

Collaborative Counseling: Working Well with Church Leaders

Michael Gembola

- I. Affirming church leaders
 - A. Acknowledge cultural tendencies related to authority
 - B. Recognize the special role of leaders (Heb 13:7-9, 17; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

Martin Luther: “There is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. **They are all of the spiritual estate**, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But **they do not all have the same work to do**. . . . A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done **for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community**, just as all the members of the body serve one another.¹

- C. Consider pastoral perspectives
 - D. Work within the pastoral vision of the church
 - E. Check your assumptions, and expect to learn²
- II. Engaging church leaders
 - A. Know your role (Gal 6; Eph 4; 1 Cor 12; Matt 18)
 - B. Give sacrificially
 - C. Teach sensitively
 - D. Speak up!³ (c.f., Ezek 34)
 - E. Build trust

¹ Quoted in Rachel Ciano, “Luther's Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers: The Importance for Today.” *Credo Magazine*, January 8, 2020.

<https://credomag.com/2020/01/luthers-doctrine-of-the-priesthood-of-all-believers-the-importance-for-today/>

² Brian K. Jackson, “Licensed Professional Counselors’ Perceptions of Pastoral Counseling in the African American Community,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 69:2, 2015.

³ Michael Gembola, “Helping the Unassertive Find Their Voice,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 33:1, 2019.

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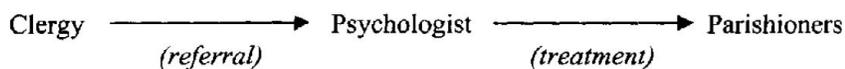
- F. Care and be cared for
- III. Challenges in collaboration
- A. Set expectations for confidentiality and informed consent
 - B. Keep congruence in what is said to all parties
 - C. Talk about people with a tone of advocacy and honor
 - D. Prioritize the person's good in disagreements with church leaders⁴
- IV. Conclusion: Better together

⁴ Matthew Breuninger, Sara Dolan, Jose Padilla, and Matthew Stanford, "Psychologists and Clergy Working Together: A Collaborative Treatment Approach for Religious Clients," *Journal of Spirituality and Mental Health* 16, 2004.

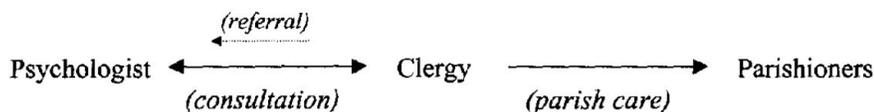
Appendix: Models for Collaborative Ministry

In the **service delivery model** of Benes et. al,⁵ we see a concern to achieve the most effective, culturally competent way to deliver psychological services to Christians.

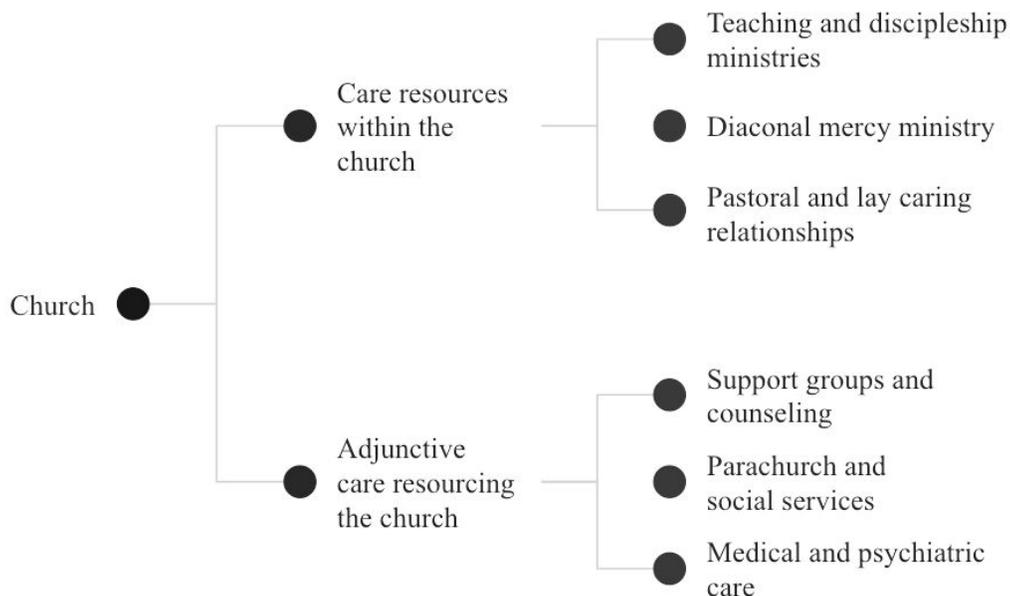
DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL



INDIRECT SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL



In a **church-centered model**, we see the church accessing a multitude of resources in-house and in the community. Ideally, many of these resources are accountable to the church; still, a church’s commitment to facilitate holistic care for its members means an expansive understanding of parachurch resources, along the lines of what Powlison and Lambert articulate.⁶



⁵ Kathryn Benes, Joseph Walsh, Mark McMinn, Amy Dominguez, & Daniel Aikins, “Psychology and the church: An exemplar of psychologist–clergy collaboration.” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 31:5, 2000.

⁶ David Powlison and Heath Lambert, "Biblical Counseling in Local Churches and Parachurch Ministries," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 33:2, 2019.