

## TERMS OF COUNSELING AGREEMENT

**Must be read and signed by the counselee(s) and counselor BEFORE the first counseling session**

**Name:**

### **Pastoral and Lay Biblical Counseling Ministry**

The Lay Counseling Ministry at Shades Mountain Community Church is a non-profit, faith-based ministry emphasizing Biblical hope & solutions for life's challenges, obstacles, suffering and sin. SMCC offers Biblical counseling to troubled individuals, families and marriages, and premarital counseling. SMCC's Biblical counselors are ordained ministers, volunteer seminary-trained counselors, and volunteer lay counselors with biblical and counseling training, experience, and supervision. Counselors apply the principles of "other person-centered" Biblical Counseling doctrine (Phil. 2:1-5) that emphasizes humility, peace, mutual respect, and acceptance of others in the Christian family and broader community to the glory of God. Counseling is based on Scripture and biblical doctrine.

### **Supervision**

To meet our objective of providing the highest level of care possible, an ordained and seminary trained Elder as the Director of Biblical Counseling supervises all counselors. Counselors may discuss your case with the Director and/or consult with a staff Pastor as necessary. Counselors may review cases together for prayer and advice in general terms (no names or specific descriptions of details) while maintaining biblical confidentiality. All attempts to maintain confidentiality will be followed during any consultations and the counselee will be informed of consultations. Counselor notes may be reviewed periodically by the Director to ensure accountability of all counselors and the counseling process. Conselees in an immediate and/or life-threatening or harming condition such as a suicidal or psychotic condition, will be referred to professional counselors outside the ministry of SMCC trained to provide appropriate treatment and protection, or to 911 EMS.

### **Confidentiality and Ethics**

Your confidentiality is guarded at all times. Counseling may be protected as a privilege communication under certain circumstances. Certain laws require that counselors warn the appropriate individuals or agencies if a counselee intends to take harmful, dangerous or criminal action against themselves or others. Counselors will report any incident of suspected or reported child abuse, domestic violence, destructive or injurious actions or threats, or legal subpoenas to the Director to be reported to appropriate authorities as required by law.

### **Financial Information**

No fees are charged for counseling services provided by the Biblical Counseling Ministry of SMCC. However, you may be asked to cover the costs of any books, tests or evaluations deemed necessary to provide you with the maximum benefit from counseling. You will, of course, always be notified of the expense involved prior to services being rendered.

### **SMCC Members**

In addition, this counseling ministry seeks to serve the members of SMCC especially, in a competent, compassionate, and confidential manner. Counselors are trained to view their role as supportive of the overall mission and vision of the congregation in Worship, Evangelism, Love, and Learning. There is a "shepherding" responsibility that counselors owe to those who come here for counseling. Members of SMCC who reveal behavior contrary to the Constitution and By-Laws of SMCC and who persist in their resistance to constructive counsel are subject to referral to the Elder Council for the Church Discipline Process by way of the Director of Counseling, in which case certain information shared in counseling may be revealed to the council of elders. Members of SMCC have the prerogative of including a church pastor/elder, or another third party at their choosing in the counseling process; this may limit the value of any privileged communication. Counselors will only provide information gained in counseling regarding the pertinent sin issue to the Church Discipline Committee as provided in the confidentiality terms of this COUNSELING AGREEMENT FORM.

**Waiver of Liability**

The undersigned, having sought biblical counseling from SMCC, hereby acknowledges his/her understanding of the following conditions and further releases Shades Mountain Community Church, its elders, agents, affiliates, counselors, and employees from any liability or claim arising from the undersigned's participation in the Biblical Counseling Ministry:

1. It is understood by the participant counselee(s) that all biblical counseling will be provided by ordained ministers, seminary-trained biblical counselors, or trained lay counselors – not licensed therapists or counselors
2. That all counseling in the biblical counseling ministry is provided in accordance with the biblical principles adhered to by SMCC and are not provided in adherence to any local or national psychological or psychiatric association
3. That no representation has been made, either expressly or implied, that biblical counseling, as conducted by the above-mentioned counselors, is accepted as psychological and/or psychiatric therapy within the definitional terms utilized by those professions
4. That any dispute with a counselor or with SMCC arising from or related to counseling will be settled by mediation, and if necessary, legally binding arbitration IAW Rules of Procedure of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, of Peacemaker Ministries, and
5. By signing this consent, I agree that I will not attempt to subpoena or require any counselor to appear in any legal proceeding related to any matters discussed during counseling; nor will I attempt to subpoena any notes or records related to this counseling.

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Counselee Signature

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Date

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Counselee 2 Signature, if any

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Date

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Counselor Signature

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Date