

PASTORAL CARE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The material on this website and in this document, whilst it may include some information on matters that are legally binding on clergy, lay ministers and other lay officers and volunteers, should be generally understood as guidance and for information unless it explicitly states otherwise. In particular, it should not be construed as forming part of any employment contract.

Introduction

Clergy are not immune to the competitive and stressful aspects of life in our society. They and their families face particular pressures from their public social position, from being constantly in the role of helper, exposed to the pain and distress of other people's lives, and from often being subject to unrealistic expectations. It is not surprising if, when such pressures accumulate over a long period of time, or are added to the losses and difficulties which any individual or family may face, professional help is sometimes needed.

Although many clergy and lay workers use counselling skills as part of their ministry, it is not always easy for clergy and their spouses to find appropriate professional counselling help, when they themselves are experiencing difficulties. Family, friends and colleagues can be supportive, but there are times when the confidentiality, skills, experience and independence of a professional counsellor may be needed.

The bishop has appointed an Adviser in Counselling and Professional Development who is listed in the Diocesan Directory. Both he and the bishop are keen to foster a climate of opinion in which those who seek the help of a trained counsellor are recognised as taking mature responsibility for their own psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being: a sign of strength, not of weakness or failure.

Counselling

The professionally trained counsellor offers a confidential setting within which the individual can feel safe enough to share difficulties, pain, confusion or despair. The counsellor does not give advice, but aims to help the client develop understanding and insight, and to work towards discovering for him/herself new ways of coping with or resolving difficulties. The client is encouraged to explore aspects of his or her life and feelings freely and openly, in a way which may not be possible with friends or family. Counselling may involve experiencing such feelings as hurt and anger, which the client has been afraid to face; it can therefore be a process which, at times brings healing through pain and challenge.

Counselling sessions usually last an hour, at weekly or fortnightly intervals agreed between counsellor and client, and take place away from the client's home. These boundaries of time and place are the counsellor's responsibility and are important in creating a safe and peaceful environment, in which the client can explore his or her issues. Counselling usually continues over a period of weeks or months.

Information on counsellors & counselling agencies

The Diocesan Adviser can be contacted on a confidential and, if preferred, anonymous

Information for Clergy

basis, for further information on agencies or individual counsellors. The diocese respect the fact that such counselling must be completely confidential and that there will not be communication with diocesan staff without the client's specific and prior permission. Clients can of course choose whether to see a male or female counsellor, ordained / lay.

Alternatively you may wish to contact:

- Inspire Christian Counselling: 01473 217694
- The Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy: 01473 216559
- Ipswich Concern Counselling Centre: 01473 212788

or for a much more comprehensive County-wide list of counselling organisations, The Suffolk Association for Counselling Directory. (Copies cost £3.50 and can be obtained for 'The Suffolk Association for Counselling' C/o Westerfield Business Centre, Main Road, Westerfield, Ipswich IP6 9AB)

Payment

In this diocese financial help is available to pay counselling fees, but the client is expected to make a financial contribution to the work as an integral part of the therapeutic process. Such financial help in this diocese is from the bishop, via the Adviser in Pastoral Care and Counselling. The names of those requesting financial help for counselling are not made known to the bishop or any diocesan officer.

For further information contact the Adviser in Counselling and Professional Development.

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