

## Editorial

This year's Asia Christian counselling conference rides along God's strategic timing on the importance of Christian Counselling in ministry and missions today. To date, over 400 local participants have registered with an additional 100 leaders from all over Asia who will be coming to network, dialogue and work out major issues authentic to the contextual development for practice, ministry and service in Asia. Themed as Culturally-sensitive CHRISTIAN COUNSELING IN ASIA, with the tagline Towards Integrating Psychology and Theology as Care and Counsel in Mission for Christ, we are looking forward to this strategic event to shape the course of Christian counselling in both our country and the region. If you still have not sign up, don't miss out on this historic event.

## MENTORING PROGRAMME

The NACC Mentoring programme is designed for Ordinary members who already have formal psychological or counselling degrees and wish to play a greater role in NACC to promote Christian counselling. However, as Christian counselling has its own presuppositions and emphasis, they need to write a paper on the distinctiveness of Christian Counselling to help them crystallize and consolidate their theory and practice.

## Criteria/Qualifications

- Applicants of this programme must be Ordinary members of NACC
- Must have at least a Bachelor in Counselling or Clinical Psychology

## AGM AND NEW BOARD (2014)

At the Annual General Meeting held on 22 March 2014, the following were elected to hold office for this year:

<b>President</b>	: Dr Edmund Ng
<b>Vice President</b>	: Rev Nancy Quay
<b>Secretary</b>	: Ps Lucy Tan
<b>Asst. Secretary</b>	: Phua Ah Eng
<b>Treasurer</b>	: Karen Karn
<b>Committee</b>	: Rev Irene Ong and Dr Vincent Wong

## Benefits and Involvement:

- Be involved as volunteer counsellors in natural disasters and other tragedies, especially for those victims who especially request for Christian counsellors.
- Be involved as mentors to assist in the training of lay counsellors, especially for the NACC 30 hour certificate course in basic counselling skills. As all practice sessions will be video-taped, we need trained counsellors to act as mentors to give the participants personal guidance to consolidate their learning experience. A love gift will be given to reimburse the mentor's time and effort.
- Work alongside NACC's personnel to help churches start lay counselling ministries. While church workers and lay leaders have the maturity, they need supervision on skills, ethics and other professional insight.
- Members who have completed this programme will be listed in our homepage as "mentors" so that people can contact them direct, if necessary.

Interested parties are requested to write to [secretary@nacc-malaysia.org](mailto:secretary@nacc-malaysia.org) for the assignment paper format and other details.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF

**NACC**  
Malaysia

CHRISTIAN COUNSELLORS

## Council of Reference 2014-2015

Dr John Court  
Dr Eric Scalise  
Dr Evelyn Biles  
Dr T. Maniam  
Dr Goh Chee Leong  
Dr Johnben Loy  
Ps Dr Daniel Ho  
Ps Dr Chew Weng Chee

## NACC Committee 2014-2015

*President:*  
Dr Edmund Ng

*Vice-President:*  
Rev Nancy Quay

*Secretary:*  
Ps Lucy Tan

*Assist. Secretary:*  
Phua Ah Eng

*Treasurer:*  
Karen Karn

*Committee Members:*  
Rev Irene Ong  
Dr Vincent Wong

*Executive Director:*  
Patrick Cheng

# NACC EQUIPPING COURSE IN BASIC CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

This 30-hour course aims to equip participants with the basic skills and knowledge to further strengthen lay counsellors in the church. Level 1 will examine the “what, why and how” of basic counselling skills. Fundamental counselling concepts and techniques will be discussed and examples shown from both secular and biblical narratives. Participants will learn how culture and developmental issues can be a hindrance to one’s effectiveness as a lay counsellor. The training will also increase one’s self-awareness so that the self will not be a stumbling block to helping others. Participants will see the importance of creating the right therapeutic environment with their help-seeker before any attempt to solve their problems. Participants will be shown how to build rapport with their counselees through attending skills and body language. Basic counselling skills such as restatement, paraphrase, reflection and questioning will be discussed, demonstrated and developed.

Level 2 consists of practical sessions where they can practise their learned skills using the triad method. Practice sessions will be video-taped and transcribed using the 4-column method to help in the consolidation of counselling skills and the heightening of self-awareness. The video recordings will be reviewed by a trained supervisor on a group and/or individual basis. When participants are more confident with these attending skills, they can then move on from that “lab environment” to be more effective in helping others as home-cell leaders, people-helpers or lay counsellors. Level 2 will also examine the NACC code of ethics, pointing out specific areas that lay counsellors need to be aware of in terms of dual relationships, psychological pitfalls and confidentiality. It will overview specific areas of needs such as grief, trauma and other life-stressing events.

## Level 1 Training

Dates: 14 June – 5 July 2014 (Five Saturdays)  
Time: 9 am – 12.00 pm

## Level 2 Training

Dates: 19 July – 16 Aug 2014 (Five Saturdays)  
Time: 9 am – 12.00 pm

Venue: **NACC Office**

## Pre-requisites

- This course is a project of NACC to fulfil its goal of equipping and training up more lay counsellors, thus help in the advancement of Christian counselling as a recognised discipline in our country. As such, we require all participants to sign up as members of NACC. The membership application form is obtainable from our homepage at [www.nacc-malaysia.org](http://www.nacc-malaysia.org).
- As this intensive course focuses on skills, it presupposes that participants have a certain level of spiritual maturity in their understanding of the Word of God in terms of salvation, sin and human nature. Members must have the appropriate spiritual gifts for ministering to people (Rom. 12:8, 1 Cor. 12:8-10) in assisting the pastor/elder to carry each other’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). In this respect, all applicants must have the endorsement of the church’s leadership.

## Registration Fees

RM250 per level (for members)  
RM500 per level (for non-members)

*Payment can be made via:*

- Crossed cheque in the name of “National Asso of Christian Counsellors” and send by post to the NACC Malaysia, 2-2B, Block K, Jalan PJU1/3A, Sunway Mas Commercial Centre, 47301, Petaling Jaya.
- Online registration at [www.nacc-malaysia.org](http://www.nacc-malaysia.org).

## Contact Hours

20 contact hours will be awarded to participants who have completed the course (both Levels 1 and 2).

**Note: A similar training will be conducted in Mandarin during this period. Please write to us for more information.**

# EDUCATIONAL ARTICLE: LAY COUNSELING AND THE CHURCH: SHOULDN'T WE LEAVE IT TO THE PROFESSIONALS?

Ian F. Jones, Ph.D., Ph.D.

## Abstract

In the field of contemporary counseling, emphasis is placed on professional training and the importance of credentials and licensing. Such preparation is necessary for the protection of people seeking help and for assurance of quality control and accountability in the delivery of counseling services. By inference, professional counseling is presented as the primary and possibly the only safe way to go for successful outcome. But how effective is professional counseling in comparison to lay counseling and should churches defer to such counseling and avoid lay helping services for fear of causing harm?

The development of professional counseling in the twentieth century has provided an additional and significant source of help to people who face problems and difficulties in living. In addition, the move to evidence-based treatments has further improved the quality of care in counseling; however, one of the unfortunate side effects of the professionalization of the field has been to ignore or even dismiss the value of lay counseling. The message given is that we should leave it to the professionals, since they know what they are doing and, more importantly, we should not interfere in areas where we may do more harm than good. A closer examination of the issue, however, reveals that attempts to confine counseling to a select group of credentialed people in order to preserve the quality of delivery and maintain high standards may not only be misguided, but lack empirical support. The church needs to be informed of the historical nature



of counseling and the effectiveness of lay counseling.

## Historical Care

Pastoral care and counseling have been a part of the church from its beginnings. The works of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215), Chrysostom (347-407), Augustine (354-430), Gregory the Great (540-604), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Martin Luther (1483-1546), Richard Baxter (1615-1691), John Wesley (1703-1791), and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) represent only a few examples of resources that provide keen insight into human nature and relationships and give practical advice and counsel. The failure to recognize and utilize this information has led to a historical amnesia in Christian counseling, resulting in a dependence upon secular sources and authorities that lack a biblical foundation and world view.

## Shouldn't We Leave it to the Professionals?

In 1968, Robert Carkhuff reported that professionals, at the beginning of their training, did a better job than lay or peer counselors, but they became less effective as their training continued. In fact, lay counselors often ended up being more effective. A decade later, Durlak (1979) reviewed forty-two studies comparing the effectiveness of professional helpers to paraprofessionals (lay people helpers) and concluded that lay helpers equaled or surpassed the effectiveness of the professional therapists. Obviously, these results were counterintuitive, so a follow-up study was done by

Hattie, Sharpley, & Rogers (1984) in an attempt to refute these findings by combining the results of forty-six studies on the issue. The result? Their data supported Durlak's conclusions: clients of lay helpers consistently achieved more positive outcomes than did clients of the professionally-educated and experienced counselors. Berman and Norton (1985) reanalyzed the Hattie, Sharpley, & Rogers (1984) study and were forced to conclude that lay counselors were equally effective as professional counselors in promoting positive change.

Why were lay counselors at least as effective, if not more so, than professional counselors? In a review of these studies in 1993, Herman observed that the research suggests that professional training was not the primary means for developing competence in helping people.

Rather, the personal characteristics of the helper were the greatest factors leading to competence as a counselor. No research currently supports the notion that professional training, knowledge, or experience improves therapist effectiveness.

## The Effectiveness of Christian Lay Counseling

Siang-Yang Tan did a controlled study of a church-based lay counseling program and found that people in the treatment group reported significantly more improvement on all measures than the control group, and they maintained their gains at significant levels (Tan & Toh, 1997). The study supported the effectiveness of Christian lay counseling in a local church context, but more research needs to be done (Garzon & Tilley, 2009; Garzon, Worthington, Jr., Tan, & Worthington, 2009).

What makes lay Christian counseling so effective? Studies on the effectiveness of lay counseling demonstrate that maturity, love, genuine concern, empathy, humility, and vulnerability are more important than professional training. If you examine these terms you will find a familiar ring to them. They reflect basic virtues in Christian character. In his book *How to Be a People Helper*, Gary Collins observed that "the personality, values, attitudes, and beliefs of the helper are of primary

importance" in any helping relationship (p. 32). Collins drew characteristics of an effective Christian helper from a study of Galatians 6. The helper restores gently (v. 1), avoids being tempted (v. 1), acts humbly (v. 3), is self-examining, without comparing himself or herself to others (v. 4), takes responsibility for his or her personal burdens (v. 5), is willing to learn from the counselee (v. 5), focuses on God and the spiritual dimension of behavior (vv. 7, 8), demonstrates patience (v. 9), and is committed to doing good to all people (v. 10). Empathy, warmth, and genuineness in the Christian counselor reflect the overarching commitment to love God "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Churches should not avoid developing counseling and care giving programs over concern that they will be less effective than professional services. Research confirms the effectiveness of lay counseling. At the same time, we should not draw the conclusion that formal training is unnecessary and professional counseling has no value. Tan (1991) and Kellemen (2011) offer examples of rigorous lay Christian counselor training programs that are worth considering. We need to rediscover the hidden treasures of the historical church in care giving, draw upon the biblical virtues in the development of effective Christian counselors, carefully examine contemporary research in the field, and rest upon and evaluate all things through the authoritative instruction of Scripture.

Ian F. Jones, Ph.D., Ph.D. is Professor of Psychology and Counseling at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is chairman of the Division of Church and Community Ministries and holds the Baptist Community Ministries' Chair of Pastoral Counseling. With degrees in Christian ethics, psychology and counseling, sociology, and religion, he has taught, counseled and done family conferences in the U.S.A., Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea, and Australia. He is the author of *The Counsel of Heaven on Earth: Foundations for Biblical Christian Counseling*.