



## Counseling Policy

### Philosophy of Ministry

GRC defines 'counseling' as "the personal application of God's healing and restorative truth – found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ – to the unique brokenness of a person in need." Who is in need? The short answer is: everyone. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). This universal reality should eliminate the stigma of counseling; it is NOT merely reserved for those who are especially broken or 'messed up.'

If sin – ours and the world's – is the fundamental reason that our relationships, bodies, minds, souls, etc. are NOT the way they're supposed to be, then the only antidote is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, all counseling conducted through GRC is Biblical Counseling that trusts in and wields the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Counselees do NOT need to profess saving faith in Jesus Christ in order to receive counseling, but all counselees should be aware of our biblical worldview and of our biblical, Gospel-centric approach to seek healing and restoration of "the brokenness of a person in need."

Our counseling ministry is closely tied to our biblical view of the church, the body of Christ. We believe that the church is Where and How God typically works transformation in and through his people. The church is the community in which maturity into Christ-likeness can most effectively occur, and the church is the primary instrument through which God works such growth and change. Counseling, therefore, should work closely with Discipleship ministries, pastoral shepherding, Diaconal service, and fellowship opportunities.

This perspective on the centrality and vitality of the Church's role in the life of person in need, leads to our team approach to counseling. We do not believe that it's in the best interests of a counselee to isolate him or her in a private connection to a single counselor. In contrast, we believe that, in order to provide the best care and support of a counselee, the counseling team must collaborate. As a result, we request that all counselees sign the **GRC Counseling Consent Form** which permits our counseling team to share selective information with one another, only when needed, to provide the best care and biblical counseling. Our counseling team is committed to upholding the highest standards of confidentiality.

### Logistics of Counseling

In order to schedule a counseling visit, you may contact the counselor via his/her Grace Redeemer email address or by calling the GRC office at (201) 357-4216. Admin staff can assist you with additional information regarding scheduling.

Completion of the **GRC Counseling Intake form** is required before the first session. This form must be submitted at least 48 hours before the first session. If the intake form is not completed in time, the first session will need to be rescheduled.

Once a session is scheduled, our cancellation policy requires a minimum of 24 hours' notice, with exceptions noted for health or family emergencies. Please understand that a counseling time slot is a significant commitment on the part of a ministry leader whose availability is very limited. If you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment, your notice of cancellation may enable another person to benefit from that counselor's time.



### **Counseling Costs**

For years the GRC pastoral staff has partnered with a professional biblical counselor to supplement in-house pastoral counseling. This outside counselor charges a professional rate. Counselees are expected to provide payment for the counseling services with financial assistance from the Diaconate available through a simple application process.

This spring, GRC's Session approved the hire of a licensed professional counselor to work on staff (rather than as an 'adjunct'). In our effort to establish greater consistency among the various counseling options AND to increase the level of commitment by counselees to their counseling, effective immediately, we will be charging the same hourly rate, regardless of the counselor providing the ministry. The rate for all counseling sessions will be \$50/hour for members of the GRC community and \$75/hour for all others. One significant exception applies to staff pastors and our Executive Director who will provide 4 complimentary formal sessions of counseling to members of the GRC community before an hourly rate is applied. None of these fees will increase a staff member's compensation. Fees paid for pastoral services will be used to assist others who apply for financial assistance. The pastoral staff will always clarify what constitutes 'formal counseling' vs pastoral shepherding that does not involve any fees. Payments may be made via check (only payable to Grace Redeemer Church) or via Grace Online. Cash cannot be accepted for accountability reasons.

Counselees who require financial assistance may schedule their first counseling meeting without any prior approval. Counselees are expected to pay as much as they are able toward the fees for the first meeting. Additional financial assistance can be requested via the [Request for Counseling Assistance form](#) which will be forwarded to select members of the Diaconate. Only after the Diaconal representative provides an answer to the counselor and to the counselees (a dollar amount of a percentage of assistance for a defined number of sessions), can the counselee then schedule subsequent meetings. Additional assistance can be requested once the approved number of sessions is completed.

### **Miscellaneous Policies**

Please do not contact pastors/counselors via their mobile numbers. We request that you use their GRC email address or call the GRC office at (201) 357-4216. In the event of an emergency, including any suicidal thoughts or threats, you should call 911.