

Counseling & Discipleship Resource Center

The Greater Impact campaign identifies the need for the creation of a Counseling and Discipleship Resource Center as a major ministry initiative to our church body over the next three years. Requests for counseling come into the church office nearly every day of the week. This presents one of the most effective means for discipleship and spiritual opportunity as people grow closer to God through the open avenue of dealing with their problems. We grow in three ways by taking this step. First, we will meet important needs in our church family by being there at the place of deep personal need. Secondly, we will also create instant outreach, since we already receive requests from those outside the church for counseling. We sometimes have to turn these down due to a shortage of resources and personnel. Thirdly, we create growth in service and discipleship. People who are gifted to serve the Lord with the spiritual gift of encouragement will have a uniquely personal place to bring glory to God. And those who are encouraged by the counseling and discipleship resource center will find Christian growth and maturity that they have always wanted. God gets the glory when freedom and grace are found!

PERSONNEL

Currently Pastor Burch oversees this ministry, although all our pastors are involved in counseling to one degree or another on a weekly basis. We also have several lay counselors who currently volunteer many hours a month in this ministry. The Greater Impact campaign proceeds would be used to fund part-time and full-time staff over the next three years to grow the Counseling and Discipleship Resource Center as we respond to this need. Pastor Burch's role would expand in overseeing the Counseling ministry. He would also need to merge other responsibilities to other ministry leaders in order to do so.

The Role of the Pastor of Discipleship

Pastor Burch, the existing Pastor of Discipleship will serve as the director of the counseling/discipleship center. He will direct the development of both the counseling and the individual one-on-one discipleship ministries.

Concerning the Counseling Ministry

He will serve as pastoral counselor as needed, but will primarily be tasked with the oversight of the counseling ministry by training and resourcing the lay-counseling ministry as well as the part-time counseling staff. He will lead a weekly counseling staff meeting, and along with the Staff and Ministry Development Pastor, be responsible for hiring and performance review of all counseling staff.

Concerning the Discipleship/Mentoring Ministry

He will oversee the mentoring ministry, develop and train mentors, select curriculum and continue in his role of supporting this ministry. He will coach mentors and help resource those needing discipleship with trained mentors.

Concerning the Discipleship Institute Ministry

He will continue to develop and promote the Discipleship Institute classes as part of the adult ministries at Mill Creek.

Concerning the LifeGroup Ministry

As part of the Greater Impact campaign, we hope to eventually hire a Pastor of Congregational Life who would assume oversight of the LifeGroups as part of his duties. Pastor Burch will be working to transition oversight of that ministry.

The Role of the Staffed Counselors

Staffed counselors will be available for counseling individuals, families, and married couples with the goal of providing spiritual growth and discipleship for people as they deal biblically with problems and difficulties. They will need to have completed the Lay-counselor training course. They will need to pass a criminal background check and a consumer credit report check. State licensure is not sought after or required, but biblical and personal ministry training is required. Given the suburban culture of Mill Creek, it is expected the staffed counselors should primarily be scheduling afternoon and evening counseling. For every hour spent in active counseling, staffed counselors should have prepared at least two or three hours through prayer, background study, biblical preparation, careful note-taking, and consultation as needed.

Staffed counselors will report to the Pastor of Discipleship. A Job Description for this position has been developed and is available for further review.

The Role of the Administrative Assistant

An administrative assistant will prove vital to the functioning of a healthy counseling ministry. This position is responsible for the initial contact with those seeking an appointment with a counselor. It is important that this person understands the philosophy and distinctive nature of biblical counseling. The admin assistant should attend the lay-counselor training course. Often the admin assistant will be dealing with people in a fragile or struggling state and will be the first “voice of encouragement” to offer hope.

This position is responsible for providing admin support for all staffed positions in the counseling/discipleship center. Additionally, this position would work with the Pastor of Discipleship in the administration of the discipleship mentoring and discipleship institute ministries, as well as managing the resource center. A Job Description for this position has been developed and is available for further review.

FACILITY

When considering issues regarding counseling facility, the main issues confronting the serious commitment to a counseling/discipleship center are the issues of location and amount of space needed.

Location

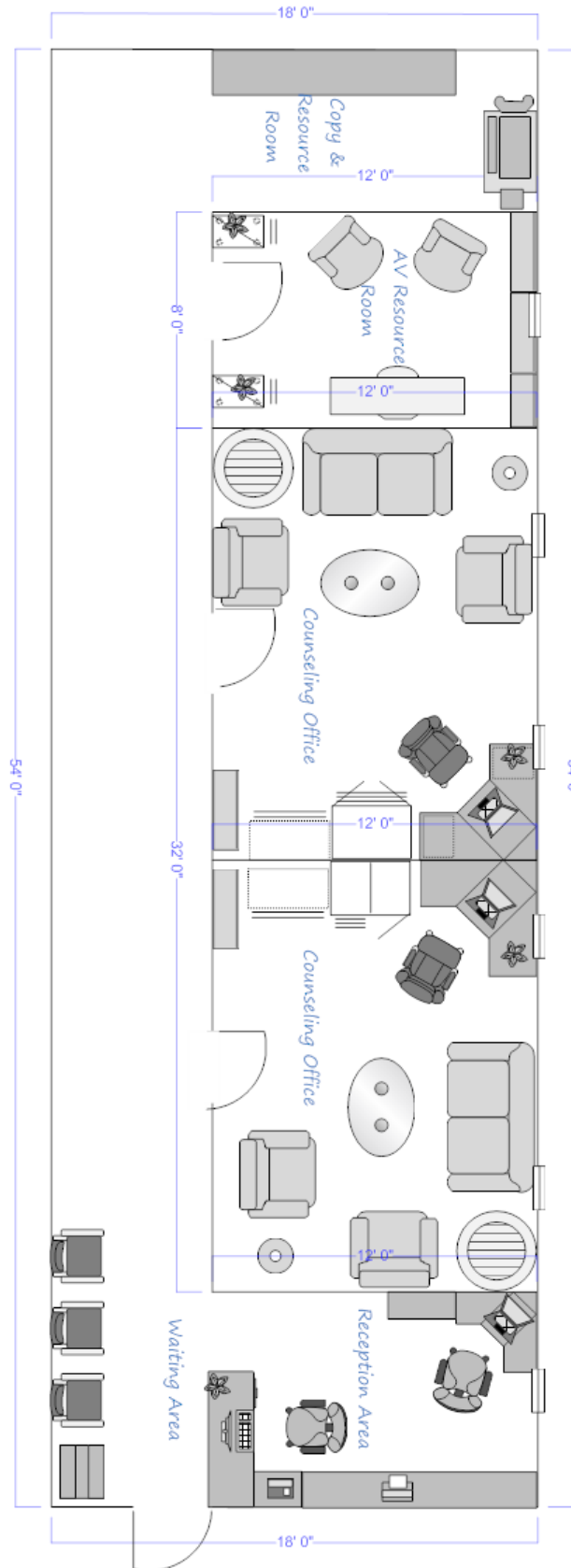
Two options are possible. The center could exist off-site or it could exist in our current facility at 7825 Gleason. Each facility model has its pros and cons. Moving the facility off-site would create difficulties of integration of the counseling and discipleship options during Sunday Morning services. On the other hand, utilizing the on-site option forces us to deal realistically with the “zero-space” reality we have right now. Something else would need to move off-site in order to concentrate on discipleship and counseling on-site. But this is not preferable due to the legal and financial issues it might raise. It would require a lot more preparation and some serious restructuring. It would be harder to transition our existing lay-counseling ministry into this model. Right now, the best use of building space would be for a small counseling and discipleship resource center to be created by remodeling our existing office space at small cost to us. The possibility exists that the revamped space could be used by multi-staff. For instance, counselors may not be “in the office” until 11 am, making shared office space a possible solution. But even with that major changes to our existing offices would need to be made.

Amount of Space Needed

Our current office suite consists of a reception area (roughly 12' x 12'), 5 small offices (8' x 12' a piece), and a print room (8' x 18'). Counseling ministry requires less cramped quarters than these! It is recommended that counseling rooms be a minimum of 12' x 15' per room.¹ Basically we need to knock out walls between two of our four adjoining offices to create comfortable space. This would give us two counseling rooms of roughly 12' by 16' dimensions. The fifth office could be “opened up” to the hall and used as a resource room for both the discipleship and counseling ministries. A small library, file cabinets of resources, and video equipment could be used there for discipleship and counseling purposes. Each of these counseling rooms could also double as office space for a counseling staff member. Small workstations with laptops in the corners could create unobtrusive workspace, while maintaining a warm, friendly feel.

¹ H. Carlene Martin, *Blueprints; A Practical Guide for Developing a Biblical Counseling Ministry*, IABC: Kansas City, 1997, p. 29

The following diagram illustrates what this redesign might look like:



RESOURCES

As shown in the floor plan, the current small office could be converted to a resource room with bookshelves and AV equipment. Counseling and discipleship curriculum on DVD could be utilized in this setting. The current “copy” room could contain copy equipment as well as additional resource space for a church counseling and discipleship library.

Additionally, a video center as part of that resource center would provide a place where people might utilize a video curriculum in a room that does not interfere with other counseling or office work that might be going on at the time. What is shown as a resource room may be needed as an office at first, in which case the current copy room could be restructured to include a resource area for video viewing.

The entire counseling/discipleship center space ought to be deliberately furnished to avoid a corporate “feel”. Furnishings for the counseling rooms should be warm, decorated attractively (not industrially or simply functional) with living room type furnishings (comfortable small sofa and chairs) as well as a whiteboard in each counseling room.

A counseling/discipleship center would also need a strong budget for curriculum. This would include not only counseling materials, but also resources for one-on-one mentoring and Christian Growth and discipleship. This resource center could be made available on Sundays (in a limited fashion as a church library) and to LifeGroup leaders as they search for curriculum. It could be that part of the admin duties of the counseling/discipleship center will be to keep this resource center in good working order.

Resourcing personnel is also an important consideration. Staffed counselors should be furnished some sort of educational expense account for books, etc. for continuing education. Conference participation should be encouraged on at least an annual basis, and funds for travel and registration should be considered an investment in the resources necessary to equip good counselors and discipleship mentors.