

PASTOR'S NEWSLETTER



**Volume 1, Issue 1
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A Pastor's Heart

We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of the *Pastors' Newsletter* from Decatur Psychological Associates, PC. This organization was started by Dr. David Wence in 2005, and effective this month, Dr. Roger Daniels has joined the organization full time. Both are trained as Pastoral Counselors and each brings over 25 years experience as a local parish pastor to this specific ministry. They have a pastor's heart and understand completely the joys and burdens of local church ministry. It is their desire to support the work of area churches in the ministry to hurting people.

Both Dr. Wence and Dr. Daniels understand that the local pastor is the "first line of defense," so to speak, in ministering to the needs of people. There was a time in our culture where people received professional services in their homes – physicians used to make house calls, individuals could count on the pharmacist at the corner drug store, etc. – but those days are gone . . . except for the local pastor. He or she still knows his or her flock. As Jesus said when he modeled being the Good Shepherd, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." (John 10:14). But sometimes, in ministering to the needs of people, a pastor can quickly discover that providing specific care and intervention to some individuals and families uses more and more of a pastor's time and energy. It also may require skills that are beyond a pastor's training, experience, or level of confidence.

This is where the ministry of Decatur Psychological Associates, PC comes in. We desire to be a support to you and your ministry, helping out by providing, as our slogan says, "Professional Counseling in a Christian Context."

While Dr. Wence and Dr. Daniels see themselves as Pastoral Counselors, we have others on staff that practice from a Christian perspective and are actively involved in their local church. Check out our website for more information.

'Tis the Season

There's a line in the classic Eagles song, *Desperado* that reminds me of this time of year. Don Henley sings, "When your feet get cold in the winter time, the sky won't snow and the sun won't shine. It's hard to tell the night time from the day." So descriptive, I think, of January in Central Illinois. The rush and celebration of the holidays are over. Skies are cloudy, rain turns to ice, temperature remains cold – 'tis the season . . . for depression, or at least Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Some suggest that depression is not something from which people of faith ought to suffer. But that is not consistent with the testimony of the saints. Elijah when he fled from Jezebel prayed, "I have had enough, Lord . . . take my life . . ." (1 Kings 19:4). The Psalmist cried, "My tears have been my food day and night . . ." (Psalm 42:3). Even Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, confided in his friends saying, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." (Matthew 26:38)

Symptoms of depression include:

- A general sense of hopelessness
- A loss of interest in once pleasurable activities
- Change in appetite and/or sleep patterns
- Crying spells
- Inability to organize or get motivated
- Fatigue

Help for depression:

- Structure one's life as much as possible
- Get as much light into one's world as possible
- Hang out with positive people
- Lower expectations for daily responsibilities
- Don't neglect the spiritual disciplines

(continued on p. 3)

What Makes Counseling Pastoral?

Seward Hiltner, the father of the pastoral counseling movement, once wrote, "The purpose of pastoral counseling is the same as the church itself – bringing people to Christ and the Christian fellowship, aiding them to acknowledge and repent of sin and to accept God's freely offered salvation, helping them to live with themselves and their fellow men in brotherhood and love, enabling them to act with faith and confidence instead of the previous doubt and anxiety, bringing peace where discord reigned before." (Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling*, 1949, p. 17)

At least three dimensions are inherent in counseling that is "pastoral." The first is shepherding. The shepherd cares for his sheep by protecting and guiding them. Many seek counseling out of a circumstance or life crisis that has left them broken and hurting, as well as confused or lacking direction. Many times these individuals need to develop ways to protect themselves from further harm. At other times, these individuals need spiritual guidance which "leads them to the still waters" as Psalm 23 puts it, where one can find a peaceful place to reflect. The pastoral counselor shepherds one's clients by helping them develop and strengthen boundaries and offering guidance from a spiritual perspective.

Another function of pastoral counseling is priestly. While some in the Free Church tradition recoil at the use of this word, it is important to understand the role. This function is rooted in the "one another" passages of Scripture, e.g., "pray for one another," "confess your faults one to another," "encourage one another to do good works," etc. Often, in the privacy of the counseling office, confession is made which leads to repentance and renewal. When a counselor prays with his or her client this priestly function is provided. The pastoral counselor is not a substitute for one's parish pastor, but provides this function as part of the entirety of the pastoral counseling role.

In addition, the pastoral counselor teaches. Difficulties often visit us because of ignorance. Many relationships are in jeopardy because of poor communication skills. A self deprecating attitude prevails because one's expectations are too high. The pastoral counselor can help individuals learn concepts and develop skills to help make struggles in life more manageable. In this way the pastoral counselor is also a teacher.

These are just some of the things that make counseling "pastoral." More than anything, the pastoral counselor tries to emulate the strategy of Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry, that is, meeting people where they are – often demonstrating compassion and suspending judgment – in order to help them move on to where they need to be.

Pastoral Care Tips

Singles Ministry – Many churches celebrate Valentine's Day with some type of event for couples – a retreat or banquet is common. Problem – what about the single adults? This particular holiday can deepen the sense of loneliness for the widows, divorcees and the never married in your congregation. Loneliness is one of the most powerful feelings one can have. Consider holding a "First Love" celebration for these people. Set a time and a place, charge a nominal fee and have a nice meal catered. Make it as formal or as informal as your creativity allows. Invite a speaker and encourage your singles to celebrate their "first love," Jesus Christ as per Revelation 2:4.

Hospital Ministry – We seem to use prayer as a "zipper" – as an opener and closer for meetings or classes. And, the protocol many of us use in calling upon parishioners while in the hospital is to offer a prayer as we leave. Try using prayer as a pastoral care tool early on in your visit. It often opens the door for you as the spiritual care giver to "walk along a little further" with your congregant. This is especially useful if they are suffering from a long-term illness or enduring a long recovery at home.

Funeral Service – It seems redundant during a funeral service for the officiating minister to read, *verbatim*, from the obituary that was published in the newspaper. In order to offer some variety, try using Ecclesiastes chapter three and inject information about the deceased into the outline. For example, you can actually begin by quoting "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven . . . a time to be born . . ." You can inject here, "And John Doe was born on (date) and (place) the son of (parents)." "There is a time to die . . ." Here inject, "And John Doe left this earthly tabernacle to be present with the Lord on (date), after a long battle with cancer."

You can use the passages in Ecclesiastes three that speak of planting and building as the opportunity to share the deceased accomplishments, career, etc. The verses which speak of weeping and mourning can be used to validate the grief and sorrow in the deceased's passing as well as use the ones which speak of a time to keep and embrace to encourage loved ones to hold memories in their hearts and comfort one another in the face of the loss. Family members have actually reached out to embrace one another during this time.

Take a look and Ecclesiastes chapter three and consider using it next time you are called upon for a funeral service.



David Wence

Dr. David Wence

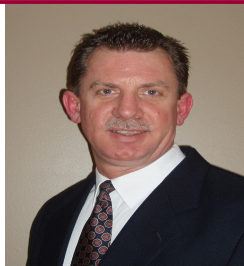
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(Depression, from p. 1)

As a pastoral intervention, I encourage my clients who suffer from this condition to spend their devotional energies reading from the Psalms – especially the Laments. They often identify with writer and find comfort and encouragement there. I also teach them to simply pray this prayer several times a day, “Thank you God, for loving me and accepting me just the way I am right now.” That seems to bring comfort and a sense of connection with God with which they previously were not in touch.

Most occurrences of depression this time of year are indeed seasonal. If, when the weather warms, the flowers bloom, and the days get longer, one does feel the depression lifting, then depression was seasonal. If it continues, one may be suffering from a more significant depression and intervention by a pastor, physician or counselor may be warranted.

Make Time for the Important Things

Simplify – How often do we make simple things complicated? Regular office hours for the pastor are important. They say that you are available to your people. But, the pastor often gets frustrated because he or she seems to live for interruptions. Most don’t mind interruptions for urgent spiritual or emotional needs, but setting appropriate boundaries can help reduce the stress of your daily people contacts.

Know the difference between shooting the breeze and planning your work. If you plan a meeting for one hour, honor it. It shows respect for others, but it also shows respect for your own needs. Standing while communicating with others in the office may be an important non-verbal tool which says, “I’ve got time for you, but only as long as we are both comfortable standing.” Others work with their office door slightly ajar. This says, “I can be disturbed, but I’ve got some important things going on.” Your work time is important, and if you declare certain hours as being set aside for “prayer and study,” you might be surprised how people honor it when you declare it’s purpose.

List your priority activities for the next day before you complete the day. Start with the toughest activities and work down. Just try not to worry about your list when you go to bed at night!

Telephone vs. email – Communication in a church is an important task. Phones and computers keep us in contact with the people we serve. You may want to use these techniques for saving time:

- Before reaching for the phone, ask yourself if e-mail would suffice?
- If a personal touch is needed, of course, use the phone.
- If it’s general information, or a number of people who need to know, use email or texting.
- Before you call, list items that need to be covered.
- Learn to say, without guilt and with diplomacy, “Please forgive me. I have an appointment.” Even if the appointment is another activity, it is still an appointment.
- Call when you are sure you can reach your party.
- If you are in conference, honor the conferee by refusing to accept the call unless it’s an emergency.
- If you work through a secretary in accepting calls, give a list of those with whom you must speak when they call.



“Professional Counseling in a Christian context.”

Services Provided:

- Counseling and Psychotherapy for Adults, Couples, Adolescents, and Children
- Sexual Addiction Group
- Clergy Support Group
- Clergy Spouse Support Group
- Leadership Retreats and Workshops
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- Employee Assistant Program (EAP) Approved
- Complete Psychological Testing, including ADD and ADHD
- Most insurance plans accepted

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