by the center. One can readily see that a major part of the pie is missing. 80.39% answered “I do not know” to this question, which signals a major misunderstanding. This along with several other questions must be clarified in the conclusion part of the study. The fees associated with the CPC will be discussed along with the options for fulfilling that obligation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

There are several questions to be answered to make this situation better for all individuals. To educate the congregation, the concluding chapter must attempt to share knowledge of the information learned through this research. Questions 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 of chapter four of this paper surfaced a lack of information for participants concerning the CPC.

Those questions are as follows:

- 1) Q26 Are you familiar with the Center for Pastor Counseling of Virginia (CPC) located here at Good Shepherd?
- 2) Q27 Is the center part of Good Shepherd?
- 3) Q28 Is the center part of the United Methodist Denomination?
- 4) Q29 Do they offer pastoral counseling for many of the same concerns as the Good Shepherd pastors?
- 5) Q30 How do they differ from Good Shepherd counselors?
- 6) Q31 Are there fees for services by the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia?

Good Shepherd members stated they were aware of the center; however, 50.98% of the 52 participants answered no to question 26 as to being familiar with the CPC and its workings. At 49.02%, this leaves less than half of the participants with knowledge of the center. This reflects very little knowledge concerning the center which means the center is not being used, or only being used sporadically. If the pastors are not counseling members and the CPC is not being used, then counseling may not be happening. This may be that the congregation members do not need counseling, or some other reasons may exist.

CPC Services

The Center for Pastoral Counseling offers a multitude of counseling services for individuals, groups, families, and organizations throughout Virginia. Further information for the center can be found on pages 45 and 46 of this research paper, on their website, or the Good Shepherd website. This format allows for only a miniscule amount of information pertaining to

the valuable services they offer. Those services include but are not limited to counseling for: abuse, addictions, anger management, clergy abuse, blended family issues, and an extremely important service - Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Their extensive list follows so that the congregation can see that they offer many of the same services with a few additional services toward mental health concerns. This should provide a level of comfort for the congregation and the community.

Center for Pastoral Counseling List of Services

- Abuse ¹⁵³
- Addictions
- Adolescents
- Adoption
- Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)
- Aging/Seniors
- AIDS/HIV
- Anger Management
- Anxiety
- Assessment (Clergy)
- Assessment (Psychological)
- Bi-Polar Disorder/Manic Depression
- Body/Mind Integration
- Brief Solution Focused Therapy
- Child Abuse
- Children (Children's Counseling)
- Chronic Illness
- Clergy and Clergy Family
- Clergy Abuse
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Collaborative Divorce
- College Adjustment
- Conflict management
- Couples/Relationship Therapy (Couples Counseling)
- Crisis Counseling
- Depression
- Domestic Violence
- Eating disorders
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Family Therapy (Family Counseling)
- Fertility Issues

¹⁵³ Center for Pastoral Counseling, "Who We Are."

- Gay/Lesbian/Bi-Sexual/Transgender (GLBT) Issues
- Grief and loss
- Imagery
- Imago Couples Therapy
- Learning Disabilities
- Marriage Therapy (Couples Counseling)
- Men's Issues
- Military Families
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Attacks
- Phobias
- Play therapy
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Pre-Marital Counseling
- Self-Esteem/Empowerment
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Addiction
- Sexual Identity
- Spiritual Crisis
- Spiritual Development
- Spouse/Partner Abuse
- Step - Family/Blended Family Issues
- Stress Management (including Financial Issues)
- Substance Abuse
- Trauma
- Women's Issues
- Workplace Issues
- Young Adult Issues

Is the Center Part of Good Shepherd?

Another misunderstanding surfaced when asked, “Is the center part of Good Shepherd?”

The center is located on Good Shepherd property; however, they have centers in other locations as well. The center started in 1996 and has eleven centers listed across the state of Virginia.

Those centers, except for three, are housed in a church or on the church property. The CPC includes on its website, “Although many of our centers are housed in churches, we are an interfaith organization, not affiliated with any one denomination or church. We also have offices outside of church settings for those who prefer not to be seen in a church related setting.”¹⁵⁴ The

¹⁵⁴ Center for Pastoral Counseling, “Who We Are.”

counselors may differ from other counselors in that they are licensed professional counselors; however, they do prescribe to religious based therapy if the client wishes to do so.

For further investigation, the researcher visited the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia (CPC) website and the CPC host websites located around the Northern Virginia area. Host sites consist of United Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Church of the Brethren Churches along with locations not housed on a church property location. The intent was to explore the level of information concerning pastoral counseling performed at the church and information concerning the CPC. Interestingly, information for pastoral counseling services offered through the church and the relationship that church share with the CPC was lacking in most cases. The sites are not listed here by name as they are not presently a vital part of this research. About 4 of the 11 sites listed provided substantially more information than the other sites. Pastoral Counseling administered by pastors and counselors at those sites were often augmented by Stephen Ministers and the CPC counselors. Information provided on the Stephen Ministries site states:

Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide one-to-one care to those experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation. After being matched with a person experiencing a life crisis, the Stephen Minister meets with that person on a weekly basis to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support. The caring relationship lasts as long as the need for care exists.¹⁵⁵

There are a few sites that listed Stephen Ministry assistance; however, in addition one church site listed the availability of registered nurses to assist members with information and services related to medical appointments. Transportation to weekly appointments was also provided for those

¹⁵⁵ Stephen Ministries. "What is a Stephen Minister," *Stephen Ministries: Equipping God's People for Ministry Since 1975*. Accessed April 25, 2021. <https://www.stephenministries.org/stephenministry/default.cfm/1596>

individuals as well as transportation to and from church events. Whereas the CPC center was listed on the church's website, very few churches provided substantial information for members and the community to understand the tandem relationship of provided counseling care. A link was provided in most cases to the CPC website but not much leading information.

CPC Fees

Fees were another source of misinformation. The CPC does charge fees for their clients. It is not certain if some individuals receive services paid by another organization. Insurance is accepted by the center. Sessions are typically one per week at 50 minutes per session. According to their website, the welfare of the client is considered, and the CPC does attempt to work with each to provide services based on that family's needs and their ability to afford services. The CPC website has a section dedicated to their fees and other applicable information that is worthwhile for potential clients to read.

Sessions

Chapter two's literature review revealed statements expressed by Everett L. Worthington Jr. In his view, individuals seek the source of counseling contingent upon what they desire from the counseling. A friend offers listening and advice. From a pastor is expected "Christian-oriented advice and counsel. The professional counselor is obligated, within the bounds of morality and ethics, to embrace as his or her number one priority to help strengthen the couple's marriage (if that is what they want to do)." ¹⁵⁶ One can remove the word marriage and insert any other issue that will be approached with the same intentions.

When studying the information on the CPC website, it was listed that sessions are 50 minutes in duration being typically done one each week and last from six months to one year.

¹⁵⁶ Worthington, *Hope-Focused*, 20.

Churches may offer three to six sessions of counseling for an individual. Worthington explains, “Most modern psychotherapies last less than ten sessions and virtually all last less than a half year.”¹⁵⁷ He goes on to say that many counselors have intentionally designed brief or briefer therapies. “I found that most counselors aimed at between six and fifteen sessions” (married couples).¹⁵⁸ This was true for counseling for many different issues if needed.

Traditional Counseling or Brief Counseling Sessions

There is a major difference in traditional counseling and brief counseling. The difference being in traditional counseling the counselor will spend many sessions with an individual charting, guiding, and suggesting solutions for change. Worthington promotes a brief program of counseling with much fewer sessions. The important idea is that a strong bond must be established in the first session to instill a sense of hope in the client(s) so that when the sessions end, they have the tools to continue that change toward better. “The counselor aims to create a turning point in the couple’s life together – one that will lead to continued improvement after the end of counseling.”¹⁵⁹ Again, Worthington’s expressions are toward couple’s counseling, however, a similar plan of action can be adopted toward similar methodology for a church setting, whether for marriage counseling or other issues that are not severe issues.

Methodology Suggested for the Pastors/Counselors

Pastors, especially ones who do not counsel often or those who need to hone counseling skills can avail of programs for counseling training or improvements. There are several method approaches that will lend to this ministry context. There has been some explanation of Hope-

¹⁵⁷ Worthington, *Hope-Focused*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 23.

Focused Counseling as suggested by Everett Worthington, Jr. Worthington writes, “Hope-focused marriage counseling is my own blend of theories. It was originally most influenced by behavioral couple’s therapy, emotion-focused couples therapy, and solution-focused therapy among the secular theories. But the primary basis of the approach is my understanding of Christian Marriage as derived from Scripture.”¹⁶⁰ His main objective is to restore hope to the couple to renew faith that the marriage can return to its better self. “Hope focused counseling seeks to arouse hope in couples. Hope focused marriage counseling is one long assessment session plus five to eight intervention sessions.”¹⁶¹ As stated earlier, both individuals need to attend the counseling session for effectiveness and the counselor must quickly establish a connection with the couple to impart knowledge for the tools necessary for continued improvement after the sessions end. Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins in collaboration with Jennifer Ripley states, “It is (Hope-Focused Marital Therapy) religious accommodative in that it was designed with religious themes as part of the theory, it has religious intervention options, and it is utilized by ministers as well as therapists to help couples.”¹⁶²

Solution Focused Therapy is another method approach that can be used effectively in this context. “Solution focused therapists emphasize collaborating with people rather than directing or coercing them. Therapists help clients discover their own solutions rather than trying to impose solutions.”¹⁶³ Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) uses the approach of concentrating on the solution more so than focusing on the problems. Some of the names are solution-focused,

¹⁶⁰ Worthington, *Hope-Focused*, xxviii.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 21-23.

¹⁶² Clinton and Hawkins, *Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 265.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 491.

solution-oriented, solution-centered, or solution-directed. The best known is the solution-focused brief therapy approach developed by Steve De Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.”¹⁶⁴ The client is a contributing participant or a co-counsel with the counselor to formulate a plan of action forward. Strengths are examined so that the client will have sufficient tools to utilize to combat the existing problem and any foreseeable problems that may arise. SFT is beneficial in its briefness and its ability to allow the client to participate and chart progress rather than relying solely on the counselor. The flexibility offered lends well to many different counseling scenarios. Counselors being too forceful in trying to find a solution; thus, converting it to solution-forced therapy is a weakness to consider. The counselor is to facilitate the session allowing the client to chart progress and goals rather than diagnosing the problems and recommending solutions.

Certain elements of SFT can be utilized to assist the client to recognize their own strengths to help make positive changes. Those consist of the miracle question, the exception question, and the scaling question as a start. Miracle questions allow the client to visualize what it would be like if a miracle occurred, and everything was great. Scaling questions allows for identifying the present state on a gradient scale (an example being from 1 -10, with 10 being very good). Exception questions causes reflection on what was occurring when the situation was better, or the problem was temporarily gone. Solution-Focused Therapy’s flexibility can be adopted to many different scenarios. Hope-Focused and Solution-Focused Therapy will fit well and offer sound methodology for counselors to render assistance to those that are hurting.

¹⁶⁴ Clinton and Hawkins, *Encyclopedia of Christian Counseling*, 491.

Where should research regarding this problem go from here?

The COVID 19 situation severely hindered the implementation of any programs to check its effectiveness. A study period of several months must be used to chart progress. During this time, the researcher and church personnel must collect data charting the increase or decrease of use of the church personnel for counseling issues. A similar account must be taken of clients being referred to or voluntarily visiting the Center for Pastoral Counseling. Without some collaboration with the CPC staff, the latter data may be flawed or hard to obtain as Good Shepherd members may hold to secrecy to avoid alerting others of difficulties, to escape ridicule or judgement, or any other type of unwanted attention. This is especially true of members with a prominent position within the church, community, or prominent standings within the area.

During an internship in 2018 at Good Shepherd for a Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling from Liberty University, this researcher found it hard to find opportunities to conduct or to even shadow the pastors for counseling sessions. In fact, the researcher was warned prior to the internship that opportunities may be non-existent or extremely sparse. Collected data can provide awareness of changes in trends for the church and community in terms of counseling.

How do the Results of the Research Project Compare to Previous Studies?

Research from this study showed an extremely different scenario as to that of the literature review. Although it has been aforementioned, the researcher must always remember and reiterate the words written by Johnson and Johnson, "Survey data suggest that when people experience distress, 40 percent go to their clergyperson first. As a result, the average pastor reports spending 10 percent to 46 percent of his or her time counseling. The minister may be the first and only person some congregants suffering psychological disorders will allow into their

lives.”¹⁶⁵ It is known that many clergypersons receive little to no training in counseling, especially issues of a more severe nature. This, as was discussed in chapter two causes apprehension, dread, or refusal to counsel the congregation members. Johnson and Johnson proceed to write, “Despite the fact that some ministers have little formal training to correctly identify and to confidently discuss emotional and behavioral problems with parishioners, nearly one-half of parishioners will first turn to their pastor when distressed.”¹⁶⁶

Another glaring difference from the literature review following a similar pattern is the fact that in this multi-cultural situation, the different cultures do not embrace as much the guidance and assistance of the pastors. Especially in the African American community, the pastors and the church are regarded as a resource and a commodity essential to its well-being. The situation at Good Shepherd deviates from these norms.

What did the researcher learn implementing the project?

Implementing the first phase of the project enhanced the researcher’s understanding of counseling practices at the parish. Most importantly, the information learned of the CPC was extremely different from original thoughts. Preliminary information had been shared with the researcher long before the researcher considered the Doctor of Ministry Action Research Project. Two crucial misinformation faults were that the center was part of the United Methodist Denomination and that United Methodist members from around the region utilized the center instead of the church staff. This information would later be found to be totally flawed. Those misperceptions have been mentioned and discussed; therefore, a revisit will not be necessary. Initiating the second phase of disseminating the questionnaire and analyzing the data would not

¹⁶⁵ Johnson and Johnson, *The Minister’s Guide*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

only surface flawed information but information flawed enough to warrant educating the congregation. The researcher and most certainly, the pastors and church staff will benefit from having accurate information concerning the Center for Pastoral Counseling.

How might the results apply in other settings?

The research results from this project can be used in other similar situations that exist in other locations throughout the region. Confusion most probably exists among other churches that have an unattached counseling center located on their property. An ongoing exchange of information with the congregation on the role of church counselors and how that functions with the presence of the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia located on the property is crucial to avoid confusion or misunderstanding. This in no way negates or undermines the excellence delivered by either entity but serves an even more vital purpose. That purpose is not to create enemies or rivals, but to serve a more crucial purpose of identifying allies, educating the congregation, and alerting them of additional assistance from another source.

Did anything emerge during the study that merits future research?

One issue that must be solved with the pastors is a decision on their ability to counsel church members. The skillset of other professionals is different; therefore, it stands to reason that the skillset of pastors is varied also; especially when it concerns counseling. Before sharing information with the congregation, each pastor must do a self-examination of skillset, knowledge, willingness, ability, and scheduling availability to conduct counseling sessions. In asking those questions of self and arriving at a well-defined, self-aware conclusion, the pastor can decide what is best for the congregation. In this way a decision can be made to accept some counseling requirements within one's own skillset or ability. If that skillset is limited, then acceptance should be limited until at which time skills can be elevated. If there is apprehension

or a refusal to conduct regular counseling sessions, then that is vital information to know as well. In truthfully answering these questions of self, the pastor can confidently proceed. Reasoning behind attacking these issues first, is that the pastor has a resource already that can be used. To forge a relationship with the staff and counselors of the CPC, can help create a trusted referral list to supplement a professional referral list already created by the pastors. When information on counseling is shared with the staff, these questions can be answered for the congregation:

- 1) Will the pastors/staff/lay leaders/pastoral counselors at the church do counseling sessions or will the sessions be done at the CPC?
- 2) What issues will be handled by the church and what issues are immediately referred to the CPC?
- 3) What safeguards are in place to provide extra measures of confidentiality and privacy?
- 4) How many sessions will the church staff conduct?
- 5) Are there times outside of the regular church hours that church members who work during set hours or have a long commute home from work can schedule sessions with a counselor?
- 6) How will the referral to the CPC be initiated?
- 7) What are the fees associated with the sessions at the CPC?
- 8) What is the length, frequency, and projected lifeline of the sessions?
- 9) Is insurance accepted by the CPC?
- 10) What options are open to assist families or individuals who may face hardships from the weekly fees associated with sessions if insurance is not accepted?

These are a lot of questions to be answered; however, feedback from the questionnaire participants require these questions being answered. Unfortunately, there was and always will be

a few individuals that feel their needs were not specifically met during a crisis event for them. This will put a plan into motion and avail all involved of the inner workings of that plan.

How Can You Replicate the Research in Another Ministry Context?

The researcher is familiar with the ministry context as he or she is already a member and stands to benefit from initiated programs. That is an inherent quality of using the action research format. To replicate involves following a few steps. First and foremost, if you are not the pastor or senior pastor, contact them before anything is even thought about being done on any project. This researcher prepped the senior pastor months earlier by a short intent conversation, a follow up text, and later an email involving the plans for the research. The senior pastor, then the associate pastor or youth pastor followed by staff and lay leaders should be contacted. There should already be a working relationship with one or more of those persons. A requirement of action research is to involve all the stake holders from the beginning to enlist help, to create enthusiasm for the project, and to not alienate any one from the onset to avoid sabotage of the project from the onset.

The questionnaire over a search engine format is extremely duplicatable and quite effective as well as conserves energy and resources for the researchers. Phase two can begin with making a flyer to introduce everyone to the project. A consent form is the next step (long version and short version translated to other languages if necessary). Afterwards, gain permission from the applicable organization leadership and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if a university is involved. The organization leaders can be emailed the organization leader permission leader to contact members, the approved IRB permission document, the flyer, and the questionnaire. They should be encouraged to read all the materials and serve as the first respondents to the research questionnaire. Four important results from this approach are: First,

transparency is established with the leadership from the onset strengthening and establishing a relationship. Second, several “sets of eyes” focused immediately on the documents can alert of mistakes and potential material that should be softened, changed in wording, or totally alleviated. Three, the researcher can receive the questionnaires in completed forms in the search engine portal to familiarize with the portal and learn options to submit the best project using the application. Survey Monkey has several options at which to change the display of the graphics and the delivery of the analyzed information. This will reduce time and work hours for the research in that the researcher does not have to use several different applications to produce the desired graphics or charts. The basic application is free; however, as the project develops, options can be added for extremely reasonable monthly fees to enhance the project adding a more professional final product. Lastly, the leadership will serve as the first credits toward achieving the desired participant goal.

Once the survey questionnaire is completed, using the application to formulate trends, silences, commonalities, and analyze the responses in groupings or individual responses are manageable for the researcher. This also gives the researcher the opportunity to resend the email or flyer to solicit more participants if the desired goal of participants is not met from the onset.

After the questionnaires are completed and analyzed for findings, the individual of the organization who signed the permission to conduct research letter should receive a copy of the findings. This should be followed up with a session with the research committee to discuss the findings to identify problems as well as procedures that are beneficial to the project. The leadership of Good Shepherd was given the analyzed results for all the questions that were multiple choice. Questions that allowed the participant to elaborate should be discussed but using a different format than the other questions. These questions can make it easier to identify

the participant from the comments written. To safeguard anonymity, the researcher should group answers that are common, soften comments that are damaging or detrimental presenting them in a more constructive manner, and consult the leadership of alarming comments voiced by participants. This is of course without naming the participant unless the comments concern admission of abuse to a minor or the elderly, intent to harm self or others, or acts committed that are against the law. The conclusion tying the research, its findings, and the next steps follows.

Conclusion

A final question begs to be asked, Is the church and the situation of this church perfect? Of course, it is not perfect in the sense of that word. God created with perfection and his creation was perfect; however, God's creation itself became imperfect. Jesus in perfection Himself and in perfect obedience to the Father redeemed humankind to God. In that, He did not restore humankind to perfection, but He did take away the sin curse of death through offering eternal salvation. Jesus' Great Commission of "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28: 19-20) did not include the phrases in perfection or in a perfect situation. Jesus' Greatest Commandment echoes the commands delivered by Moses to the people of Israel before they would enter the land promised by God. "Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22: 37). Jesus' added command, "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Matt. 22: 39) commanded us to the model of love we are to follow. Consequently, the Great Commission nor the Greatest Commandment includes the phrase "All that look, think, and act, like you." Good Shepherd dares to answer the commands through attempting to reach a multi-ethnic congregation. The church was born out of a model of love and

boasts even still today, “Come for the diversity and stay for the love.” Diversity is not a happenstance, it is a commitment to make a difference, just as monumental as the commitment to make a difference in the lives of those God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit calls their own. That difference is not in perfection or a perfect situation but a working ever changing model toward making the situation as good as possible. The other quest is to also work toward a holistic existence of body, mind, spirit, and emotional wellness of the recipients while on that journey of spiritual formation to the likeness of the Christ for all.

The research finishes with these thoughts from Everett L. Worthington Jr., “We will have the most success with marriage counseling – indeed with all counseling and with life in general – to the extent that we develop a healing character. That healing character is the character of Christ burning through our own personalities. We manifest that character in our relationships with our clients, coworkers, family members, and peers. Christ’s love produces faith and work, which provides the basis of hope.”¹⁶⁷ Hope restores faith in the ability to change, while the Holy Spirit exacts and produces longevity for that change. It is a model of love just as daring to change the counseling at Good Shepherd to make a great situation even better for all the congregation. “Deep character change can take place as we rely on the essential resources God has made available and as we engage in relevant formation practices over time, in companionship with our brothers and Sisters in Christ.”¹⁶⁸ God adds His blessing to the intent and the endeavor. Whatever has God in the process will be destined to succeed.

¹⁶⁷ Worthington, *Hope- Focused*, 17.

¹⁶⁸ Klaus Issler, *Living into The Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 35.

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APPENDIX A

November 3, 2020

Pastor
Address
Phone Number

Dear Pastor,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree with a cognate concentration in pastoral counseling. The title of my research project is *Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor*. The purpose of this action research project is to inform the congregation of the role of the pastoral counselor to entice utilization of pastoral care through pastoral counselors as well as the pastors. If the congregation understands the role of the pastoral counselor, they may embrace the pastoral counselor and others and utilize more frequently the services provided in times of uncertainty or stress. While the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia is an effective source of benefit for the congregation, these are additional aids for the congregation during the many difficult times, especially with the uncertainty of present times.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff, church, as well as yourselves to invite you to participate in my research study.

Participants will receive an email to complete the attached survey. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participation. The consent forms are for informational purposes only. To further maintain anonymity with a smaller group of participants, it is necessary to illuminate as many chances of identifying information as possible; hence, the use of the online questionnaire format. Personal interviews will be requested with the pastors and other key personnel to gain vital information in the workings of counseling at Good Shepherd. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience. It has been set up for your convenience and forwarding information has been included on the document. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Richard Wilkins, or visit the Institutional Review Board information site on the Liberty University website.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Wilkins
Liberty University Doctor of Ministry Candidate.

APPENDIX B

Identifiable information and phone numbers for church personnel was deleted.

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church

November 17, 2020

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church
Address

Dear Richard Wilkins:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor, I have decided to grant you permission to contact our pastors, church staff, volunteers, or lay leaders to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

The requested data **WILL BE STRIPPED** of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church

APPENDIX C

Consent

Title of the Research: *Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor*

Principal Investigator: Richard L. Wilkins, Doctor of Ministry Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and attend Good Shepherd United Methodist Church. You do not have to be a member to participate in the research. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this action research project is to inform the congregation of the role of the pastoral counselor to entice utilization of pastoral care through pastoral counselors. If the congregation understands the role of the pastoral counselor, they may embrace the pastoral counselor and utilize the services provided. If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. The First task procedure is to read the consent information in its entirety.
2. Then you will proceed to the questionnaire to take approximately ten minutes to complete the survey.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study is more understanding of pastoral care through counseling at Good Shepherd whether through the counseling center or church counseling. In gaining a better understanding, you will be more aware of your present mental state and where to turn in the event of added stress to your daily life occurs.

The surrounding community will also benefit from added counselors and counseling hours to the pool of counselors already present to address issues with the church congregation and community.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study include minimal risks as the information is of a general personal nature that does not involve particularly in-depth probing of personal information. However, if you have suffered from additional stress, a crisis or trauma situation in the present or past, please take additional precautions as any questions may provide stress in certain situations. Please be aware that although this is a voluntary research project conducted in an online anonymous format, it is mandatory that child abuse, child neglect, elderly abuse, intent to harm self or others, or unlawful actions be reported to applicable authorities for further investigation if revealed during the information gathering process.

How will personal information be protected?

Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared. As it is an anonymous questionnaire with the consent form information requirement waived, an extra level of security will be possible to provide anonymity.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. A few interviews will be conducted with the pastors and staff to gain further understanding of the counseling process and counseling requirements at Good Shepherd but not to discuss any members within the congregation. These interviews will be conducted with applicable leadership or individuals who conduct pastoral counseling and will be scheduled at a time and location preferable to their convenience.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and the recording will be of a general information format not to include member's information or their individual situations.
- Confidentiality means that data can be linked to a particular individual because of the format of gathering of the data. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. To reduce this potential, focus groups will not be used unless questioning is of a general nature so as not to identify other members or to bring undue scrutiny or other to individuals. Anonymous means that the researcher will not be able to link data to the specific participants who provide or are associated with the data; therefore, this method of data gathering will be the preferred source.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study, nor will they incur any costs for participation in the study as an additional safeguard to protect anonymity.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a candidate to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry program at Liberty University. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

This study has no funding requirements except to those costs to the researcher incurred in the gathering and compiling of data. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Richard Wilkins, or Good Shepherd United Methodist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships. Your submittal of an incomplete survey will alert the researcher of your intent to not address certain questions. Any completed questions will be added to the data collection groupings.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will only be recorded or included in the study if you chose to submit any answered questions.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Richard Wilkins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Richard Wilkins

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure to understand what the study is about. If you have any questions about the study later or wish to address a complaint of the procedures, a form will be provided for you to complete and send to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the above web address. Online participants will not be required to sign a consent form, but the consent information will be provided for them to decide if they wish to participate anonymously. The below signing is for face-to-face interviews with staff or others.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study as a part of his attempt to include accurate information provided by me.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ All forms are templates retrieved from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board site. Liberty University, *Institutional Review Board* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, 2020). <https://www.liberty.edu/graduate/institutional-review-board/participant-rights-information/>

Legally Authorized Representative Permission

By signing this document, you agree to the person named below participating in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I agree for the person named below to take part in this study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to record the person named below as part of their participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

LAR Signature

Date

Appendix D

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Question 1.

1. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ White or Caucasian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Asian or Asian American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ African
- ☐ Another race

Question 2.

2. What age category are you included?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

Question 3.

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Question 4.

4. How often do you attend worship services at Good Shepherd?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ A few times a month

Question 5.

5. Do you attend other programs, events, or use other services offered at the church?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question 6.

6. If yes, what type of events? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Music programs
- ☐ English classes
- ☐ Holiday observance events

Question 7.

7. Do you frequently suffer uncertainty about life, spirituality, family, or your own spiritual growth?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question 8.

8. How often do you feel stressed or overwhelmed with life's events?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ A lot
- ☐ A moderate amount
- ☐ A little
- ☐ None at all

Question 9.

9. Are there trusted confidants that you can contact for guidance or listening to your concerns?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 10.

10. Do you sometimes wish to talk with someone, but do not know who to contact?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 11.

11. Would you feel comfortable contacting the church leadership for counsel, listening, guidance, or advice on an issue?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 12.

12. What is your reasoning for either answer?

Question 13.

13. Do you know what a pastoral counselor does?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 14.

14. Is pastoral counseling offered at the church by the pastors, a pastoral counselor, or other staff member?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 15.

15. Who conducts counseling sessions? You may check more than one answer.

☐ Senior pastor

☐ Youth pastor

☐ Lay leader

☐ Trained pastoral counselor

Question 16.

16. Who is eligible to request a counseling session? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Church members
- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Community members
- ☐ Visitors to the church

Question 17.

17. What are some reasons to request pastoral counseling? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Excessive stress
- ☐ Mental health concerns
- ☐ Marriage counseling
- ☐ Pre-marital counseling
- ☐ Family issues
- ☐ Spiritual concerns or questions

Question 18.

18. Can you request a particular person for counseling?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Question 19.

19. What is the difference between a licensed professional counselor and a pastoral counselor?

- ☐ The licensed counselor is licensed by the state.
- ☐ Both may hold Christians views.
- ☐ The expertise of each may differ according to the problem and their particular training.
- ☐ All of the above.

Question 20.

20. Do you sometimes have issues with self or family that are not spiritual concerns but are mental health or emotional concerns?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 21.

21. Will you briefly explain with any information pertinent to this research?

Question 22.

22. Are there issues that are not life-threatening, but you would like to get guidance or advice on from a biblical perspective?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 23.

23. Are you aware that many pastoral counselors are trained for brief intervention in marriage issues, marriage counseling, family issues, spiritual concerns, anxiety concerns, life stresses, and many other concerns for congregants?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 24.

24. If you could better understand the role of the pastoral counselor, services offered, issues addressed, and be assured of safeguards to maintain confidentiality and privacy, would you use more frequently pastoral counseling services offered?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 25.

25. Is there a problem that you presently have that you need to contact counselors at the church?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 26.

26. Are you familiar with the Center for Pastor Counseling of Virginia (CPC) located here at Good Shepherd?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 27.

27. Is the center part of Good Shepherd?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question 28.

28. Is the center part of the United Methodist Denomination?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Question 29.

29. Do they offer pastoral counseling for many of the same concerns as the Good Shepherd pastors?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Question 30.

30. How do they differ from Good Shepherd counselors?

- ☐ They are licensed professional counselors.
- ☐ They have multiple locations throughout the state.
- ☐ You can request to have spirituality to not be a part of your counseling.
- ☐ You can visit a location not at a church.
- ☐ They are not a part of any one denomination.
- ☐ All of the above.

Question 31.

31. Are there fees for services by the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Appendix E

Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Research Participants Needed

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Does life sometime throw you a curve?
- Are you stressed and are concerned how to rid of the stresses?
- Do you search for answers to everyday problems?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you are the person needed to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight on the congregation's knowledge of counseling practices at Good Shepherd. Often time crisis and trauma situations are the only times individuals seek guidance or counseling services. Guidance when an everyday situation causes stress is as important as when life presents an extremely difficult problem for us. There is no charge to participate in the study. Information obtained from your responses can help the leadership and staff gain valuable knowledge on additional procedures to further ensure the pastoral care needs of Good Shepherd are being met as best as possible.

The first part of the study is an online questionnaire that can be completed at your convenience, any place you have internet access.

Richard L. Wilkins, a doctoral candidate in the Pastoral Counseling/Rawlins School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study. If you would like information or a follow-up call:

Please contact Richard Wilkins

Information concerning all the particulars of this project can be emailed to you if you choose. Simply provide an email address to the contact information above and the complete information will be emailed to you. Thank you to the leadership of Good Shepherd for providing the opportunity to undertake this worthwhile research project as part of the final stage in the completion of a Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Counseling. Your participation is appreciated, and several precautions have been instituted to maintain the privacy of your replies and to ensure anonymity of the participants. This survey is an information gaining project and a requirement for the completion of a Doctor of Ministry dissertation. It in no way undermines the authority or demeans the excellent leadership and pastoral care provided for the Good Shepherd community (this researcher is a recipient as well).

Thank you for your understanding and participation.

The online questionnaire can be accessed at the following site:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9CL8Z8N>

Appendix F

Services offered by the Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia

- Abuse
- Addictions
- Adolescents
- Adoption
- Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)
- Aging/Seniors
- AIDS/HIV
- Anger Management
- Anxiety
- Assessment (Clergy)
- Assessment (Psychological)
- Bi-Polar Disorder/Manic Depression
- Body/Mind Integration
- Brief Solution Focused Therapy
- Child Abuse
- Children (Children's Counseling)
- Chronic Illness
- Clergy and Clergy Family
- Clergy Abuse
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Collaborative Divorce
- College Adjustment
- Conflict management
- Couples/Relationship Therapy (Couples Counseling)
- Crisis Counseling
- Depression
- Domestic Violence
- Eating disorders
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Family Therapy (Family Counseling)
- Fertility Issues
- Gay/Lesbian/Bi-Sexual/Transgender (GLBT) Issues
- Grief and loss
- Imagery
- Imago Couples Therapy
- Learning Disabilities
- Marriage Therapy (Couples Counseling)
- Men's Issues
- Military Families
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic Attacks
- Phobias

- Play therapy
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Pre-Marital Counseling
- Self-Esteem/Empowerment
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Addiction
- Sexual Identity
- Spiritual Crisis
- Spiritual Development
- Spouse/Partner Abuse
- Step - Family/Blended Family Issues
- Stress Management (including Financial Issues)
- Substance Abuse
- Trauma
- Women's Issues
- Workplace Issues
- Young Adult Issues ¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Center for Pastoral Counseling, "Who we are."

Appendix G

Date: 12-13-2020

IRB #: IRB-FY20-21-384

Title: Educating the Congregation on the Role of the Pastoral Counselor

Creation Date: 11-20-2020

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Richard Wilkins

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	No Human Subjects Research
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Charity Williams	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	cdwilliams6@liberty.edu
Member	Richard Wilkins	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	rwilkins5@liberty.edu
Member	Richard Wilkins	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	rwilkins5@liberty.edu

Appendix H

Scripture Used

“... in His own image” (Gen 2:27), page 12.

“If you love me feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, and feed my sheep” (John 21: 15-17), page 17.

“But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done” (Genesis 3: 9-13), page 43.

“... take care of my sheep” (John 22:16), page 44.

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them” (I Peter 5: 2), page 44.

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20: 28), page 44.

“It was He who gave some to be apostles... and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 5: 11- 13), page 44.

“... elders must be able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2), page 44.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Prov. 3: 5), page 45.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55: 8-9), page 45.

“Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth” (John, 14: 15-17), page 46.

“The Holy Spirit is our companion” (our helper, John 14: 16-17), page 46.

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke, 2:52), page 48.

Appendix H

Scripture Used cont.

“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), page 48.

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27), page 48.

“Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11: 28), page 49.

“Be imitators of God; therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us...” (Eph. 5:1-2) and “Love the lord your God with all your heart.... Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39), page 52.

“Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8: 11), Page 52.

“...sending more workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:38), page 71.

“...to love our neighbors as ourselves” (Matt. 22, 29), page 71.

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me” (Isaiah 6:8), page 73.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19-20), page 135.

“Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22: 37), page 135.

“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ (Matt. 22: 39), page 135.