

IFTCC Pastoral Care Protocol May 20, 2023

This protocol is directed toward Christian care workers who intend to support men and women who experience same-sex attraction or gender incongruence. IFTCC prioritizes the dignity of the individual seeking support and honors their conscience. With this in mind, we recognize these biblical foundations, essential priorities, and ethical principles as requisite for pastoral care workers associated with our organization.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES:

Jesus Christ taught a relational ethic in which His disciples could whole-heartedly love one another with honor and sincerity.¹ He was concerned about the ways people harm and objectify one another and taught how to protect human dignity through pure-hearted attention to the well-being of others—even for those with whom we have conflict or distrust.² Sin disrupts our relationships with one another. All of humanity are victims of the effects of sin because of the disobedience of Adam, and our salvation through Jesus Christ establishes pathways of restoration and wholeness.³ By His wounds, we are healed.⁴

Jesus Christ taught that immorality, in all its forms, impacts the soul and called everyone to repentance and faith, which cause radical renewal.⁵ He responded to individual instances of sexual immorality with compassion and understanding.⁶ His mercy in the face of human weakness was restorative: amid her public humiliation and personal failure, when she was ostracized and about to be stoned, Jesus Christ invited the woman caught in adultery to begin again and follow Him.⁷

Pastoral care workers represent Jesus Christ amid deep crises to connect the marginalized to their heavenly Father, where they will find His mercy, compassion, direction and new identity as a son or daughter of God.⁸ IFTCC recognizes this role as essential to the well-being of men and women with unwanted same-sex sexual feelings and/or gender incongruence. Pastoral care workers guide individuals through life by offering prayer and spiritual direction, by facilitating community and belonging, and by offering the love of Jesus Christ in practical ways. With this in mind, IFTCC recognizes the following essential priorities and ethical principles as a fundamental guide for all pastoral care workers within our organization.

1. God longs to be in communion with all of humanity through the reconciling work of Jesus⁹ Christ in His life, His death by crucifixion, and His resurrection.¹⁰ He is our creator and the source of human identity.¹¹ Although human rebellion, unbelief, and immorality distance us from God, His divine intent for humanity to know Him cannot be rewritten.¹²
2. The image of God is portrayed not only in human sexuality as male or female, but also in the moral and rational character of humans. Male and female are unique, interdependent, and equal expressions of God's divine nature.¹³ Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God who became man, is the supreme visible image of the invisible God the Father.¹⁴ He is renewing the image of God in those who trust and follow Him.¹⁵ Therefore, all people are invited into the restoration project of God.¹⁶
3. Jesus Christ points to Genesis to emphasize the significance of human identity specifically in the male and female bond through covenant marriage, which is a unique representation of God's intimate relationship with humanity.¹⁷ Therefore, God intends that our sexuality be a powerful expression of love designed for intimacy within biblical marriage and the creation of life for His glory alone.

4. The love of God brings us to repentance.¹⁸ The role of the pastoral care worker is to reinforce the truth that a loving God came to us offering hope and redemption because we were unable to come to Him. God's ways bring wholeness and peace.
5. And, His love is the foundation of Christian life. Our appropriate response as believers is deference to His instruction through a relationship of mutual self-giving love.¹⁹ This interchange of love and surrender to His ways embodies the life of the disciple.
6. Pastoral care workers model this discipleship process for those under their care (1 Corinthians 11:1). Their exercise of the spiritual disciplines leads others into the wholeness of life in Jesus Christ as they follow their example.
7. The power and authority of the Holy Spirit creates life and renewal.²⁰ Through prayer, pastoral care workers lead individuals to connect with God and the presence of the Holy Spirit so that relationships with God are restored and that hearts are made whole.²¹ Ministry to others involves leadership into God's presence to process their perceptions, beliefs, and emotions with Him. There are many effective modalities of care offered in the wisdom of God. IFTCC recognizes care that prioritizes the dignity and purity of the believer and exhibits effective outcomes that yield peace, relational wholeness, and belonging within the Christian community.

ESSENTIAL PRIORITIES:

8. Healing from the wounds of sin is a complex, non-linear process of repenting from lies we have believed (about ourselves, God, and others), feeling our pain, grieving our losses, receiving comfort, forgiving others, surrendering false preconceptions, and yielding to God in faithfulness and perseverance. It requires the faithful oversight of pastors and caregivers who are fully invested in the dignity and thriving of those under their care, who also recognize the limitations of their ministry to meet every need.
9. Pastoral Care workers accompany men and women in their journey of faith in God and must anticipate the challenges of disappointment and perseverance. Their care compassionately responds to questions of God's goodness and mercy in the face of ongoing temptation. Surrendering one's weaknesses to Jesus Christ yields a lifetime of self-discovery that guides the individual in their calling and destiny.
10. Pastoral care workers must evaluate how they will most benefit the individual under care. At times, for example in cases addressing trauma, this may require making referrals to professional therapists. It is vital pastors and care givers recognize the signs that necessitate outside professional counseling. Pastoral care may supplement professional therapy by offering encouragement, prayer, and community as the individual pursues emotional healing.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

11. Unlike professionals in a clinical therapeutic setting, pastoral care workers model and facilitate appropriate relational boundaries within a congregation. They may play a role in introducing and informing sex-based attitudes and discipleship expectations within the Christian community. Therefore, great consideration and foresight should be applied when directing members of the same sex as well as the opposite sex.

12. Pastoral care workers must have proper oversight and accountability frameworks. Individuals under care must be made familiar with avenues of communication with senior overseers or trusted outside ministerial support (ex. Church pastor) and encouraged to offer feedback. Openness and transparency among the pastoral caregiver, his or her overseer, and the individual under care must be facilitated, while also maintaining essential confidentiality restrictions. The boundaries of openness, transparency, and confidentiality should be clarified and agreed upon by the relevant individuals. Records may be kept of private meetings if agreed upon by all parties, in which case mutual understanding of the intent and usage of such confidential records should be made clear in writing with confirming signatures.
13. Pastoral care workers may be legally mandated reporters in some localities or jurisdictions. While confidentiality needs to be maintained, pastoral care workers need to educate themselves on any legal exceptions to confidentiality in their locality or jurisdiction. Exceptions to confidentiality may be necessary or required if a counselee gives evidence of eminent intent to harm self or others and steps must be taken to protect the counselee or others. Local legal requirements must be maintained.
14. Legal and pastoral protections for care workers must be always considered, and regular intervals of review are recommended between overseers and care workers on their work and cases. Intermittent interviews of counselees by senior overseers are recommended. Appropriate informed consent documents exchanged and signed between counselee and counselor outlining such procedures provide avenues for the counselee to confidentially air concerns and for the counselor to receive input.
15. We reject as ineffective and harmful all practices that include forms of physical violence, force, manipulation, shame, or humiliation to coerce an individual to renounce LGBTQ identity or change sexuality or gender experiences. We advocate for accessible, self-motivated approaches that affirm one's dignity and empower personal choice, desired sexual ethic, and individual life goals.

¹ John 15:12-13; Romans 12:9-10

² Matthew 5:23-25, 38-48; Romans 12:14-21; James 3:13-18

³ Genesis 3:1-23; Romans 3:23-26, 6:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

⁴ 1 Peter 2:24

⁵ Matthew 4:17, 19:3-12; Mark 1:15, 7:18-23; Luke 5:32, 11:33-36; John 3:1-21; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 1:5-10

⁶ Matthew 9:12-13; John 4:13-18

⁷ John 8:3-11

⁸ 1 John 3: 1-3

¹⁰ John 17: 23-26; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Ephesians 2:8

¹¹ Genesis 1:26-30

¹² Ephesians 2:13-18

¹³ Genesis 2:15-25

¹⁴ John 1:1-18; 2 Cor. 4:4

¹⁵ Romans 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:15-23,27; Col. 3:5-10,12

¹⁶ Matthew. 25:35-36; Luke 19:7; Romans 8:13, 15:7; 1 Corinthians 6:18-19; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:17, 3:26-28; 1 Peter 1:1-2

¹⁷ Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Ephesians 5:22-33

¹⁸ John 3:16-18; Romans 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9

¹⁹ John 14:21; 1 John 2:3, 3:3; 1 Peter 1:14-15

²⁰ Genesis 1:2, 26-31; Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 8:11; Titus 3:5

²¹ Matthew 5:6, Ephesians 3:20, 3:16; Galatians 5:16-17; Colossians 3:5