



MISSION

To provide counseling services by integrating psychotherapeutic techniques with biblical principles



Winter 2013

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A Pastor Finds Hope

In 2001, a number of circumstances began to mix together into a bad stew: I had been a full-time Assistant Pastor in a large church in New York for twenty years. I had a lot of responsibilities, long hours, very little rest, and very little exercise. The job I once enjoyed had become drudgery.

I was a full-time husband, full-time father, and full-time student. In June of that year, my wife, who had been working at the church school, left her job to accept a position at Nyack College. In July, my son got married and relocated. In August, my daughter left home for college, and lived on campus. In September, we all experienced the World Trade Center attack, and the constant negative media updates, creating a sort of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. So within a matter of months, I was experiencing a lot of loss.

The day after Thanksgiving I was helping my son move; it took all day. That evening, I was exhausted. I felt what I would describe as a darkness of gloom and doom. I thought I was having a heart attack, and was taken to the hospital. At that time, I had no idea what I was going through. The doctors checked me, and found everything was fine, but admitted me for observation and then sent me home. I had an over-whelming sense that something was not right. That was the beginning of my journey of gloom, fear, and much anxiety.

The Senior Pastor of the church was gracious. He allowed me to take off whatever time I needed, and still kept me on salary. But I was struggling. I was hesitant of seeking counseling. I was not sure what I had, and as a pastor, I didn't want to appear weak. But when pastors stand alone, there is the propensity to not go for help, and that only exacerbates the situation. I had been sending people from our church that needed counseling to The

Pastoral Counseling Center, but when I opened my file to do the same for myself, I debated. Should I make an appointment or not?

Finally, one day I picked up the phone and made that call. I remember the first day. I was apprehensive: Is this going to be for life? Will I have to be on medication for life? Even though I was drained physically, spiritually, and emotionally, my counselor gave me hope in the very first session. In fact, I left every session with hope. Also, I was not labeled. Each week we would talk things out, and over time I developed an understanding of what was happening: what I was going through was normal. I began to consider my future; hope was being extended.

My downward spiral of panic attacks and depression was becoming an upward spiral. I started taking care of my body: I would walk 3 to 5 miles after each session. I started moving ahead with my career goals. For years I had wanted to teach, so I finished my undergraduate studies, got my Masters' Degree, and recently completed my Doctorate. I have been teaching at Nyack College for 11 yrs. now, and I love what I do. I have a sense of purpose.

At home, my wife was very understanding. There were times that I would just cry on her shoulders. I was grateful my children weren't home at that time. That would have been more difficult. There were times my daughter would come home for a day, and ask my wife, "What's wrong with Dad?" My wife would handle that; she was my buffer. In situations like this, your marriage can deteriorate or grow depending on how your spouse handles it. This was not easy for her. I don't think she even understood what I was feeling. Being able to talk with her helped. I had the blessing of having a godly wife: there were times when I was asleep and would feel her hand on my head as she prayed for me. Those were the kinds of things that drew us

close. Praise God for all He has done.

My advice to pastors is to have an accountability partner. Pastors need relationship, we need friends, and we need accountability. In NYC, it's easier for pastors to network for ministry than for relationship. We don't need to use our ministry as a mask to hide behind. Never identify yourself by your ministerial gift. If your identity is based on what you do, the moment it's taken away, you will have lost who you are. Your identity is based on your relationship with Christ and with others. If you take away the title, 'pastor', can you survive? The title 'pastor' is not on your birth certificate and won't be on your tombstone; neither will it be in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Carlos Velez is presently living in PA. with his wife and is an Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Nyack College, NYC. The above true story was presented in an interview at the main office of the Pastoral Counseling Center in Flushing, NY.



A Book of Interest

For those who enjoyed the testimony by **Esther Jno-Charles** in our last newsletter, you might enjoy getting a copy of her book from Amazon.com:

The Talking Palm: How the childhood storms of a young woman's life remained hidden until a palm fruit started talking



Generous contributions have blessed the ministry in various ways. PCC continues to depend upon your prayer and support. If you would like to sponsor a session, or a client, contact us at (718) 463-4613. Thank you.

FYI

Praise the Lord!
Counseling sessions have increased this year.

Our intern, Sheila Matthew has started counseling sessions at Evangel Christian School in Long Island City, NY.

The Bi-Annual World Conference sponsored by the American Association of Christian Counselors held in Nashville Tennessee in September was attended by Ellen Van Etten and Sheila Matthew and their spouses. **-Theme:** Our Time is Now taken from Esther 4:14b

Pastors' Appreciation Luncheon

On Thursday, September 26, Christian radio station, WMCA, hosted a Pastors' Appreciation Luncheon at the Hotel Pennsylvania in midtown Manhattan. Over 600 pastors and ministers were in attendance. Dr. David Jeremiah of the radio and T.V. program, Turning Point, and pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church was the keynote speaker. Pastoral Counseling Center of Flushing was a sponsor of the event and had a display table in the vendor area, where we gave information on the services we offer. Those who passed by the table had the opportunity to speak with our director, Ellen, her husband Tom, and two Board members. They were invited to fill out a contact information card, and have an opportunity to win a tablet. The winner of the tablet was Jose Santiago of Jackson, NJ. *(Two top pictures –taken by Tom Van Etten)*

Harvest Fest

PCC attended the Harvest Fest in Bloomfield, NJ on September 28. We shared an exhibit table with Brookdale Christian Church, giving information to the many who passed by, pointing them to wholeness in Jesus Christ. *(Bottom picture – taken by Jim Chambers)*

- D. Ellen Van Etten, Executive Director
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- Chisholm, Marlene
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- Han, Sarah, M.A.
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- McEwen, M. Katherine, LCSW-R
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