

**PASTORAL COUNSELING GUIDELINES**  
**GULF ATLANTIC DIOCESE**

Clergy and pastoral caregivers in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese regularly provide pastoral counseling services in situations where it is necessary and appropriate. Within the context of the church, pastoral counselors offer direction or advice concerning moral or spiritual matters. With God’s grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, pastoral counseling can often provide opportunities for healing, accountability, repentance or restoration. In order to ensure healthy and transparent boundaries in a pastoral counseling setting, the Gulf Atlantic Diocese recommends the following guidelines be adhered to by all church leaders providing pastoral counseling services:

1. Fees or donations in exchange for pastoral counseling services are prohibited.
2. Pastoral counseling is recommended to be offered for a maximum of six (6) sessions per person. If there is a need for ongoing counseling, church personnel must refer to a licensed and qualified professional counselor for long term counseling services.
3. Pastoral counselors will maintain strict confidentiality of all information revealed during a pastoral counseling session *except where disclosure is required or permitted by law*, including if the pastoral counselor is made aware of any form of abuse.
4. In an effort to seek and give wise counsel, pastoral counselors may sometimes speak with other clergy or their bishop about confidential matters which are revealed in pastoral counseling sessions. Unless express permission is given by a participant to share their identity, such conversations between clergy or their bishop must always be conducted in such a manner as to preserve the anonymity of the individual or individuals involved in the pastoral counseling session.
5. Pastoral counseling sessions should maintain a physical and spiritual environment that minimizes any appearance of potentially inappropriate behavior. Anyone providing or receiving pastoral counseling has the right to terminate a pastoral counseling session at any time or for any reason.

We mutually agree to these terms and intend to abide by these guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Pastoral Counselor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Pastoral Counseling Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date