



Pastors & Counsellors in Consultation Groups

Rationale

Shalom Counselling is committed to being a resource to the faith community. This includes support of clergy as they minister in our congregations. The role of ministry is complex and multi-faceted. Clergy find themselves involved in a myriad of situations that call for much wisdom as they seek to respond to people in need.

Shalom staff strive to be available to clergy to support them in their ministry. Shalom staff have also pondered if there are additional ways to support clergy that include a “preventive” or “health promoting” component, in addition to responding to clergy’s requests for help in times of challenge.

Shalom counsellors support clergy in a variety of ways:

- Clergy regularly refer people for counselling services at Shalom.
- Clergy contact Shalom staff for consultation pertaining to challenging situations that they face within the congregation. The role of consultation is to provide feedback, perspective, and problem-solving, which enables the clergy to obtain the clarity and direction that they need to proceed.
- Clergy contact Shalom for personal counselling. The work of ministry impacts a clergy’s sense of self and at times their well-being. Issues faced in the context of church dynamics and in providing pastoral care may tap into agenda from a clergy’s personal experience. Clergy seek counselling to address issues of their own healing so that they can continue to minister from a place of deeply rooted personal and spiritual health.

History

In the process of meeting with ministerial clusters in the fall of 2010, clergy named their appreciation of the ways that Shalom counsellors have supported them in their ministry. In one cluster this was discussed at length and the question was raised as to whether Shalom staff would consider running pastoral consultation groups for clergy.

This idea prompted significant energy from both clergy and Shalom staff. Further conversation with both pastors and leadership staff at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has confirmed that there is interest in developing pastoral consultation groups.

Pastors & Counsellors in Consultation groups began in 2012 with 2 groups. Shalom now provides 4 Pastors & Counsellors in Consultation groups.

Purpose & Goals

The Pastors & Counsellors in Consultation group is intended to offer a place for clergy to reference with other pastoral colleagues and a mental health professional regarding issues that they are facing in the context of their ministry role.

The goal is to create a safe context for referencing with others regarding areas of uncertainty or challenge. The uniqueness of this model brings together both the wisdom of pastoral colleagues and the unique perspective of a mental health professional in one setting. The synergy of this meeting together provides value added beyond meeting with a colleague or a counsellors on one's own. The mix of ideas from other church experiences in combination with the mental health perspective provides a holistic context for problem-solving and support.

Format & Structure

The format and structure allows for flexibility for the group to modify and shape itself as it evolves. The process also involves an evaluative component at the close of the group, allowing participants to provide feedback as a group and individually. This feedback will create a context for future groups.

The groups are facilitated by a Shalom counsellor. The facilitator shapes "agendas" for the group meeting and serves as the contact person for group members who wish to bring a case study to the group.

The counsellor acts as both facilitator and resource provider. The group meetings include opportunity for case sharing, reflections on pastoral role in challenging contexts (use of self) and educational input. The group is not intended to be a course or workshop, but when themes emerge from the group that identify the need for further education, this will be researched and provided by the Shalom counsellor.

The groups are run with clearly defined parameters that include clarity regarding confidentiality and norm-setting to ensure the comfort and trust of group participants. The groups also allow time for personal check-in regarding the well-being of group participants and the opportunity to name pressing issues for discussion that were not submitted

Time Frame/Duration

Groups run once per month for two hours for 4 months. This time frame is a way for group participants to test the value of their participation, without making a lengthy commitment. The possibility to extend the group meeting time will be determined in conjunction with group members at the end of the group. If a group connects well and is able to make solid use of the group consultation format, consideration will be given to ongoing meeting times; perhaps spaced further apart.

Number of Group Participants

Five to seven participants, plus the Shalom Counsellor is considered the ideal size. This allows for a variety of perspectives and for sufficient group process if one or more members is not able to attend.

Contact Information

Please contact admin@shalomcounselling.org if you wish more information or would like to be placed on a waiting list for future groups.