



Procedure Manual for Friendship Ministers

Stephen M. Saunders, Ph.D.
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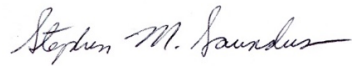
Dedication

Greetings.

If you are reading this, that likely means you are being trained to be a Friendship Minister in your church. You are surely fulfilling the command given us by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. John (chapter 13), "Love one another."

My fervent hope is that the Friendship Ministry program will be of benefit to you, to the members of your church, and to the work of pastors and churches in God's kingdom here on earth.

In His name.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen M. Saunders".

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“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

Introducing the Friendship Ministry

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.
(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

St. Paul says to comfort “those who are in any affliction.” He encourages us to realize that, just as God comforts us, so can we comfort others.

But can we really comfort “any affliction”? What about persons who are depressed or anxious? What about someone going through a problem causing confusion and distressed? We know that counselors, psychiatrists and ministers can help. But can church members do that as well?

St. Paul is correct. Anyone who is naturally kind and caring can be taught to comfort another person experiencing affliction and distress. This is why I began the Friendship Ministry.

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There are three documents used to create a Friendship Ministry at your church.

- Pastors and Co-Leaders are trained in conducting the Friendship Ministry as well as in supervision skills with the *Training Manual for the Friendship Ministry Program*.
- In turn, they train laypersons to be Friendship Ministers using this document, the *Procedure Manual for Friendship Ministers*.
- When meeting with members, Friendship Ministers will use the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions for Friendship Ministers*, as well as several worksheets.

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This *Procedure Manual for Friendship Ministers* is organized into three parts.

Part 1 describes the **rationale** of the Friendship Ministry Program, contrasting the substantial need for mental health support and the limited capacity of churches to address that need. It describes the Friendship Ministry, including the training to start a program, how the program is structured, and how it will work.

Part 2 focuses on developing the core skills Friendship Ministers will need to assist someone experiencing emotional distress, which are **understanding, listening skills, and problem-solving skills**. It presents a clear and accessible framework for understanding mental health problems. It explains effective listening skills, which foster open communication and encourage someone to talk about their emotional distress. It explains **problem-solving skills that encourage someone to think and behave in a more effective manner**.

Part 3 reviews **general considerations** for conducting the Friendship Ministry, including privacy and confidentiality, meeting locations, adhering to time limitations, and ongoing consultation with the Friendship Ministry Team.

Finally, Reverend Michael Berg, Ph.D., Associate Professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has written “**theological considerations**” found at the end of each part.

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Part 1: Rationale and Overview

Preview of Part 1

Chapter 1 discusses the **rationale** for starting a Friendship Ministry at your church. To summarize: mental illness and mental health problems are common and distressing; persons experiencing emotional distress will turn to their church for assistance; but churches have insufficient capacity to help all of those in need.

Chapter 2 briefly describes the Friendship Ministry, including the **training** to start a program at your church, the **skills** trained, how the program is **structured** within churches, and **how it will work**.

The **Theological Considerations** section discusses **justification and anthropology**, including their relevance to mental health.

Chapter 1. Rationale for the Friendship Ministry

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

This chapter introduces the Friendship Ministry, including the reasons for starting a program at your church. To summarize: mental illness and mental health problems are common and distressing; persons experiencing emotional distress will turn to their church for assistance; but churches have insufficient capacity to help all of those in need.

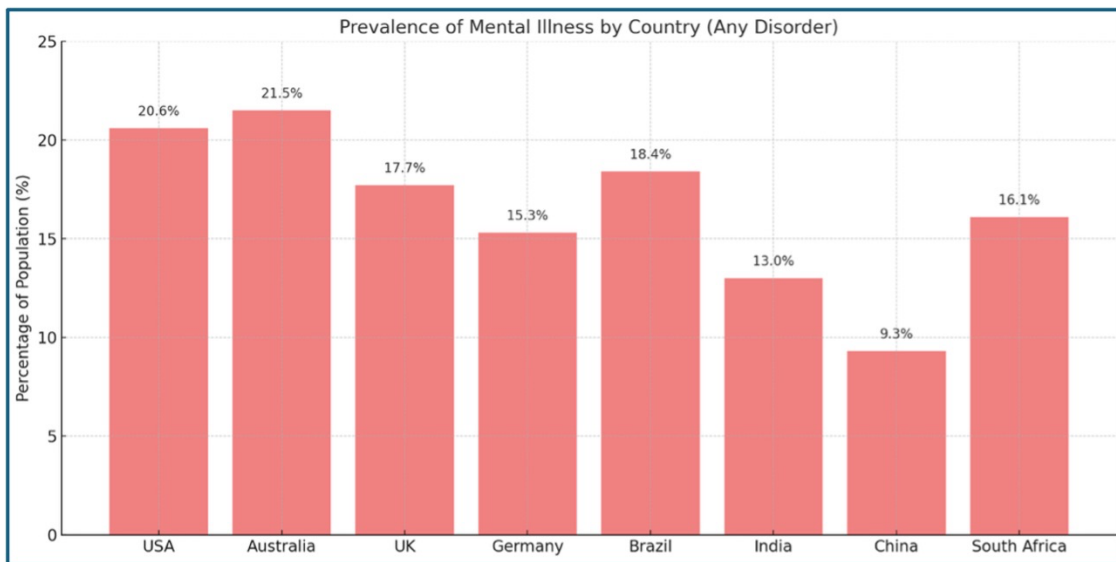
Chapter Summary

- Mental health problems are common and cause immense distress and impairment.
- Although effective treatments exist, most people never receive them.
- Christians experiencing emotional distress will often seek help from their church.
- Pastors want to help, but the need is very great..

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE COMMON, DISTRESSING, AND DISABLING

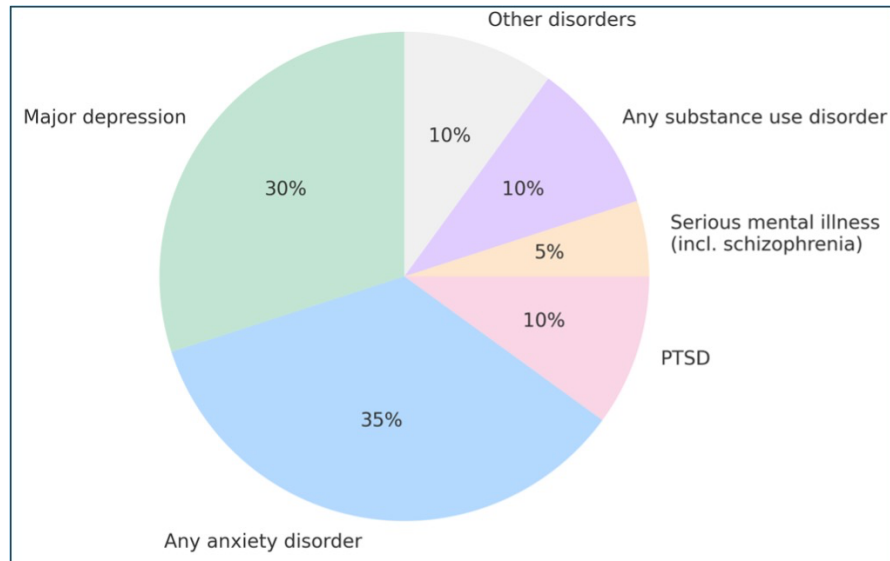
Mental health problems are common. As shown in **Figure 1**, research shows that between 10–20% of adults around the world experience a diagnosable mental illness each year.

Figure 1. Yearly Prevalence Rates of Mental Illness in Adults (ages 18-65)



As shown in **Figure 2**, research shows that, in the United States, anxiety and depressive disorders account for approximately two-thirds of diagnosed mental illnesses. Trauma-based disorders (i.e., PTSD) and the substance use disorders account for another 20%.

Furthermore, many individuals experience more than one mental illness. For example, the anxiety and depressive disorders very frequently co-occur, and PTSD often co-occurs with both depression and the substance use disorders.

Figure 2. Distribution of Mental Illnesses in Diagnosed Adults (U.S. Sample)

“Subclinical Cases”

Many persons meet criteria for a diagnosable mental illness. Mental health professionals generally agree that many additional individuals experience significant emotional distress without meeting formal diagnostic criteria for a mental illness. Sometimes referred to as “subclinical cases,” these individuals are emotionally distressed and could benefit from help, but they are not counted as having a formal mental illness.

Subclinical cases include persons experiencing mild to moderate depression or anxiety, such as those who are recently divorced or struggling to find employment.

For this reason, to ensure that these individuals are included, this manual will use the broader term “mental health problems” rather than the more restrictive term “mental illness.”

Applying the Numbers

In a small congregation of 100, 20 persons will have a diagnosable mental illness each year. In a church of 1,000 members, 200 will have a mental illness in any year. Subclinical cases double these estimates.

Distress and/or Impairment

Mental health problems cause **distress**, **impairment**, or **both** distress and impairment. *Distress* refers to emotional suffering. Common terms for distress, such as depression and anxiety, are part of the formal name of many mental illnesses (such as *major depressive disorder* and *generalized anxiety disorder*). *Impairment* refers to difficulty fulfilling responsibilities to oneself, one’s family, or one’s work.

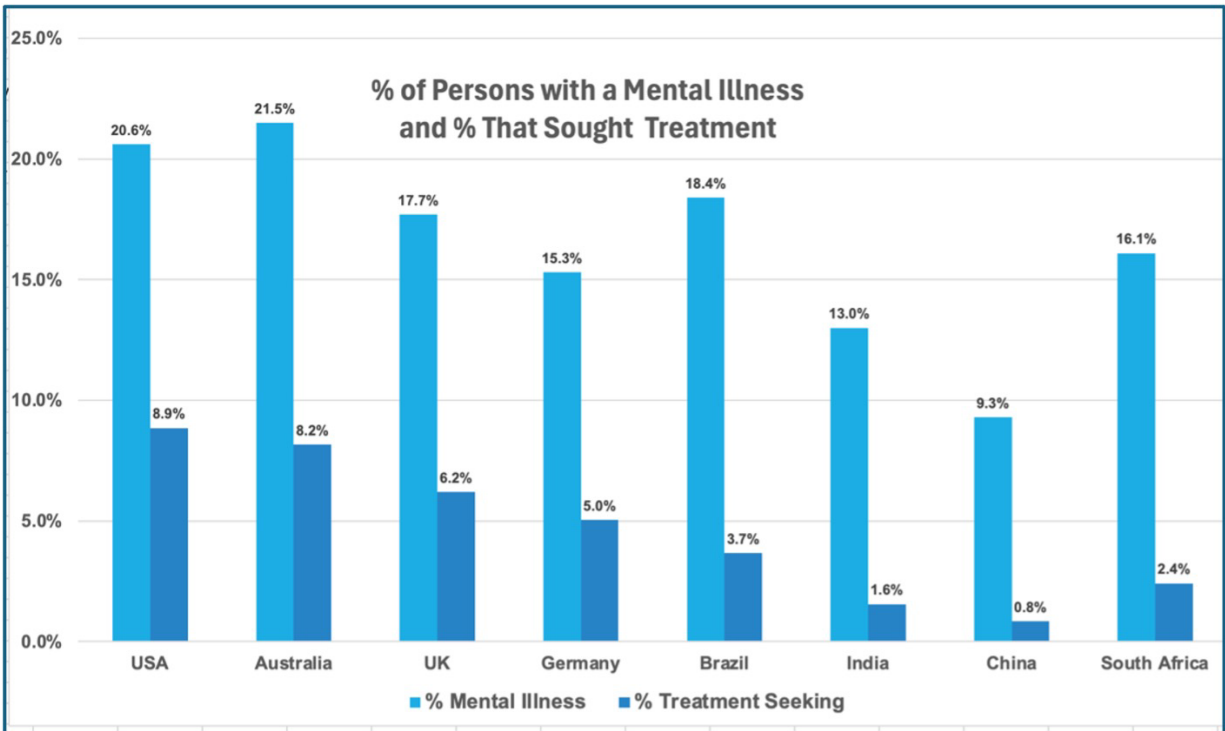
Although most mental health problems cause both distress and impairment, some involve primarily one or the other. For example, a person experiencing serious distress related to a mental health problem might nonetheless function well in work, family, and social roles. In contrast, some individuals with a mental health problem may experience little personal distress but show serious impairment. For example, a person with a substance use disorder, such as alcoholism, may not feel distressed by excessive drinking, but he will be seriously impaired in job performance and family responsibilities.

MOST DO NOT OBTAIN TREATMENT

As shown in **Figure 3**, research shows that, although many effective treatments have been developed, most persons with a mental health problem do not get any help whatsoever. For example, in the U.S., only about

40% of persons with a mental illness get treatment.

Figure 3. Mental Illnesses Versus Treatment Seeking



Environmental and Psychological Barriers to Obtaining Help

Many people who could benefit from help never receive it. Practical barriers include cost, lack of providers, and transportation difficulties. Psychological barriers include lack of awareness, uncertainty about treatment options, and feelings of shame or embarrassment.

Persons in Distress Turn to Their Church

Many Christians who experience a mental health problem—either in themselves or in a loved one—turn to their church for support. The church is familiar and trustworthy. It is a place of community, where believers gather to hear the love of God proclaimed, and a place of comfort and refuge. The church does not shrink from illness, but rather seeks to minister to those who are suffering. The church does not view mental health problems as shameful.

Because mental health problems are common and many people seek support from their church, pastors often face more need than they can address alone. The Friendship Ministry expands the church's capacity to provide care. It helps churches meet these needs by training laypersons to provide structured, supervised support to members experiencing emotional distress.

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Preview of Chapter 2

For these reasons, having a Friendship Ministry at your church could greatly benefit many of its members. With this background in mind, the next chapter describes the training to start a Friendship Ministry at your church, as well as what it would look like.

Chapter 2. The Friendship Ministry at Your Church

The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all. (Psalm 34:19)

This chapter briefly describes the Friendship Ministry, including the training to start a program at your church, the skills trained, how the program is structured within churches, and how it will work.

Chapter Summary

- The Friendship Ministry Program helps churches improve their capacity to help members experiencing mental health problems.
- The program trains laypersons to conduct basic mental health care, under the supervision of their Pastor.

OVERVIEW

The Friendship Ministry helps churches expand their capacity to help those with mental health problems. The Pastor and Co-Leader, who is selected by the Pastor, go through training to select, train, and supervise laypersons to become Friendship Ministers who provide basic mental health care to members in need. The Pastor, Co-Leader, and Friendship Ministers constitute the Friendship Ministry Team (FM Team), which meets regularly for consultation and supervision.

The Friendship Ministry at your church will be tailored by the FM Team to fit the needs and capacities of your church. The program is part of the Pastor's overall ministry and operates under the Pastor's authority. Assistance provided by Friendship Ministers is an extension of the Pastor's ministry. It is biblically grounded and consistent with established mental health principles.

Friendship Ministers are not mental health professionals. They will not diagnose mental illnesses nor provide counseling. Rather, they provide Christian support, listening, encouragement, and structured problem-solving under the supervision of the Pastor and in consultation with the FM Team. When professional care is needed, Friendship Ministers encourage members to obtain appropriate services.

TRAINING TO START A FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY

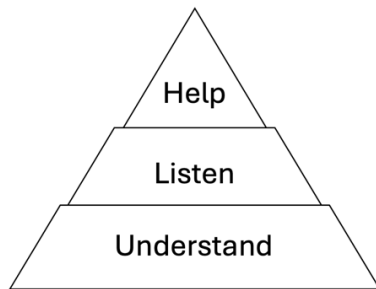
The training to begin a Friendship Ministry proceeds as follows.

- After deciding to start a Friendship Ministry, the Pastor selects a Co-Leader, who ideally (but not necessarily) has training and experience in the healthcare field.
- Pastors and their Co-Leaders are trained by Friendship Ministry Directors at a multi-day conference. They are trained in all aspects of the program, including how to understand mental health problems, listening skills, and problem-solving strategies. They are also trained in teaching and supervision.
- The Pastor and Co-Leader return to their church to recruit laypersons to be trained as Friendship Ministers, using this *Procedure Manual for Friendship Ministers*. The Pastor and Co-Leader conduct the training. Friendship Ministers are trained in listening and problem-solving skills.
- After this training is completed, the church has a Friendship Ministry Team (FM Team), which includes the Pastor, Co-Leader, and Friendship Ministers.
 - The FM Team will establish the process by which members will seek assistance.
 - Privacy is strictly upheld through the FM Team's confidentiality practices.

- The FM Team regularly reviews and adapts the program to the needs of the church.
- Friendship Ministers conduct the program with members seeking assistance, using the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions for Friendship Ministers*.
 - After a specific problem is identified, the Friendship Minister works with the member to improve or resolve it.
 - When professional care is needed, meetings focus on encouraging the member to seek appropriate services.
- Friendship Ministers continue to meet for consultation and supervision with the Pastor and Co-Leader through meetings of the FM Team.

THE THREE SKILLS TRAINED

The Friendship Ministry is based on understanding, listening, and helping. These skills build on one another.



The most foundational skill is **understanding** mental health problems. Part 2, Chapter 3 reviews how the Friendship Ministry understands mental health problems as being closely related to thinking and behavior.

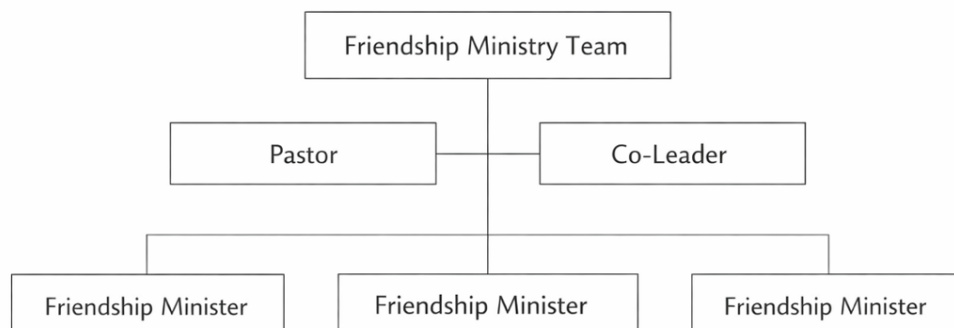
Listening skills are essential to understanding a person's distress and problem—including how that person is thinking and behaving. Listening skills are covered in Chapter 4.

Based on a general understanding of mental health problems and (from listening) understanding of the particular problem of the person seeking assistance, providing **help** involves evaluating and changing the member's thinking and behaviors toward the problem. These helping skills are covered in Chapter 5.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY

The organizational structure of the Friendship Ministry is shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Organization of the Friendship Ministry



- **The Friendship Ministry Team:** Under the Pastor's guidance, each church forms a Friendship Ministry Team (FM Team), consisting of the Pastor, a Co-Leader, and at least two laypersons trained as Friendship Ministers.
- **The Pastor:** The Friendship Ministry is an extension of the Pastor's ministry and operates under the Pastor's ongoing supervision.

- **The Co-Leader:** The Pastor recruits a Co-Leader for the FM Team. Ideally, this individual has some formal training in a health profession (e.g., counseling, nursing).
- **Friendship Ministers:** Laypersons are recruited and trained as Friendship Ministers. The Pastor and Co-Leader equip them to listen, understand, and provide support. Friendship Ministers meet individually with members experiencing emotional distress. Friendship Ministers are supported by the FM Team.

THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY IN ACTION

A brief overview of the processes of the Friendship Ministry follows.

1. Members **reach out for help** to the Friendship Ministry, are screened for appropriateness, and are **matched** with a Friendship Minister of the same gender, who reaches out to arrange the initial meeting.
2. In the **initial meeting**, the Friendship Minister provides an **overview** of the program and then engages the member in conversation.
3. Through **active listening**, the Friendship Minister communicates empathy and demonstrates understanding.
4. In the second meeting, the Friendship Minister and member **identify a problem** causing distress. The member's thoughts and behaviors about the problem are explored.
5. In subsequent meetings, discussions between the Friendship Minister and the member focus on the identified problem. Discussions emphasize how the member might **modify their thinking and behavior**. This may include discussion about whether the member should seek professional mental health care and how they might do so.
6. In the final meeting, **progress is reviewed** and the meetings are concluded.
7. Throughout the process of meetings between Friendship Ministers and members, the **FM Team meets regularly** to consult with and learn from each other.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rev. Michael Berg, Ph.D.

JUSTIFICATION AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Image of God

- So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).
- Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. (Genesis 9:6).
- Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:9-10).

The term “image of God” is used in two ways. First, the general idea that all humans bear this image. We are designated as valuable regardless of race, gender, socio-economic standing, or even our creed. Not even our sinfulness forfeits this designation. Second, the term refers to the original righteousness Adam and Eve were created in, was lost in the fall into sin, and is restored only on account of Christ and through faith.

This means that humans reflect certain characteristics of the creator such as reason, love, and creativity. We are personal beings as opposed to mere objects. We possess an innate understanding of our importance, a desire for freedom, and a desire for perfection. We are different than the plants and animals. We were made for flourishing and we know it!

Most significantly, we desire justification (righteousness). We seek to be seen as valuable and right(eous), and we consistently try to justify our actions and even our very existence.

Justification

- We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified (Galatians 2:15-16).
- God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Justification is often described as being “declared not guilty”. This is true. We are acquitted in God’s courtroom. Satan can no longer accuse us of sin because Christ has paid the price for our sins. Justification and righteousness are two sides to the same coin. In fact, some languages use the same word for the English words, “justification” and “righteousness”. If I try to justify my actions, I am simply trying to make them “just” or “right”. When God justifies us, we are declared “righteous”.

Righteousness is always a gift. Adam and Eve were created with original righteousness. This was lost in the fall into sin told to us in Genesis 3. The rest of the biblical story is God trying to give righteousness back to stubborn sinners who think they do not need his help!

Two Kinds of Righteousness

- Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through

faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (Romans 3:20-22).

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

Sometimes we refer to these two kinds of righteousness: active and passive. The active righteousness is the perfect life Christ lived in our place and is credited to our account. We are declared (really made) righteous (justified). The passive righteousness refers to sanctification (the result of our justification). Christians perform acts of righteous love. This is God's love through us. We are passively righteous (God makes us righteous) and we perform righteous acts (his love through us).

It is also helpful to think about the two kinds of righteousness in this way: a righteousness by law and a righteousness by faith. Think of two systems: a wage system and a gift system.

Righteousness by Law	Righteousness by Faith
Wage System	Gift System
God is Boss	God is Loving Father
Humans are Employees	Humans are God's Children
Humans are paid a wage (curses for sin, blessings for good deeds)	Humans are gifted the righteousness of Christ.

Our sinful nature seeks to justify our actions so that we can earn God's love. This is a double tragedy. First, we cannot earn righteousness because we are sinful. Second, we do not have to earn God's love (it wouldn't be love if we had to earn it!). Thus did Paul say in the above passage that the *wages* of sin is death but the *gift* of God is eternal life.

Sinner-Saints

- What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:15-18).

Christians are simultaneously sinners and saints. We are not half sinners and half saints but 100% sinners and 100% saints. I know that the math doesn't work out but it sure explains my life: one moment I am a delight and the next moment I am not. Paul's use of the slave/master imagery is meant to teach us that we do not have a choice in the matter. A sinner, by definition, always sins. A saint, by definition, always *saints*, that is performs righteous acts of love.

Body and Soul

- Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).
- Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

The description of a human being is difficult. Are we body and soul or body, soul, and spirit? The bible uses a variety of words and concepts to describe our physical and non-physical being. It is helpful to think of the non-physical aspect of a human being (the soul) as having faculties. Each term emphasizes one aspect or purpose of the soul. Please note that this is only one list. There are other descriptions that are helpful.

The term “heart” is often used to describe the central being of a human being as well. Where your heart goes, everything else follows. You are what you love!

It is best to think of the soul being in every part of the body. The body and the soul interact with each other. The body can affect the soul, and the soul can affect the body. While it is necessary for us to think of the body and soul as separate it is best to think of the body and the soul as so intertwined that it is nearly impossible to think of them as separate.

Faculty of the Soul	Aspect/Purpose
Mind	Intellect
Heart	Will/Desire
Reason	Rationality
Emotions	Psychosomatic (both bodily & spiritual) reactions
Spirit	Connection to God

Mental Health Connection

Sinner/Saint Anthropology

The goal of mental health counseling for the Christian is not to overcome sin (an impossibility) but to aid in the Christian’s spiritual battle between the old self (sinful nature) and the new self (Christ living in me). The biblical analogy is death and resurrection and not an overcoming of sin. Christians are not “on their way” to becoming saints. They already are. Spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer) are helpful, but they cannot rid the person of sin.

Body/Soul Anthropology

The body and soul interact. A person who is physically abused will still carry emotional pain even after the bruises fade away. An emotional experience can produce a positive or negative reaction in the body. Correct thinking and discipline help form both the soul and the body to correct emotions and actions.

Love and Our Status before God

The Christian’s true status is a saint. This cannot be taken away; it is a gift. I never have to earn God’s love. If I did, it would not be love anymore. If I find myself in a relationship in which I think I must earn love, it is not a loving relationship. This misunderstanding of love leads to attempts to earn love (either God’s love or someone else’s love). This results in negative mental health outcomes.

NOTES FOR PART 1



Part 2: Understanding, Listening and Problem-Solving

Preview of Part 2

Part 2 describes how the Friendship Ministry program helps persons with mental health. It trains Friendship Ministers in the three essential skills: understanding, listening, and helping.

Understanding mental health problems is a foundational skill. **Chapter 3** reviews how the Friendship Ministry understands mental health problems as being closely related to thinking and behavior.

Listening skills are trained in **Chapter 4**. Active listening enables the Friendship Minister to understand how the person in distress is thinking, feeling and doing.

Helping skills are taught in **Chapter 5**. The problem-solving strategy and how it is implemented starts in the second meeting. The strategy entails identifying a single problem on which to focus to identify, evaluate and try to change—as appropriate—how the member thinks about and behaves toward it.

Chapters 6 and 7 **will not apply to all members** seeking assistance from the Friendship Ministry.

The FM Team will decide that some members would be best helped by encouraging them to seek professional help for a more serious mental health problem. This topic is covered in **Chapter 6**.

As well, the FM Team will decide that some members should focus on their self-care, an important behavior that promotes physical and emotional well-being. **Chapter 7** describes how to help a member engage in better self-care.

The **Theological Considerations** section discusses the power of words.

Chapter 3. Understanding Mental Health and Mental Health Problems

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement. (John 7:24)

The Friendship Ministry conceptualizes mental health problems in a simple but accurate manner that provides a powerful way to help persons in distress. It shows that mental health problems are closely related to thinking and behavior.

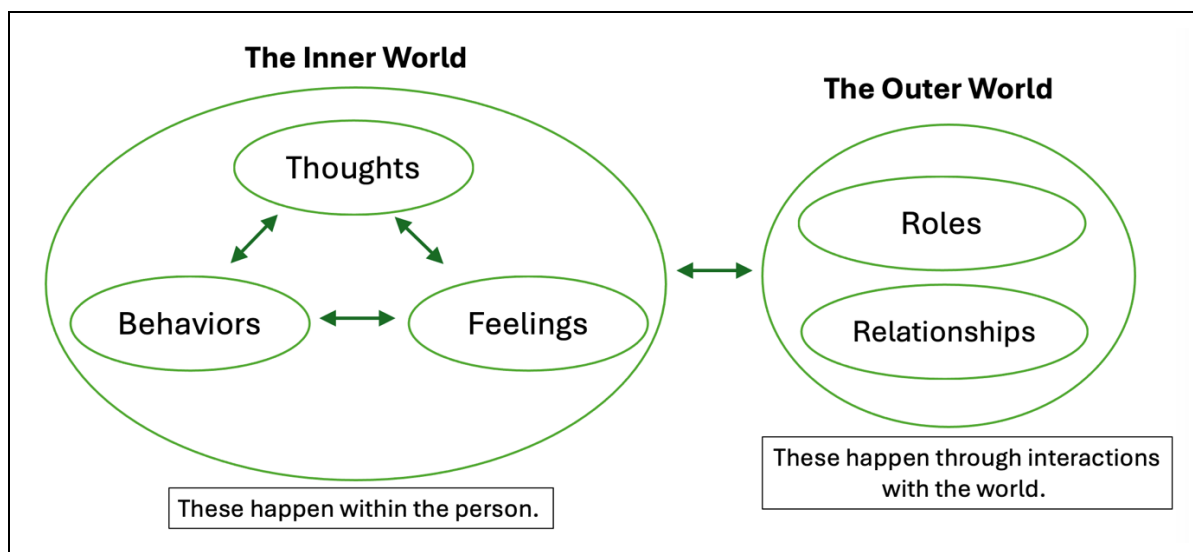
Chapter Summary

- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors constitute the inner world, whereas roles and relationships constitute the outer world.
- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors influence each other.
- Thoughts, emotions, and behaviors influence how a person functions in roles and relationships, and roles and relationships influence thoughts, emotions and behaviors.
- Thoughts and behaviors are learned and can be changed.
- Friendship Ministers are trained to help members think more accurately and act more effectively to reduce distress and improve functioning.

A MODEL OF MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The Friendship Ministry uses the model of mental health illustrated in **Figure 5**. To summarize, a person's **inner world** happens within the person and consists of thoughts, behaviors and feelings. A person's **outer world** consists of roles and relationships. The arrows show that thoughts, behaviors and feelings influence each other, and that the inner and outer worlds influence each other.

Figure 5. A Model of Mental Health and Mental Health Problems



The Inner World: Feelings, Behaviors and Thoughts

Feelings

Mental health professionals distinguish between affect and mood. Affect refers to feelings experienced in the moment that can change throughout the day. Mood refers to a more enduring emotional state that may last for hours or even days.

Behaviors

Behaviors are actions we engage in, both intentionally and out of habit. We read a book and talk with others without much effort, whereas preparing meals and helping children with homework takes more intentional effort. **Healthy** behaviors are helpful and effective, such as exercising, socializing, and eating well. **Unhealthy** behaviors are harmful or ineffective, such as drinking too much, isolating, or responding to anger with abuse.

Thoughts

There are many categories of thinking that are often referred to as **cognitive activities**. The cognitive activities most relevant to the Friendship Ministry are **perceptions, memories, and expectations**. These are thoughts about the present, the past, and the future.

- **Perceptions** are thoughts about what is happening, such as what we think another is feeling.
- **Memories** are thoughts about events that happened in the past.
- **Expectations** are thoughts about what we believe will happen in the future.

It is important to recognize that, much of the time, cognitive activities happen outside of a person's conscious intention. For example, without conscious effort, we often "just know" what another person is thinking or feeling based on their facial expression. In another example, disturbing memories of a traumatic event can cause emotional distress in the present moment, even if someone tries not to think about them. For this reason, an early task of the problem-solving strategy is helping the member become more aware of what they are thinking.

Other Examples of Cognitive Activities

- Paying attention: Focusing on certain things while ignoring others.
- Interpreting: Making sense of what is happening.
- Problem solving: Thinking through possible ways to handle a problem.
- Planning: Thinking about how to handle something in the future.
- Shifting perspective: Looking at a problem in a different way.
- Reflecting on your thinking: Noticing your own thoughts and how they affect you.

The Outer World: Relationships and Roles

A person's **outer world** consists of relationships and roles.

Everyone has **relationships** that vary in closeness. For example, relationships with family members are typically closer than relationships with friends and acquaintances.

Most persons also have a variety of **roles**, which consist of tasks, obligations, and responsibilities. For example, the role of spouse includes the obligation to be faithful, patient and kind. A person's role as an employee entails obligations to their employer, such as showing up on time and completing assigned tasks.

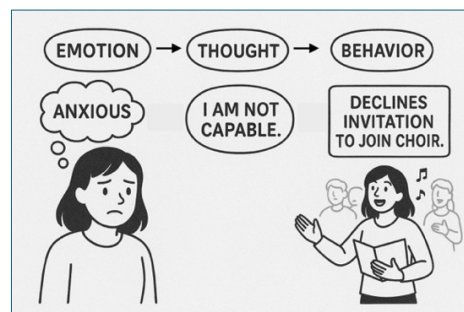
The Mutual Influence of Thoughts, Behaviors, Feelings, Roles and Relationships

Thoughts, behaviors, feelings, roles, and relationships continuously influence one another.

Feelings influence behavior and thinking

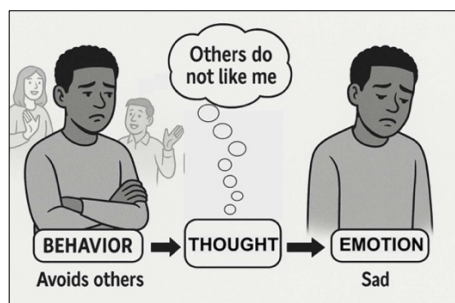
When someone feels happy, he or she is more likely to think positive thoughts and engage in enjoyable activities. In contrast, when someone feels sad or anxious, negative thoughts are more likely, and the person may be less inclined to engage in enjoyable social activities.

- Isaac has been depressed for some time. His sad feelings lead him to think that others do not like him, which causes him to withdraw from others.
- Judith often feels anxious. She is a very good singer, but singing in front of others increases her anxiety. This causes Judith to decline an invitation to join the church choir.



Behavior influences feelings and thinking

Some behaviors help us feel better and think more positively, such as doing something enjoyable, exercising, or talking with a close friend. Other behaviors make us feel worse and can increase negative thinking, such as arguing with others, working excessively, or spending too much time alone.



- Marek isolates from others because of his anxiety. This behavior causes him to feel sad and lonely, and it makes him think that others do not like him.
- Instead of going to church service and other events, Gayle stays home. Over time, this behavior makes her think badly about herself and to feel anxious and sad.

Thinking influences feelings

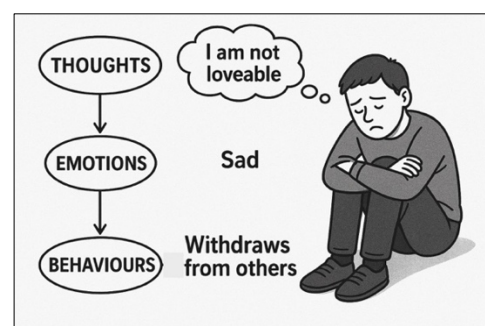
Feelings are very strongly influenced by thinking. As the following examples show, it is often easy to determine how a person feels by knowing what he or she is thinking.

- Dave says, "I think Laura, my boss, does not like me," and it is clear that he feels anxious.
- Mary says, "I think I made an unforgivable mistake," and it is obvious that she feels deeply distressed.

In fact, we can tell what someone is thinking by knowing how he or she is feeling. For example:

- Amy feels terrible after making a mistake, and we know she thinks others expect her to be perfect.
- Jacob is afraid of his grandmother's dog, suggesting that he thinks the dog is dangerous.

Thoughts and feelings are so closely intertwined that people will say "feel like" when they are describing a thought. For example, Dave says, "I feel like Laura does not like me," using the word *feel* instead of *think*.



Thinking determines behavior

Behavior is strongly influenced by thinking, whether that thinking is deliberate or automatic. If a person believes a behavior is worthwhile, he or she is likely to engage in it. In contrast, if a person believes a behavior is a bad idea, he or she is unlikely to do so. Consider the following.

- Tyler injured his ankle playing football. He understands (thinks) that he will be able to play again if he engages in his physical therapy regimen, so he does these behaviors.
- After becoming pregnant and knowing (thinking) that it is bad for her baby, Amber quits smoking.

Our inner and outer worlds influence each other

How a person thinks, feels, and behaves strongly affects how he or she functions in roles and relationships. Consider the following.

- Dave thinks his boss, Laura, does not like him. As a result, he feels anxious and avoids interactions with her. These thoughts, behaviors and feelings negatively affect his performance at work.
- Winfred feels depressed, which causes her to think that others do not like her. This causes her to decline invitations to go out with friends and coworkers, which hurts her relationships with them.

In the opposite direction, problems in relationships and roles affect thoughts, behaviors and feelings. Consider the following.

- Dave is anxious because he thinks his boss does not like him and he avoids her, which causes him to struggle at work, which makes his anxiety around his boss even worse.
- Winfred's depression causes her to isolate from others, and this negatively affects her relationship with friends and coworkers, making her feelings of sadness increase.

USING THE MODEL OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY

The model of mental health (see **Figure 5**) shows that thinking and behavior influence how a person feels and how well he or she functions in roles and relationships. This model provides a powerful framework for helping individuals who are seeking assistance for emotional distress or a challenging problem.

Feelings Are Influenced by Thinking and Behavior

The Friendship Ministry does not *directly* challenge how a person **feels**. We ought never tell another that they should not feel a certain way, such as, "You should not feel sad" or "That should not have made you upset." However, we can help someone experiencing negative emotions by encouraging them to examine whether the way they think and behave might be changed in order to feel better.

Characteristics of Thoughts and Behaviors

The Friendship Ministry helps people in distress by assisting them in changing both their thinking and their behavior. This is possible because thoughts and behaviors have three important characteristics.

1. The way people think and behave are learned, and they can become habitual;
2. Thoughts and behaviors can be either wrong or unhealthy, leading to problems in emotions or in how a person functions in roles and relationships; and
3. Thoughts and behaviors can be changed.

Thoughts and behaviors are learned and can become habitual.

Regarding thinking, one of the most important things people learn is how to think about themselves and others. Some learn that they are worthwhile and that others can generally be trusted. As a result, they are able to form healthy, loving relationships. Others learn to think poorly of themselves and struggle to trust others, making relationships more difficult.

Behaviors are also learned. Some develop naturally, such as crawling, talking, and walking. Others require deliberate effort, such as riding a bicycle, driving a car, or learning to use a computer. Some persons were never taught certain helpful behaviors, however. For example, a person may never have learned healthy ways to manage stress, ask for help, or care for a parent with dementia.

Over time, both thoughts and behaviors become habitual. Habitual thoughts are often called *automatic* because they occur with little awareness. A person may repeatedly think poorly of himself or herself without realizing how these thoughts influence emotions and relationships. Similarly, behaviors that once required effort—such as reading, driving, or riding a bicycle—eventually occur with little conscious thought. In this way, both helpful and unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving can become automatic.

Thoughts and behaviors can cause problems in how we feel ...

Thoughts and behaviors can cause problems in how we feel. For example, a person might be taught to think incorrectly that others will make fun of her if she tries to do something. The anticipation of that will make her feel very anxious. Unhealthy behaviors, especially when they become habitual, can likewise worsen emotional well-being. Examples of unhealthy behaviors that would worsen emotional functioning include not getting enough exercise or isolating from others.

... and in how well a person handles a challenging problem

The way a person thinks and behaves might make it more difficult to resolve a challenging problem. Excessively negative thinking about a problem can lead to strong negative emotions, which may interfere with effective problem-solving behavior. For example, Rita finds herself frequently arguing with her teen daughter about school. She thinks, incorrectly, “*My daughter no longer cares about me*” and “*She does not care about a good education.*” These thoughts increase Rita’s distress and make the problem more difficult.

Behavior can also interfere with coping with a challenging problem. A person might attempt ineffective behaviors. Or perhaps the problem is something the person has never confronted previously and thus never developed the skills to handle.

A particularly challenging problem is mental illness. Many persons have incorrect, negative thoughts about mental health problems and their treatment. This thinking will influence how they feel and act. For example, if someone thinks depression only happens to people who have a weak faith, they will feel ashamed if they or someone in their family becomes depressed. In a similar way, if a person incorrectly thinks that mental health care does not help, that thinking would influence them to not seek care. Or perhaps a person simply does not know the appropriate behavior for obtaining help, such as where or how to seek it.

Thoughts and behavior can change

To summarize, thoughts and behaviors are learned and over time can become habitual. This is good if one has healthy thoughts and engages in healthy behavior. But unhealthy thoughts and behaviors can cause a person to feel badly and to have difficulty resolving a challenging problem. And since they are habitual, it can be difficult for a person to realize that their thoughts and behaviors are unhelpful.

Fortunately, thoughts and behaviors can be re-learned. Learning more healthy ways of thinking and behaving can help a person feel better emotionally and do better in roles and relationships.

The Friendship Ministry helps people make these changes. Consider these examples:

- Dave thinks his boss does not like him. A Friendship Minister asks Dave how he is certain that his thinking is accurate, saying, *"You think your boss does not like you, but are you sure that is accurate? How do you know that?"* With encouragement, Dave requests a meeting with his boss, through which he is able to realize that, in fact, she does like him.
- Judith is anxious about her singing. Although she declined an invitation to join the church choir, a Friendship Minister encourages her to reconsider. Judith goes to a choir practice, and this behavior introduces her to fellow church members who are friendly and complimentary.
- Rita is having difficulty with her teen daughter. A Friendship Minister helps Rita understand that it is normal for teens to argue with parents. The Friendship Minister also helps Rita develop behavioral strategies for communicating calmly and effectively with her daughter.

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Preview of Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 are the most important to the conduct of the Friendship Ministry.

Chapter 4 introduces active listening skills, which are the primary focus of the first meeting but are used in all meetings. Chapter 5 builds on this foundation by introducing the problem-solving strategy, which is also used throughout the Friendship Ministry.

Chapter 4. Listening Skills

Making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding. (Proverbs 2:2)

This chapter focuses on listening skills, specifically *active listening*. Listening effectively is the main task of the Friendship Minister during the initial meeting. It assists with the three primary goals: it helps the Friendship Minister gain an initial understanding of the reason the member is seeking help; it communicates that the Friendship Minister cares, understands, and is capable of helping; and it encourages the member seeking help to engage in the difficult work of trying to change. Active listening is the primary task during the initial meeting, but it is used in every meeting.

As the material in this chapter is presented and discussed, it will be useful to simultaneously have the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* available for review.

Chapter Summary

- Empathy is defined and the benefits of empathy are described.
- Active listening is the process of achieving empathy.
- Strategies of active listening are discussed, including:
 - Being present and attentive, nonjudgmental, patient and kind.
 - Paying attention to and utilizing nonverbal behavior.
 - Verbal behaviors of reflection, rephrasing, summarizing.
 - Questions and gentle commands.

EMPATHY AND ITS BENEFITS

Empathy is understanding and accepting what another person is thinking, feeling, and experiencing.

The Immediate Benefits of Empathy

Members will reach out to the Friendship Ministry because they are experiencing a distressing, confusing problem. They may think no one can understand what is happening or perhaps that others will be critical of their distress. They may have been told things like, “*Why are you so upset? It doesn’t seem that bad.*” Indeed, many in distress agree with that sentiment because they do not understand why they are feeling the way they are. They might say to themselves, “*There is no reason for me to be feeling this way.*” In summary, as a result, many experiencing emotional distress may worry that they cannot be understood by others.

Empathy communicates both understanding and acceptance, and thereby it is incredibly helpful to a person in distress. It directly communicates, “*How you are thinking and feeling is okay. I understand, and therefore it can be understood.*” Empathy communicates, “*What you are feeling is not shameful.*”

Empathy Does Not Mean Agreeing

Empathy is nonjudgmental. It always understands, accepts, and respects what someone is feeling and thinking. But this does not mean agreeing with that thinking. Consider these examples.

- You can understand that someone thinks, “*I am unlovable,*” and you can recognize the pain of that thought. But you would likely not agree that the thought is true.

- Imagine someone describing an experience of childhood maltreatment. Now imagine they say, “*I deserved it.*” While you would understand their feeling of upset, you would not agree with the notion that they deserved what happened.

This distinction is extremely important. In the Friendship Ministry, we do not disagree with how someone feels, but we do not necessarily agree with the thoughts that cause those feelings. At times, we might say *something* like, “*I understand that you feel this way because of how you are thinking. If I thought that way, I would feel the same. But I’m not sure I agree with how you are thinking.*”

ACTIVE LISTENING OVERVIEW

During the initial meeting, listening effectively is the main task of the Friendship Minister. This serves three primary goals: it helps the Friendship Minister gain an initial understanding of the member seeking help; it communicates that the Friendship Minister cares, is trying to understand, wants to help, and is capable of helping; and it encourages the member to engage in the difficult work of trying to change.

At the same time, do not underestimate the simple healing power of listening to someone. Being listened to with kindness is, in and of itself, extremely helpful to a person in distress. For all of these reasons, active listening is used in every meeting.

An Example

Consider the following example, which highlights the importance of active listening.

Sarah is a member of your church who has come to the Friendship Ministry seeking help. During the first meeting, Sarah says, “*I was very upset.*”

But what does Sarah mean by this? In short, we don’t know. We know she was distressed, but we do not yet understand the nature of that distress. Sarah might mean that she was embarrassed. She might mean that she was angry, sad, or hurt, or that she was annoyed and worried.

To discover what Sarah means when she says she was “*very upset*,” we need to engage her in conversation and encourage her to elaborate. Sarah will do this if she knows you care about how she is doing, that you genuinely want to understand her experience, and that she can trust you not to judge or criticize her for what happened, what she is thinking, or how she is feeling.

Active Listening Defined

The term **active listening** means that the listener is active during the conversation to encourage the speaker to continue speaking and to clarify, correct, expand, and explain their experience more fully. In this way, active listening by the listener fosters more thoughtful and meaningful communication by the speaker.

But the goal of active listening is not to have constant conversation. It does not mean gathering every detail. Friendship Ministers should avoid asking question after question. Instead, they should rely primarily on reflections, summaries, and thoughtful questions that help the member tell his or her story.

THE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is how empathy is achieved. It includes cognitive (or attitudinal) components that inform and guide the behaviors of effective active listening.

The Attitudes of Active Listening

There are three attitudes a listener holds to practice active listening effectively. First, the active listener is invested in understanding the speaker. He or she is **fully present and deeply attentive**. Second, the active listener is **accepting and nonjudgmental**. As noted earlier, this attitude does not require complete agreement. Finally, the active listener is **patient and kind**. Patience includes allowing the speaker to finish speaking without interruption and, at times, simply sitting quietly in another person's silence as they struggle to find words.

Nonverbal Behavior

Silence

Ironically, an important behavior in active listening is silence. People often need time to gather their thoughts, especially when discussing painful experiences. Friendship Ministers should not feel pressured to fill every pause in the conversation. Sitting in silence often gives a member the opportunity to reflect and continue speaking. Sitting quietly and patiently with another person's distress is sometimes one of the most caring things a Friendship Minister can do.

Body language

Speakers and listeners communicate a great deal without words. This is often referred to as “body language,” as posture, movement, and facial expressions convey important messages to others. Friendship Ministers must be aware that their nonverbal behavior will inevitably communicate something to the person who is speaking. For this reason, nonverbal behavior should be used intentionally to communicate attentiveness, interest, and care. For example, imagine that someone speaking notices that the listener keeps looking at his watch. A simple gesture, it communicates impatience and distraction to the speaker.

Good body language, in both posture and facial expressions, can be summarized as “ENROLS”.

- **Eye contact:** Maintain appropriate eye contact to demonstrate attentiveness and interest. Avoid staring, and allow natural breaks in eye contact.
- **Nod gently:** Gentle nodding while someone is speaking encourages them to continue. It signals understanding, such as, “*I am following you*” and “*I understand what you mean.*”
- **Relaxed demeanor:** Having a relaxed demeanor communicates calmness and ease. A relaxed presentation helps the speaker feel supported and safe, even when topics are difficult or painful.
- **Open:** Maintain an open posture. For example, avoid crossing your arms, as this can signal defensiveness or unwillingness to listen.
- **Lean in:** When listening or speaking, lean slightly forward to communicate interest.
- **Smile reassuringly:** A small, kind smile is reassuring and help the speaker feel more comfortable.

Simple utterances

A simple and effective technique of active listening is the use of *simple utterances*. These might be brief words or phrases, such as “Yes,” “Uh-huh,” or “I understand.” Sometimes, simple utterances are not words at all, such as “Mmm-hmm” or “Hmm, yes.”

When spoken softly while the person is talking, simple utterances do not interrupt the speaker. Instead, they encourage the speaker to continue by communicating attentive interest.

Reflections

Reflections, or reflective listening, are easy strategies that are highly effective in active listening. Reflections are often more effective than asking another question because they encourage the speaker to continue talking while communicating understanding. They encourage the speaker to clarify, correct and elaborate. Reflections demonstrate that the listener is paying attention and striving to understand. They include **simple reflections**, **slight rephrasing**, and **reflecting emotions**.

In the following examples, imagine that a member relates to her Friendship Minister that she is worried about her elderly parents. She spoke to her older sister about her concern, but the sister dismissed the concerns as “silly” and even told her parents what the speaker said, which made the parents angry.

Simple reflections

Simple reflections are fail-safe. They cannot be wrong. Like a mirror, the listener simply reflects or repeats back, essentially word for word, what the speaker just said. Note the simple reflection in these examples, and further note that the speaker responds with further elaboration.

- Member: *“I was very upset with my sister.”*
- Friendship Minister: *“You were very upset with your sister.”*
- Member: *“Yes. I was angry and surprised.”*
- Member: *“I’m very worried about my elderly parents.”*
- Friendship Minister: *“You are very worried about your elderly parents.”*
- Member: *“I’m worried and I feel like I’m all alone in this.”*

Slight rephrasing

Slight rephrasing is like simple reflection, except the listener repeats back what was said using slightly different words. These are also essentially fail-safe, as they are only slight rephrasing of what was said. Consider the same examples from above. Again, note that the speaker responds to slight rephrasing by elaborating or even correcting.

- Member: *“I was very upset with my sister.”*
- Friendship Minister: *“It was very upsetting to hear that she did that.”*
- Member: *“When I heard what she did, I was angry and surprised.”*
- Member: *“I’m very worried about my elderly parents.”*
- Friendship Minister: *“You are concerned about them. You don’t know what to do.”*
- Member: *“I’m concerned what will happen. I know what to do, but I feel like I am alone in this.”*

Reflecting emotion

Reflecting emotion is when the listener tries to identify the emotional content of what the person is saying. This is the deepest level of reflection and the deepest form of empathy. Members will come to the Friendship Ministry because of emotional distress, and when the Friendship Minister empathizes with that emotion, it demonstrates caring, concern, and understanding.

But it is not always obvious what someone is feeling based on what they are saying. As a result, unlike simple reflections and even slight rephrasing, reflecting emotion can be less certain. For this reason, it is useful to begin reflections of emotions tentatively, such as *“it seems like”* or *“it sounds like.”*

Further, consider what likely would happen if the Friendship Minister guessed at the speaker’s emotions, but that guess is incorrect. Even when accurate, reflection communicates a desire to understand. Moreover, it gives the speaker an opportunity to clarify what they are feeling.

Using the examples from before, consider these attempts to reflect emotion:

- Member: *"I was very upset with my sister."*
- Friendship Minister: *"Seems like you were angry at her."*
- Member: *"No, I wasn't angry. I was more sad and hurt."*
- Member: *"I'm very worried about my elderly parents."*
- Friendship Minister: *"You are anxious about what is going to happen to them. It seems like it is hard to think about."*
- Member: *"It is hard to think about what is happening. But it is also upsetting that I'm the only who seems to be thinking about their future."*

Summarizing

Summarizing is an extended form of reflection. Like reflection, to summarize is to say back what you have heard. But summarizing entails reflecting a lot of information, not just a simple sentence. Summarizing demonstrates that the listener has been listening carefully and is starting to understand the situation.

For example, consider the following summary of the above examples:

- Friendship Minister: *"Let me see if I understand what you are talking about. You are worried about your elderly parents. And you are upset that your sister does not seem to think there is anything to worry about. Then she told your parents that you are worrying about them, and they scolded you. It was hard to hear what she did, and it is upsetting that you seem to be the only one thinking about the future. Does that sound right? Am I missing anything?"*

Notice how the summary ends by inviting confirmation or correction. This communicates humility and care, saying to the speaker, *"I'm trying to understand. I may have missed something, and I want to get it right."*

Closed Questions, Open-Ended Questions, and Gentle Requests

During both the initial conversation and subsequent meetings, there will be many times when a Friendship Ministry will want or need additional information. Closed questions, open-ended questions and gentle requests all ways of asking the speaker to provide more information. For example:

- The member mentions a daughter struggling at school, and you wonder about her age.
- The member describes problems at work, and you want to know where they work.

Closed questions

A closed question has a specific, brief answer. Useful for quickly getting details, they are asked and answered quickly and do not interrupt the flow of the conversation. Consider these two examples:

- Member: *"I am concerned about how my daughter is doing in school. She won't do her homework."*
- Friendship Minister: <gently interrupts to ask> *"What grade is she in?"*
- Member: *"Fourth grade. I don't know why she is not enjoying school like before ..."*
- Member: *"I'm not sure my work is the right place for me any longer. I've been there 12 years, but the place is different now."*
- Minister: <gently interrupts to ask> *"Where do you work?"*
- Member: *"I'm a manager at a coffee shop. But it's not the same ..."*

Open-ended questions

An open-ended question "opens" up a larger conversation by asking the member to respond with detail. For example, a Friendship Minister might ask the following, and a relatively long answer would be expected:

- “How is your relationship with your child’s teacher?”
- “What was it like working there?”

Open-ended questions can be used to change the topic from one area to another area. For example:

- “We’ve talked about your daughter. How are your other children doing?”
- “We’ve talked about your issues at work. How have work problems affected things at home?”

Gentle requests

Gentle requests are polite instructions to provide more information. For example, a gentle request might be, “Tell me how many siblings you have.”

Different ways to the same information

Closed questions, open-ended questions and gentle requests are interchangeable. Consider the following.

Topic	Closed Questions	Open Questions	Gentle Request
High school	“What was the name of your high school?”	“What were your high school years like?”	“Tell me about high school.”
Employment	“Where do you work?”	“What work do you do?”	“Describe your job for me.”
Marriage	“What year did you marry?”	“How is your relationship with your spouse?”	“Describe your and your spouse’s relationship.”
Children	“How old are your kids?”	“How are your kids doing?”	“Tell me about your kids.”
Childhood	“Where did you grow up?”	“What kind of place was that to grow up in?”	“Tell me about your hometown.”

LISTENING SKILLS AND THE FIRST MEETING

It is the primary task during the first meeting, but effective listening remains essential throughout. Review the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* for Meeting #1 to see examples of active listening.

- The conversation starts with a **gentle command** of “Please tell me what led you to seek help.”
- Throughout the meeting, the Friendship Minister uses **reflection**. This encourages the member to continue to talk about what is distressing to them and helps the Friendship Minister understand.
- Through **summarizing**, the Friendship Minister expresses preliminary understanding of the reason the member is seeking assistance. He or she then transitions to other areas of the member’s life, including their family, work, and social life.
- The Friendship Minister uses reflection, **open- and closed-ended questions**, and summaries to facilitate the conversation.

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Preview of Chapter 5

Active listening allows Friendship Ministers to understand the member's experience and communicate empathy, care, and acceptance. As trust develops, the Friendship Minister shifts from listening to helping. The next chapter introduces the problem-solving strategy used throughout the Friendship Ministry.

Chapter 5. Problem-Solving Strategy and Tools

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6)

This chapter discusses how the Friendship Ministry uses the model of mental health in the problem-solving strategy, which starts in the second meeting. After a problem is identified, the Friendship Minister and member identify, explore, and evaluate thoughts and behaviors related to it. Different ways of thinking and more effective ways of behaving are identified and, if possible, implemented.

As the material in this chapter is presented and discussed, the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* and the three worksheets should be available for review so that Friendship Ministers can see the methods that they will use during meetings.

Chapter Summary

- The problem-solving strategy is described.
- The worksheets and methods used to implement the strategy are described.
 - The problem-solving strategy is explained.
 - The *Problem Identification Worksheet* is used to identify a particular problem on which to focus.
 - The *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Thinking* is used to evaluate and change (as appropriate) thinking about the problem.
 - The *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Behavior* is used to explore and implement (as appropriate) new behaviors toward the problem.
- The problem-solving strategy continues throughout all the remaining meetings.

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY: CHANGE THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIORS

The Friendship Ministry uses the model of mental health described in Chapter 3 (**Figure 5**). This model shows that a person's thinking, behavior, and feelings (their inner world) influence one another and affect how well the person functions in roles and relationships. The problem-solving strategy is based on this model and seeks to help members examine and modify their thinking and behavior, so they experience less emotional distress and become more effective in addressing the problems they face. The goal is not to solve members' problems for them. Rather, the goal is to help members develop the skills and confidence to solve problems more effectively themselves.

Characteristics of Thoughts and Behaviors

The problem-solving strategy is based on several important observations. As noted, thoughts and behaviors are learned and can become habitual. People are not always fully aware of how they think or behave, and some patterns of thinking and behavior may contribute to emotional distress or make it more difficult to resolve problems. Because they are learned, they can also be changed.

Recognize, Evaluate, and Change Thinking

Changing thinking involves a multi-step strategy that has proven highly effective in reducing emotional distress and improving problem-solving.

First, the person becomes aware of their thinking.

Second, the person recognizes that their thinking influences both emotions and behavior.

Third, the person recognizes that some thoughts are not entirely accurate.

Fourth, the person replaces inaccurate or partially accurate thinking with accurate thinking.

Explore and Improve Behaviors

Changing behavior is in some ways easier and in some ways more difficult than changing thinking. It is easier for people to recognize how they are behaving and to understand how their behavior affects a problem. But behavior change can be more difficult because it requires taking action in the real world. It involves changing how a person responds to situations and interacts with others in roles and relationships. For example, an unhappy employee might want to confront his boss, but actually doing so might be very difficult.

Improving behavior also involves several steps.

First, the person's behavior toward the problem is explored.

Second, any behaviors attempted are examined in detail.

Third, the effectiveness of those behaviors is evaluated.

Fourth, new behaviors to address the problem are brainstormed.

Fifth, one or two of the behaviors are selected because they seem feasible and potentially effective.

Sixth, the person attempts those behaviors.

PUTTING THE PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY INTO PRACTICE

The *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* detail the methods that the Friendship Minister will use to implement the problem-solving strategy, which begins in the second meeting and has four parts.

- Part 1. Explain how thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are related, and explain how the problem-solving strategy applies that understanding.
- Part 2. Identify a specific problem that is distressing to the member.
- Part 3. Explore whether existing thoughts are accurate and, if necessary, develop more accurate and helpful ways of thinking.
- Part 4. Examine the effectiveness of the member's behavior toward the problem. Explore and implement more effective behaviors.

Using the Worksheets

The worksheets are the primary tools through which the problem-solving strategy is implemented. The purpose of the worksheets is not merely to complete paperwork. Rather, they guide conversations, keep the Friendship Minister focused on the strategy, and help members actively participate in it. The worksheets teach members a problem-solving process that they can continue to use after the Friendship Ministry meetings have ended.

Instructions for completing the worksheets are contained both in the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* and on the worksheets themselves. The general guidelines for completing the worksheets are:

- 1. The Friendship Minister uses active listening (reflection, questions, summarizing, etc.).
- 2. To emphasize the collaborative nature of the work, the member reviews and approves anything that the Friendship Minister writes on the worksheet.

3. The Friendship Minister refrains from giving direct advice, because change is much more likely if the member concludes for himself or herself what is needed.

PART 1: EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY

(See *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, Meeting #2, section IV.)

The problem-solving strategy begins by explaining it to the member, so that he or she is more likely to participate actively and effectively.

The *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions* (Meeting #2) give numerous examples of the influence of thinking and behavior, but it is not necessary to review all of them. Friendship Ministers can generate other examples or encourage members to come up with examples.

The Friendship Minister can clarify any questions, but it is not necessary that the member *completely* understand the strategy at this point. Understanding of the strategy will increase over time.

If Necessary, Clarify “No Blame”

After hearing that the problem-solving strategy focuses on thinking and behavior, some persons might be inclined to think they are being blamed for the problem. They might think that the Friendship Minister is holding them responsible for the problem. The Friendship Minister should recognize this possibility and gently clarify the misunderstanding by emphasizing the following:

- People are **not blamed** for how they think, feel, or behave.
- Patterns of thinking and behavior develop gradually and often occur automatically, without deliberate awareness. They are **learned and shaped** over time by experiences, relationships, stresses, and habits.

PART 2: COMPLETE THE PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION WORKSHEET

(See *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, Meeting #2, section V.)

At the second step of problem-solving, the Friendship Minister and member complete the *Problem Identification Worksheet*, as detailed in the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*.

Introduce the *Problem Identification Worksheet*.

The Friendship Minister introduces the *Problem Identification Worksheet* by explaining that it will help them identify and explore a single problem causing distress. The Friendship Minister might understand (based on the first meeting) that the member is experiencing more than one problem. But one problem is selected as the focus of the strategy. Once learned, the strategy can be applied to other problems.

The Friendship Minister explains that the strategy seeks to improve or resolve the problem by identifying more helpful ways of thinking and more effective behaviors.

Step 1: Identify the problem.

While the Friendship Minister should not suggest a particular problem on which to focus, he or she can remind the member of things that were discussed in the initial meeting.

Summarize the problem in one sentence. The sentence can be modified as needed until the member agrees that it describes the problem accurately.

Step 2. Explore, define, and describe the problem.

The Friendship Minister and the member explore the problem in terms of distress, duration, triggers, and circumstance.

- Both current (“over the last week”) and past (“worst ever”) **distress** associated with the problem are rated on a scale from 1 (“no distress”) to 100 (“intolerable distress”).
- The **duration** of the problem is estimated, as is the **time** when it started.
- Any possible **triggers** to the problem are discussed.
- The member is asked to explore whether there are **distinctive circumstances** in which the problem arises, such as times or places when it usually happens and certain people who are usually involved. They are also asked if there are times when it is “not so bad.”

After finishing this section, the Friendship Minister reviews with the member everything that was written down and modifies the ratings as needed.

Step 3. Describe what “better” would be like.

To fully explore the problem, the Friendship Minister and the member discuss what “better” would look like. This is an important aspect of problem solving, but it can be difficult for someone in distress to imagine things being better. Active listening and patience will help. The Friendship Minister writes down the description of “better.”

Here are some examples of problems and a better situation.

- Problem: *I am in conflict with my supervisor at work.*
- A better situation: *I talk to my supervisor, and we reduce our conflict. Or I get another job.*
- Problem: *I have been depressed since my friend moved away.*
- A better situation: *I feel less depressed.*
- Problem: *My child is struggling at school.*
- A better situation: *My child does better. Or we change schools.*

Step 4. Wrap up

After completing it, the Friendship Minister quickly reviews what is written on the *Problem Identification Worksheet* and asks if anything should be changed.

The Friendship Minister then explains that the problem identified will be the focus of subsequent meetings aimed at helping to improve or resolve that problem.

PREVIEW PARTS 3 & 4: THE PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEETS

(See *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, Meeting #3, section III.)

The *Problem-Solving Worksheets* are introduced in Meeting #3.

The Friendship Minister displays both worksheets and explains that they will be used to implement the problem-solving strategy and will be used throughout the remaining meetings. He or she explains that one worksheet focuses on thinking and the other focuses on behavior.

The Friendship Minister indicates that the worksheets will be completed together, that the member will approve anything written on them, and that completing them might take time.

While using the worksheets, it is important for Friendship Ministers to understand that their role is not to decide what the member should do. Rather, they listen with kindness and empathy and help the member evaluate their thinking and behavior so that the member can decide what would be most helpful.

Switching between the Worksheets

Steps 1–3 on the *Thinking* worksheet and steps 1–4 on the *Behavior* worksheet are similar. These steps help the member become more aware of thinking and behavior. They also help the member understand their effects and effectiveness.

Steps 4–5 on the *Thinking* worksheet and steps 5–7 on the *Behavior* worksheet are also similar. These steps focus on change.

It is recommended that awareness and understanding of both thinking and behavior precede efforts to change thinking and behavior. Therefore, it is recommended that the Friendship Minister and member complete the worksheet steps in the following order:

- First, *Thinking* worksheet Steps 1–3.
- Second, *Behavior* worksheet Steps 1–4.
- Third, *Thinking* worksheet Steps 4–5.
- Fourth, *Behavior* worksheet Steps 5–7.

The Worksheets Are Guides, Not Deadlines

In most cases, both *Problem-Solving Worksheets* will be completed by the fourth meeting. However, Friendship Ministers should not feel pressure to complete both *Problem-Solving Worksheets* during the third meeting. Some discussions require time and patience, and meaningful exploration of thinking and behavior may take longer than expected. The goal is not to complete worksheets quickly, but to help the member understand the problem, evaluate thoughts and behaviors, and make progress toward improvement. Friendship Ministers should remain flexible and allow sufficient time for discussion when needed.

PART 3: COMPLETE THE *PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET: FOCUS ON THINKING*

(See *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, Meeting #3, section IV.)

In Part 3, the Friendship Minister and member explore how the member thinks about the problem by completing the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Thinking*.

Introduce the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Thinking*

The Friendship Minister explains to the member that the worksheet examines how the member thinks about the problem. The Friendship Minister will fill it out based on discussion, and will review it with the member to make sure it is fair and accurate.

Because many are not in the habit of “thinking about their thinking,” it might be challenging for a member to identify what they are thinking. Thoughts become “automatic,” such that a person may not be fully aware of their thinking. However, most can be taught to recognize their thinking. Therefore, Friendship Ministers are encouraged to use active listening, and especially reflection strategies (discussed in the previous chapter) to make suggestions about what the member seems to be thinking. Such as:

⇒ *It sounds like you think ...*

⇒ *It seems like this is how you are looking at it ...*

- ⇒ Earlier you indicated, “It seems like she does not care.” So, you seem to be thinking, “She does not care.” Can we write that down as a thought?
- ⇒ When you said, “This is never going to get better,” that was a good example of a thought about the problem. Can we write that down?

Step 1. Identify thoughts about the problem

The Friendship Minister reads aloud the sentence describing the problem from the *Problem Identification Worksheet*. On the *Thinking* worksheet, the Friendship Minister and member complete the first column, entitled “Thoughts about the problem.” Write down 2 - 4 thoughts. If the member mentions more than four thoughts, the “top four” are selected.

Step 2. Effects of thoughts on emotions and behavior

After documenting several thoughts, the Friendship Minister and member examine one thought at a time and complete the remaining columns. They examine the thought and write down the resulting emotion based on the thought. They also document how the thought influences their behavior.

Active listening—and especially empathy—are very useful at this step. For example, suppose the problem identified is conflict at work. If a member states about the problem, “I think it is hopeless because I don’t think they like me there,” then the Friendship Minister can empathize and say, “That thought sounds like it makes you sad and anxious.” The same can be suggested about behavior, such as, “That thought might make it hard to think of what to do.”

Step 3. Review table

After completing the table, it is reviewed with the member. The Friendship Minister tries to encourage the member to recognize the connection between their thinking and their emotional and behavioral reactions.

(As noted above, at this point the Friendship Minister is encouraged to switch to working on Steps 1–4 of the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Behavior*.)

Step 4. Thinking about the thoughts

The Friendship Minister reflects on Step 3 and reminds the member that thoughts affect feelings and behavior. They then remind the member that thoughts are sometimes not entirely accurate.

The Friendship Minister and member work together to rate the accuracy of each thought on a scale from 1 (not at all accurate) to 10 (completely accurate). Thoughts are evaluated one at a time. This discussion should be conducted gently and respectfully. The goal is to help the member examine the accuracy of the thought, not to argue or prove the member wrong. To encourage reflection, the Friendship Minister may ask the member to provide evidence supporting the thought. These should be asked with kindness and genuine curiosity, rather than with skepticism. For example:

- ⇒ I’m not sure I agree that thought is accurate.
- ⇒ What is the evidence of the accuracy of the thought?
- ⇒ Convince me that it is accurate.

For each thought that is not rated as accurate, the Friendship Minister asks the member how it should be revised to be accurate. The Friendship Minister writes down the more accurate thought in the table.

The Friendship Minister completes the last two columns by asking the member how the new, more accurate

thought would affect how they feel and behave. Such as:

- ⇒ *If you thought that way instead, how might that change the way you feel?*
- ⇒ *If you thought that way instead, how might that influence your behavior?*

Step 5. Encourage to think more accurately

To complete the *Thinking* worksheet, the Friendship Minister reviews the completed table and encourage the member to practice the more accurate way of thinking over the week to come. The Friendship Minister can discuss ways they could remind themselves to think more accurately. The Friendship Minister can empathize that this sort of change can be difficult, but it is worth doing.

PART 4: COMPLETE THE *PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET: FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR*

(See *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, Meeting #3, section V.)

In Part 4, the Friendship Minister and member explore how the member acts toward the problem by completing the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Behavior*.

Introduce the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Behavior*

The Friendship Minister explains that the worksheet is similar to the thinking worksheet, except that it examines the member's behavior toward the problem. The Friendship Minister explains that, as before, the Friendship Minister will fill it out and then review it with the member to ensure it is fair and accurate.

Step 1. Identify behaviors toward the problem

The Friendship Minister reads aloud the sentence describing the problem from the *Problem Identification Worksheet*. In the first column, the Friendship Minister writes down any behaviors that the member has attempted to solve or improve it. At this step, only the first column is completed. The Friendship Minister writes down as many behaviors as the member has tried.

The Friendship Minister avoids asking, "How have you tried to help the problem?" or something similar, as that implies that the person should have tried to resolve it.

Step 2. Compliment any behavior OR Empathize with no behavior

Some members will report trying to resolve or improve the problem, but others will not.

- If the member has made any effort at all to resolve the problem, regardless of how effective, the Friendship Minister compliments the effort.
- Alternatively, if the member has not made any effort, the Friendship Minister reassures the member that this is understandable. Note that, if the member has not tried any behavior, Steps 3 and 4 will not be completed.

Step 3. Details of behavior

If the member has described any behaviors to address the problem, the Friendship Minister asks them to provide details about the behaviors, including when and how often they tried it. These details are documented in the table on the worksheet.

Step 4. Effectiveness of behavior

If the member has described any behaviors to address the problem, the Friendship Minister asks them to indicate how effective the behaviors were in improving or resolving the problem. The effectiveness of the behavior is rated on a scale from 1 (not at all effective) to 5 (completely effective). These ratings are documented in the table on the worksheet.

(At this point, if the *Problem-Solving Worksheet: Focus on Thinking* was not completed earlier, the Friendship Minister is encouraged to switch back and complete Steps 4–5.)

Step 5. Brainstorm new behaviors

The Friendship Minister brainstorms with the member different or new behaviors to address the problem. To “brainstorm” means to think and say aloud any idea, regardless of whether it is feasible, realistic, or likely to work. The Friendship Minister keeps track of all ideas. The Friendship Minister can help the member identify additional possibilities.

Step 6. Commit to one or two behaviors

The Friendship Minister and member discuss which behaviors from the list seem most feasible (possible to do) and likely effective. The Friendship Minister can assist the member in evaluating the possible behaviors.

The Friendship Minister and member select one or two behaviors that the member can commit to trying to implement before the next meeting, and these are written on the worksheet. The Friendship Minister strongly encourages the member to try the behavior or behaviors.

Step 7. Discuss how to implement behaviors

To complete the *Behavior* worksheet, the Friendship Minister and member discuss how the member will engage in the behavior. This is an essential aspect of behavior change. As earlier noted, new behaviors are easy to consider, but actually attempting a new behavior can be difficult.

To make it more likely for the member to attempt it, the Friendship Minister will discuss how the member will implement the behavioral plan. Members often underestimate how difficult behavior change can be. They can discuss potential difficulties and how to work through them. The Friendship Minister should encourage them to be both optimistic and realistic about what they can do.

USING THE PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY AND WORKSHEETS IN REMAINING MEETINGS

The problem-solving strategy begins in the second meeting with problem identification. Efforts to help the member change thoughts and behaviors begin in earnest in the third meeting, and they continue through the remaining meetings.

Problem-Solving in Meetings 4-6

As detailed in the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, the *Problem-Solving Worksheets* remain the primary tools used throughout the remaining meetings. During each meeting, the Friendship Minister and member review, discuss, and update the worksheets based on the member's experiences since the previous meeting.

Together, the Friendship Minister and member continue to explore thoughts and behaviors related to the problem and evaluate them for accuracy and effectiveness. As appropriate, they continue to identify more

accurate ways of thinking and to explore more effective ways of responding to the problem. They also review efforts made since the previous meeting, discuss obstacles encountered, and consider any new insights that have emerged.

Monitor Progress and Adjust As Needed

Throughout the process, the Friendship Minister and member monitor whether emotional distress is decreasing and whether progress is being made toward improving or resolving the problem.

Friendship Ministers should expect gradual progress rather than dramatic change. Even small improvements in thinking, behavior, problem-solving, or emotional well-being should be recognized and encouraged.

Friendship Ministers should also remain flexible. As active listening continues, new information may emerge that changes how the problem is understood. As a result, previous conclusions, plans, or strategies may need to be revised. The worksheets provide structure, but they should be used in a manner that responds to the member's needs and experiences.

Throughout all meetings, the Friendship Minister continues to use active listening. These skills remain essential for helping the member explore problems, evaluate thoughts and behaviors, and continue making progress.

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Preview of Chapter 6

The problem-solving strategy provides Friendship Ministers with practical tools for helping members think more accurately and act more effectively in response to distressing problems. At the same time, some members will require help beyond what the Friendship Ministry can provide.

The next chapter discusses how Friendship Ministers can help members think accurately about professional mental health care and take practical steps toward obtaining it when appropriate.

Chapter 6. When Professional Mental Health Care Is Needed

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. (Proverbs 15:22)

The Friendship Ministry is designed to help members experiencing mild to moderate emotional distress or problems. Friendship Ministers are not mental health professionals, and they are not expected to provide professional counseling. However, the Friendship Ministry may be able to help members who do need professional mental health care to obtain that care. If such members are emotionally stable enough to benefit from support, using the same problem-solving strategy, Friendship Ministers can help them think more accurately about seeking professional care and engage in practical behaviors to obtain it.

Chapter Summary

- The Friendship Ministry is not professional mental health treatment.
- Some members experiencing mild to moderate distress may benefit from the Friendship Ministry alone.
- Members experiencing a mental health crisis are referred immediately for emergency assistance.
- Members with more serious or persistent mental health concerns should be encouraged to obtain professional care.
- Friendship Ministers can support members in seeking appropriate treatment.

WHAT THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY CAN AND CANNOT DO

There are three types of members who will seek help from the Friendship Ministry. This is summarized in the table on the next page. First, there will be members experiencing **mild to moderate emotional distress**. The Friendship Ministry is designed to help these members adjust their thinking and behavior toward a problem. However, some members who are experiencing a **mental health crisis** cannot be seen in the Friendship Ministry. Because they are in crisis, they are referred to professional care.

Finally, there will be some members experiencing **more serious distress** but not a mental health crisis. This chapter describes how the Friendship Ministry can help persons who are in serious enough distress to need professional mental health care obtain that care.

When Professional Mental Health Care Is Needed

Some members are not experiencing an immediate crisis, but they nevertheless require professional mental health care. They may struggle with moderately severe emotional or mental health concerns that are severe, long-lasting, or make it difficult to function in everyday life.

These members can benefit from the Friendship Ministry. The focus of the Friendship Minister changes, however. The problem on which the Friendship Minister and member focus becomes the problem of helping the member obtain and engage in appropriate professional care. Some in need of professional care will be identified during the screening process and accepted into the Friendship Ministry with the understanding, **from the beginning**, that the meetings will focus on obtaining professional mental health care. But some will be identified as needing professional care after meetings start with the Friendship Minister. In these cases, the Friendship Minister will inform the member that the problem on which they will focus will change to the “problem” of seeking professional mental health care.

Presentation	Examples	Role of the Friendship Ministry
Mild to Moderate Distress	• Stress • Feeling overwhelmed • Grief and loss • Loneliness • Mild anxiety or depression • Difficulty adjusting to life changes • Problems at work or school	The Friendship Ministry can help using active listening and problem-solving.
Moderately Severe Mental Health Problems	• Serious or persistent depression • Serious or persistent anxiety • Trauma-related symptoms • Mental health symptoms that significantly interfere with daily life	The Friendship Ministry can help members obtain professional care (e.g., to think more accurately about and to better understand how to obtain it).
Severe Mental Health Problems and Crisis Situations	• Suicidal thinking or recent attempt • Threats of harm toward others • Hallucinations, delusions, or other symptoms of psychosis • Extreme confusion • Impaired judgment • Inability to care for self • Substance use problems	The Friendship Ministry is not appropriate. At screening (see Chapter 12), the Pastor refers the person to professional care. If the person has been seen in the Friendship Ministry, they are referred to the Pastor.

HELPING A MEMBER GET PROFESSIONAL CARE

Some in need of professional care will hold misconceptions about it. Others will be unaware of how to obtain it. Using the same problem-solving approach described in earlier chapters, Friendship Ministers can help these persons think more accurately and behave more effectively. The goal is not to pressure members into treatment, but to help them think clearly about the potential benefits of receiving professional help.

Encourage Accurate Thinking About Mental Health Care

Common negative thinking

Many individuals have misconceptions about professional mental health treatment, such as:

- Only crazy people need counseling.
- Good Christians should not need mental health care. Getting help means weak faith.
- Medication is spiritually wrong.
- I should be able to fix this myself.
- Therapy means someone will judge me. If I seek help, people will reject me.

Accurate thoughts about mental health care

Friendship Ministers should gently challenge these inaccurate beliefs. Friendship Ministers can encourage balanced thinking, such as:

- Emotional suffering is part of living in a fallen world. Christians experience depression, anxiety, trauma, and other mental health problems.
- Seeking help is often an act of wisdom and humility, not weakness.
- Treatment does not replace spiritual care. Professional and pastoral care complement one another.

Accurate statements about professional mental health care

As needed, Friendship Ministers can assure members of the following:

- ⇒ *You cannot be forced to take medications.*
- ⇒ *Hospitalization can only occur if a person is in a crisis that places them or others in danger.*
- ⇒ *Seeking help does not commit you to anything. You can stop or find another counselor at any time.*
- ⇒ *Treatment has been proven to help most persons who seek it.*
- ⇒ *The length of treatment depends on the needs and circumstances. For most, it will last 3-9 months.*
- ⇒ *Many faithful Christians benefit from counseling or medical care.*
- ⇒ *Seeking help does not mean your faith is weak.*
- ⇒ *Talking with a professional does not mean you are “crazy.”*

Encouraging Effective Behavior About Mental Health Care

Distressed individuals are often overwhelmed, discouraged, anxious, embarrassed, or confused. Even when they agree they need help, they may struggle to take practical steps, such as:

- Talking to their physician
- Calling a counselor and discussing their situation
- Speaking with the pastor
- Asking a trusted friend or family member for assistance

Encourage manageable steps

Large tasks may feel impossible during emotional distress. Friendship Ministers can break the process into manageable steps. For example:

1. Identify possible providers
2. Make a phone call
3. Schedule an initial appointment to see what happens
4. Figure out transportation
5. Attend the first session

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Preview of Chapter 7

Probably many, but not all, members seeking help would benefit from better self-care behaviors. Emotional well-being is influenced not only by how people approach specific problems but also by the everyday habits that support resilience and health. Chapter 7 discusses self-care and how Friendship Ministers can encourage healthy routines that promote emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being.

Chapter 7. Self-Care

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, (Jesus) said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (Mark 6:31)

This chapter reviews self-care, which is an important general behavior that promotes physical and emotional well-being. This topic will not be relevant to all members seeking assistance, so it does not correspond to a specific meeting. Whether it should become a topic of discussion is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Chapter Summary

- The role of self-care in emotional and physical well-being is discussed.
- Guidance is provided regarding when self-care should be addressed.
- Common misconceptions about self-care are examined.
- Essential self-care behaviors are described.
- Friendship Ministers are encouraged to support small, manageable changes.

SELF-CARE OVERVIEW

Defining Self-Care

Self-care refers to the routine behaviors people engage in to support their emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Self-care behaviors are neither special nor difficult. They are the everyday activities that help people remain healthy and resilient.

Self-care is important for everyone, but it becomes especially important during periods of stress or emotional distress. When people are overwhelmed, they often neglect the very behaviors that help them cope effectively. They may skip meals, sleep poorly, withdraw from others, stop attending church, or give up activities they once enjoyed. Neglecting self-care can unintentionally worsen emotional distress, whereas maintaining healthy routines often improves mood, increases resilience, strengthens relationships, and helps people address problems more effectively.

Jesus Himself modeled the importance of rest, prayer, and withdrawal from constant demands. After periods of intense ministry, He sought time alone to rest and pray, and He encouraged His disciples to do the same: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31).

Should It Be Discussed?

Whether self-care should become a topic of discussion is determined by the Friendship Minister in consultation with the FM Team. Over the course of meetings with the member, it might become obvious that the member is engaging in adequate self-care, and the topic does not need to be addressed. Alternatively, it might become evident that the member is not engaging in adequate self-care, in which case the topic should be introduced.

The Friendship Minister can ask a member about self-care using one of these prompts.

- ⇒ *How well do you take care of yourself? How have you been taking care of yourself lately?*
- ⇒ *What are things you do to take care of yourself?*
- ⇒ *Do you take time for yourself to do things that help you manage stress?*

ENCOURAGING SELF-CARE

When self-care is lacking, Friendship Ministers should encourage members to strengthen it. This can be done by discussing the benefits of self-care. It might also be helpful to explain that it is not complicated (offering simple examples) and to explore misconceptions about self-care.

When discussing self-care, Friendship Ministers should avoid suggesting big changes. Small, realistic steps are often more sustainable and more effective than ambitious plans.

Self-Care Behavior Is Not Complicated

Self-care behaviors are often simple things. They do not require large amounts of time, money, or special resources. Most effective self-care behaviors are simple and inexpensive.

Simple but important self-care behaviors include:

- Getting adequate sleep
- Going out for coffee with a friend
- Having good-tasting and healthy meals
- Doing hobbies or enjoyable activities
- Socializing with friends
- Praying
- Going to church services
- Walking or other regular exercise
- Reading Scripture
- Going to other church activities
- Listening to music
- Spending time with children or grandchildren

Common Misconceptions about Self-Care

Some people hold mistaken beliefs that make self-care behavior difficult.

One misconception is that self-care behavior is selfish. People may believe that they should always put the needs of others first and that caring for themselves somehow reflects a lack of love or commitment. The truth is the opposite. Taking care of oneself is often necessary to care effectively for others.

Another misconception is that self-care behavior occurs only when someone "feels like it." In fact, the most important time for self-care is when someone is stressed or distressed.

ESSENTIAL SELF-CARE BEHAVIORS

Self-care includes many behaviors, but some deserve emphasis because they are particularly important.

Practices of Faith

During times of stress and emotional distress, Christians might withdraw from worship, prayer, and the life of the congregation. If appropriate, the Friendship Minister should strongly suggest that the member engage in these activities, as these are not simply helpful habits. They are central to the Christian life and are among the primary ways God comforts, strengthens, and sustains His people.

Sleep

Adequate sleep is an important self-care behavior. When people do not sleep well, they become more emotionally reactive, more vulnerable to negative thinking, and less effective at solving problems. Thus, Friendship Ministers should emphasize that better sleep can improve emotional well-being and make it easier to address other problems.

Some people experience occasional sleep difficulties, while others struggle with more persistent sleep problems (i.e., insomnia). Regardless of the severity of difficulty, good sleep habits (“sleep hygiene”) can be very helpful.

Overcoming Sleep Problems

- **Maintain a regular sleep schedule:** Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, including weekends. (This is especially important for overcoming insomnia.)
- **Relaxing routine:** Set a relaxing bedtime routine, such as listening to calming music, reading a book, or taking a warm bath.
- **Attend to the sleep environment:** Be sure your sleep area is cool, quiet and dark.
- **No lighted devices in bed:** Do NOT take phones or computers to bed. The light from these devices will make your brain think it is daytime.
- **No work in bed:** Learn to associate the bed with sleep, not work or worry.

Socialization and Fun

When people are struggling emotionally, they might withdraw from others. They may also stop engaging in activities they once enjoyed. In contrast, doing fun things—especially with other people—is an extremely important self-care behavior.

Friendship Ministers should encourage members to engage in both socialization and enjoyable activities whenever possible. Combining the two is both easy and particularly effective in self-care, such as going for coffee or for a walk with a friend, participating in congregational activities, and spending time with family.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rev. Michael Berg, Ph.D.

THE POWER OF WORDS

The Power of Words

- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

Words have power. Too often we think that we control them. We tend to “stand over” words thinking that we manipulate them. Words are dynamic, that is, they move.

Creating States of Affairs

- And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:3-4).
- As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Words can create. God’s words create out of nothing. We who are made in his image have the power of creative word. We cannot create out of nothing like God can, but we can create states of affairs.

The Theology of the Cross: Law and Gospel

- Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin (Romans 3:19-20).
- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:16-17).

God has two “words” for us: law and gospel. They perform different actions.

Law	Gospel
The will of God.	The good news of salvation.
Shows me my sin.	Shows me my Savior.
Says, “Do this!” and it is never done.	Says, “Believe this!” and it is already done.
Can only crush a heart.	Can heal the heart.
Can only curb behavior.	Makes a sinner a saint.

The Theology of the Cross: Two Stories

- For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

There are two “stories”: a theology of glory and a theology of the cross. All people are “theologians”, that is, they have an opinion about God (even if they think he does not exist). A person is either a theologian of glory or a theologian of the cross.

A Theologian of Glory	A Theologian of the Cross
Believes if he sees (“eyeballs”).	Believes what he hears (“eardrums”).
Sees through the lens of law.	Sees through the lens of the cross.
Believes good works are good.	Believes good works can be bad.
Believes that God rewards/punishes according to law.	Believes that God saves through grace alone.
Believes that suffering is always bad.	Believes that suffering is good.

The Shame of the Cross

- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole” (Galatians 3:13)
- For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15).

A way to think about sin and grace is forensic. Sin is a trespass and that trespass is paid for by Christ’s sacrifice. Sin and grace can also be spoken of with the analogies of light/darkness, death/resurrection, and clean/unclean. Mental health and pastoral care are strengthened when the counselor or pastor can articulate law and gospel with the picture that the person needs at that moment. For example, a person who is abused may need to hear the gospel proclaimed in the clean/unclean analogy. A person in a predominantly shame culture might need to hear that Christ was shamed on the cross and not just that his sacrifice paid the price for sin. He was shamed because sin is shameful. He takes away the shame of both the sins we commit, and the shame of the sins committed against us.

Mental Health Connection

The Power of Words

Correct words lead to correct thinking and correct actions. Incorrect words lead to incorrect thinking and incorrect actions. God’s word creates faith in hearts. Theologians of the cross believe God’s words over our own words which are often incorrect either leading to arrogance or despair.

The Power of Stories

Stories provide a sense of belonging and meaning to life. A “strong” story provides a beginning, an end, a moral code, a sense of purpose, and a place for an individual to belong. Ancient myths provided these components. Notice that a story does not need to be true but only strong to provide this value. Christianity is a “true myth”. It is both a strong and true story. Without a story, an individual must craft a story for themselves, a something only a divine being can do.

NOTES FOR PART 2



Part 3: General Considerations for the Friendship Ministry

Preview of Part 3

Part 3 covers general considerations for the Friendship Ministry.

Chapter 8 describes various ways that the Friendship Ministry practices **confidentiality** to assure, to the extent possible, the member's **privacy**, as well as practices to **promote a sense of safety**.

Chapter 9 discusses a range of **practical issues** for all meetings. These include the need to match the gender of Friendship Ministers and members seeking assistance, where meetings with members take place, how to arrange the room, and how to start and stop meetings.

Chapter 10 describes **FM Team meetings**, including the importance of maintaining confidentiality during the FM Team meetings, how Friendship Ministers can present members they are seeing during the meetings, and suggestions about holding discussions and consultations.

Chapter 11 discusses how your church might **promote the Friendship Ministry** so that members know about its purpose and potential benefits. It also provides some ideas on the Friendship Ministry will bring church members into the program, such as who they will initially contact, how they will be determined to be appropriate, and how they will be paired with and introduced to a particular Friendship Minister.

Chapter 12 describes a recommended process by which **members enter the Friendship Ministry**. This includes establishing a contact person, reviewing cases by Pastor, assigning a Friendship Minister, and arranging the first meeting between the Friendship Minister and the member.

The **Post-Script** provides encouragement and guidance for Friendship Ministers.

There are two sections on **Theological Considerations**. The first discusses "extra nos" or matters outside of us. The last section considers issues encompassing practical pastoral care, including the important matter of the unseen realm.

Chapter 8. Privacy, Confidentiality and Safety

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. (Proverbs 11:13)

Privacy and confidentiality are essential to the Friendship Ministry. Members are more likely to seek help and speak openly when they know their privacy will be honored and protected. This chapter explains confidentiality practices within the Friendship Ministry that maintain the members' privacy. It also describes simple and thoughtful practices that create an environment in which members feel comfortable and safe.

Chapter Summary

- Privacy belongs to the member seeking assistance. Confidentiality is how the Friendship Ministry protects privacy.
- Friendship Ministers discuss confidentiality practices during the first meeting.
 - Confidentiality applies to individual meetings, FM Team meetings, and documents.
 - Members should be informed of the limits of confidentiality.
- Other practical steps can promote comfort and safety during meetings.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Why Privacy and Confidentiality Matter

Members seeking assistance disclose highly personal information. It is easy to imagine that few persons would be willing to seek help from a church's Friendship Ministry program unless they were certain that what they talked about (i.e., their private information) would be kept strictly confidential. The Friendship Ministry should therefore make every effort to protect privacy and maintain confidentiality. Trust is essential to the helping relationship, and trust grows when members know their information will be handled respectfully and carefully.

Privacy and Confidentiality Defined

Privacy and confidentiality are related. **Privacy** refers to a member's right to control personal information. **Confidentiality** refers to the obligation of Friendship Ministers and the FM Team to protect that information from unnecessary disclosure.

Limits of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is extremely important, but it is not absolute. Information may need to be shared when necessary to protect safety. If a Friendship Minister learns of any of these situations, he or she should inform the Pastor or the Co-Leader, who determine what actions are necessary. The following are situations that would require immediate attention:

- Risk of suicide or serious self-harm
- Threats of serious harm toward others
- Suspected abuse of a child
- Suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult
- Medical or psychiatric emergencies requiring immediate intervention

PRIVACY DURING MEETINGS

To uphold the member's privacy, follow these practices:

- Meet in a private room at the church.
- Keep the door closed during meetings.
- Use a "Do Not Disturb" sign when possible.
- Conduct conversations in a manner that cannot be overheard by others.

Confidentiality of Documents

The Friendship Ministry may create documents containing private information. These documents must be protected with the same care given to verbal communications.

- Use only the member's first name and last initial whenever possible.
- Keep records for different members separate.
- Store documents securely between meetings.
- Bring relevant documentation to meetings and FM Team consultations.
- Destroy documentation after Friendship Ministry involvement has ended.

CONFIDENTIALITY DURING FM TEAM MEETINGS

Members are discussed during FM Team meetings so that Friendship Ministers can receive consultation and support. All information discussed during FM Team meetings is confidential.

- The FM Team meets in private, behind closed doors.
- No persons except those on the FM Team are present during the meetings.
- Discussions do not happen outside of FM Team meetings.

Every FM Team meeting should begin by ensuring the privacy of the member. Anyone on the FM Team who personally knows the member should recuse himself or herself. This will require disclosing the member's full name during the Initial Consultation. After that, first names only can be used during discussions.

There might be occasions when a Friendship Minister has need to discuss something with the Pastor or Co-Leader. These consultations should also be considered confidential, although the discussion might be later reviewed by the FM Team.

FM Team Member Recusal

Because Friendship Ministers and members belong to the same congregation, situations may arise in which a member of the FM Team personally knows the member seeking assistance. In such situations, the team member should recuse himself or herself from discussions involving that member.

- Inform the FM Team of the relationship.
- Leave the room during discussion of that member.
- Return when the discussion has concluded.

At the subsequent meeting, the Friendship Minister should inform the member about the recusal.

Pastor Participation and Recusal

The Pastor does not normally recuse because the Friendship Ministry operates under pastoral supervision. However, if the Pastor chooses to recuse, the Co-Leader should supervise the discussion.

Special Confidentiality Situations

Occasionally, a member may request that certain information not be shared with Pastor or one of the Co-Leaders. Since strict adherence to the expectation that Pastor hears every detail and personal concern may discourage some members from seeking help, such requests should be considered thoughtfully.

The following principles are recommended:

- Every case must be supervised by either Pastor or the Co-Leader.
- If a member requests that information not be shared with one Co-Leader, the Friendship Minister should consult the other Co-Leader regarding the request.
- Requests for limited confidentiality may sometimes be honored.
- Pastor retains ultimate responsibility for determining whether such requests can be accommodated.

MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY AT CHURCH

Friendship Ministers and members will occasionally see one another at church. While confidentiality remains important, it would be awkward and potentially hurtful for the Friendship Minister to ignore the member entirely. Discretion is key.

A simple greeting is usually appropriate. If the member chooses to discuss the Friendship Ministry with others, that decision belongs to the member. Friendship Ministers should nevertheless avoid discussing details of meetings, progress, or private conversations.

EXPLAINING CONFIDENTIALITY TO MEMBERS

As noted in the *Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions*, during the first meeting, the Friendship Minister should discuss the issue of privacy and explain the Friendship Ministry's confidentiality practices. As detailed above, the Friendship Minister should explain:

- Everything discussed is private and will be protected by maintaining confidentiality.
- The limits of confidentiality related to safety.
- The Friendship Minister will not disclose anything to anyone, apart from the FM Team.
- The FM Team is consulted regularly, but the FM Team also upholds the member's privacy by keeping everything confidential.
- Anyone on the FM Team who knows the member will recuse themselves. Likewise, the member can request that anyone on the FM Team be recused.
- Any documents created are also confidential and will be destroyed after meetings conclude.
- What will happen if the Friendship Minister and member see each other at church.

PROMOTING A SENSE OF SAFETY

Why Safety Matters

A sense of safety is essential to the helping relationship. Members are more likely to discuss difficult experiences, private concerns, and painful emotions when they believe they will be treated with kindness, respect, and understanding.

When people do not feel safe, they often become guarded. They may minimize problems, avoid discussing

important topics, or end meetings prematurely. In contrast, a safe and welcoming environment encourages openness and trust.

Empathy Promotes a Sense of Safety and Acceptance

As discussed in Chapter 4, active listening is among the most effective ways to promote a sense of safety. When Friendship Ministers listen carefully, members are more likely to believe that they are accepted and understood. Kindness, patience, and respect help reassure members that they can speak honestly without fear of criticism or rejection.

Practical Ways to Promote Feelings of Safety

In addition to active listening, several simple practices can help members feel more comfortable during meetings. Friendship Ministers should:

- Leave the meeting room door unlocked. Although locking the door would prevent interruptions, it might also make the member feel uncomfortable.
- Consider using a "Do Not Disturb" sign to discourage others from entering the room.
- Allow the member to sit in the chair nearest the door. This communicates that the member is free to leave at any time.
- Meet only when others are present elsewhere in the building. Reassure the member that another person is nearby by saying something such as, "Pastor is working in his office down the hallway," or "Jacob will be in the building the entire time we are meeting."

These practices are simple expressions of courtesy and respect. Although they may seem minor, they can help members feel more secure.

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Preview of Chapter 9

With an understanding of privacy, confidentiality, and their practical limits, we now turn to several issues involved in conducting the Friendship Ministry effectively. The next chapter addresses important matters such as matching Friendship Ministers and members by gender, arranging the meeting space, managing time, and beginning and ending meetings in a manner that promotes safety, consistency, and care.

Chapter 9. Practical Issues for All Meetings

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.
(Colossians 3:23-24)

This chapter covers practical issues related to meeting with a member. These include the need to match the gender of Friendship Ministers and members seeking assistance, where meetings should take place, how the room might be arranged, keeping track of time during meetings, and how to begin and end meetings.

Chapter Summary

- Male members meet with male Friendship Ministers, and female members meet with female Friendship Ministers.
- The arrangement of the room is discussed.
- The importance of starting and stopping on time is discussed.
- The chapter also provides a strategy on how to begin and end meetings.

REGARDING GENDER

An explicit and firm rule of the Friendship Ministry is that female members meet only with female Friendship Ministers, and male members meet only with male Friendship Ministers. This rule should not be compromised or ignored.

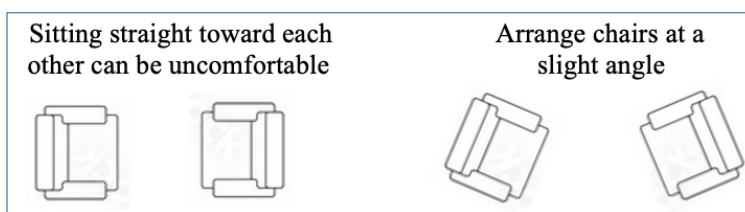
The reason for this policy is not mistrust of Friendship Ministers. Rather, this policy promotes comfort, protects both members and Friendship Ministers from misunderstanding, and preserves confidence in the Friendship Ministry. Many feel more comfortable discussing private and distressing concerns with someone of the same sex. In addition, gender matching reduces the possibility of confusion, suspicion, or misinterpretation by others inside or outside the congregation.

By following this practice consistently, the Friendship Ministry helps foster a greater sense of safety and trust for everyone involved.

THE ROOM

Friendship Ministry meetings should be held in a specially designated room at the church. A room near Pastor's office or near other offices, in contrast to an isolated room, is preferred.

Friendship Ministers should arrive early, before meetings, and make sure the room is available. Arrange chairs in a way that allows the member or you to break eye contact without having to turn their head away. Have nothing in between the chairs (such as a table or desk). This provides for more easy conversation.



Have a clock easily viewable, on a table near the member or over the member's head on the wall, so the Friendship Minister can keep track of the time.

TIME

The Friendship Ministry is usually limited to seven (7) meetings. Meetings should be time limited. It is recommended that meetings be at least 45 minutes and at most 90 minutes. At the beginning of each meeting, the Friendship Minister should announce when it will end. For example, the Friendship Minister can say, *“As you know, these meetings last about 60 minutes. It is 5:15 now, so we will wrap up by 6:15.”*

Friendship Ministers should start and end on time. It is reassuring to the member if the time frame of meetings is predictable and consistent. That said, it is okay to occasionally go a little over time, if the topic under discussion is especially important or distressing. A Friendship Minister might say, *“We are at the end of our time, but this seems important. Can you stay for a few more minutes to finish what we are discussing?”*

BEGINNING AND ENDING MEETINGS

As discussed in Part 4, the first meeting is structured. Friendship Ministers are given somewhat detailed instructions in how to conduct it. For example, you will introduce yourself at length, and you will talk at length to orient the member to the Friendship Ministry. Also, there is certain information that you will want to obtain to prepare for future meetings.

There are also instructions for subsequent meetings, but they are somewhat less structured, especially at the beginning. As a result, starting subsequent meetings can feel somewhat awkward.

Beginning Meetings

The Friendship Minister can begin meetings with some “small talk,” such as the weather, a recent well-known event (e.g., a football game), or other things. But do not spend more than 3 minute or so on such banter. The Friendship Minister neither wants to allow them to avoid discussing the reason they are seeking assistance, nor do you want to give the impression that you are reluctant to discuss it.

After a brief informal conversation, the Friendship Minister can state *“Why don’t we begin?”* and start the meeting. Then start the formal discussion with a review of last week’s meeting, such as, *“Do you have any questions about what we discussed last week?”*

Ending Meetings

If the room is set up properly, there will be a clock easily viewable. In addition to allowing the Friendship Minister can pace the conversation and cover the material, it also allows him or her and end on time.

As the hour ends, with about 10 minutes remaining, say, “I am aware of the time” or “I see that we are almost out of time.” Then you can proceed to summarize what was covered in the meeting, discuss what the member will do between now and the next meeting, and prepare for the next meeting as needed (such as finding a time or previewing what will happen).

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Preview of Chapter 10

FM Team Meetings are essential for supporting, encouraging, and guiding Friendship Ministers as they carry out this ministry. The next chapter describes the purpose of these meetings and provides practical guidance for conducting them effectively.

Chapter 10. FM Team Meetings

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

This chapter describes FM Team meetings, including their purpose, the importance of maintaining confidentiality during the FM Team meetings, how Friendship Ministers can present members they are seeing during the meetings, and suggestions about holding discussions and consultations.

Chapter Summary

- FM Team meetings provide consultation, supervision, and support for Friendship Ministers.
- Discussions should be conducted respectfully and confidentially.
- Friendship Ministers should consult with the FM Team before seeing a member for a second meeting and regularly thereafter.
- Consultation should focus on understanding the member's problem, thoughts, and behaviors, as well as determining appropriate next steps.

THE PURPOSE OF FM TEAM MEETINGS

Friendship Ministers do not carry the responsibility of helping members alone. Regular FM Team meetings provide Friendship Ministers with support and confidence.

FM Team meetings serve several important purposes. They provide:

- Consultation regarding members receiving assistance.
- Supervision and oversight of the Friendship Ministry the Pastor and the Co-Leader.
- Encouragement for Friendship Ministers.
- Opportunities to learn from one another's experiences.
- Guidance in following the Meeting-by-Meeting Instructions faithfully.
- Ongoing evaluation of whether pastoral or professional care may be needed.

These meetings remind Friendship Ministers that they are not alone. Difficult situations can be discussed openly, questions can be asked freely, and decisions can be made collaboratively.

Respectful and Supportive Consultation

Respect for both the member seeking assistance and the Friendship Minister providing that assistance is essential. The Pastor and Co-Leader should ensure that FM Team discussions reflect the values of compassion, humility, and understanding.

FM Team members should:

- Always speak respectfully about the member. There should be no criticism, ridicule, or judgment. Avoid minimizing the member's distress or problems.
- Remain aware of their own emotional reactions, including anxiety, frustration, or dismissiveness.
- Support and encourage the Friendship Minister presenting the case. Offer observations and suggestions gently and constructively.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

These practical ideas for FM Team meetings should be followed:

- Either the Pastor or the Co-Leader should chair the meetings.
- Meetings should occur at church in a private room.
- Only members of the FM Team shall attend meetings.
- Meetings should occur regularly and predictably.
- Before seeing a member for a second meeting, the Friendship Minister should consult with the FM Team about the member.

SUGGESTED AGENDA

The Pastor and Co-Leader should determine the agenda most appropriate for their congregation. The following structure is offered as a guide.

1. Opening prayer, devotion, or bible study (10 minutes)
2. Preview new and ongoing members to be discussed (3 minutes)
3. Initial consultations for new members (15 minutes per consultation)
4. Updates on ongoing members (10–15 minutes per consultation)
5. Discussion of Friendship Ministry protocol (10 minutes)
6. Closing prayer (1 minute)

FM TEAM CONSULTATIONS

The Initial FM Team Consultation

Following the first meeting with a member, the Friendship Minister should consult with the FM Team before meeting with the member again. Before the initial consultation, the Friendship Minister should:

1. Discuss any requests for recusal with Pastor or the Co-Leader.
2. Complete the *First Meeting Summary* form found in the Appendix.
3. Prepare a concise summary of the member's concerns and circumstances.
4. Consider whether the member appears appropriate for the Friendship Ministry.
5. Consider whether professional care may be needed.

Presenting the Member to the FM Team

The Friendship Minister should provide a concise summary of the member's situation, focusing on facts and observations rather than conclusions.

The presentation will usually include:

Presenting concern

- Why is the member seeking assistance?
- How does the member describe the problem?

Behavioral observations

- Emotional tone and mood.
- Degree of openness.
- Insight and understanding.
- Level of engagement.

Relevant background information

- Current and past relationships.
- Family circumstances.
- Friendships and social supports.
- Educational history.
- Employment or school functioning.
- Relevant medical concerns.

Friendship Minister's impressions

- Does the member appear appropriate for the Friendship Ministry?
- Is professional care indicated?
- What areas might require particular attention?

Ongoing Consultation

Before the FM Team meeting, the Friendship Minister should review all completed worksheets and notes from meetings with the member. The Friendship Minister should be prepared to remind the FM Team of the member's primary concern or problem. Discussion should focus on:

1. The status of the member's problem.
2. Progress since the previous consultation.
3. The member's thoughts about the problem.
4. The member's behaviors related to the problem.
5. Whether additional support or referral is needed.

Four Questions to Guide FM Team Discussions

Throughout all consultations, the FM Team should organize discussion around five questions.

1. What is the problem?

- What difficulty is the member experiencing?
- What factors contribute to it?

2. How is the member thinking about the problem?

- What thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, or interpretations influence the member?
- Are there thinking patterns that appear incomplete, inaccurate, overly negative, or unhelpful?
- What evidence supports or challenges these thoughts?

3. How is the member behaving in response to the problem?

- What actions is the member taking?
- What actions is the member avoiding?
- Are these behaviors helping or worsening the situation?
- Are there alternative behaviors that might be more effective?

4. Is the member understanding and participating in the problem-solving strategy?

- Does the member understand the strategy of changing thinking and behavior?
- Does the member seem hesitant about using the strategy?
- Does the member need encouragement to use the strategy?

5. What should occur next?

- What changes in thinking or behavior should be encouraged in the next meeting?
- Is additional pastoral, medical, psychological, or social support needed?

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Preview of Chapter 11

Having considered how Friendship Ministers listen, help, maintain confidentiality, and support one another through FM Team Meetings, we now turn to those whom the ministry is intended to serve. The next chapter discusses how congregations can introduce the Friendship Ministry to their members and encourage those in need to seek its support.

Chapter 11. Promoting the Friendship Ministry

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all.
(Philippians 4:4-5)

Establishing a Friendship Ministry is only the first step. Members cannot benefit from the ministry if they do not know that it exists, understand its purpose, or know how to access it. The FM Team should therefore develop thoughtful ways to promote the Friendship Ministry within the congregation.

The methods used to promote the Friendship Ministry will vary from church to church. The suggestions in this chapter are intended to help churches communicate clearly, reduce stigma surrounding emotional struggles, and encourage members to seek support when needed.

Chapter Summary

- Promotion should be part of a broader effort to encourage emotional well-being and reduce stigma.
- Multiple methods of communication can be used to increase awareness, and Pastor and other church leaders can make referrals.
- Promotional materials should clearly explain what the Friendship Ministry is and what members can expect.

PROMOTING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND REDUCING STIGMA

Part of a General Focus on Emotional Health

Ideally, the Friendship Ministry should be part of a broader effort to promote emotional well-being within the congregation. Members who experience emotional distress often feel embarrassed, ashamed, or reluctant to seek help. Churches can reduce these barriers by communicating that emotional struggles are common and that seeking support is a sign of wisdom rather than weakness.

Pastor and other church leaders should model compassionate, non-stigmatizing attitudes toward emotional and mental health concerns. Jokes, insults, misinformation, or dismissive comments about mental health problems should be gently corrected. The church should communicate that emotional suffering is not incompatible with Christian faith and that members need not struggle alone.

Educational Opportunities

Churches may wish to offer educational opportunities related to emotional well-being and mental health. Bible studies, guest speakers, workshops, and presentations can all help reduce misunderstanding and stigma. For example, Bible studies can examine individuals in Scripture who experienced fear, discouragement, grief, despair, or anxiety. Such discussions remind members that emotional suffering has always been part of the human experience and that God's people have long sought His comfort and care during difficult times.

Educational programs can also help members understand the difference between the Friendship Ministry and professional mental health treatment, clarify when additional care may be needed, and encourage compassionate responses toward those who struggle.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REFERRALS

Bulletin Announcements and Printed Materials

Regular reminders help ensure that members remain aware of the Friendship Ministry.

If your church publishes weekly bulletins, consider including a brief announcement about the Friendship Ministry on a regular basis. Churches that do not use bulletins might display flyers or brochures in common areas where members can obtain information privately.

Flyers placed in discreet locations, such as church restrooms, may be especially helpful because they allow members to take down contact information without drawing attention to themselves.

Any printed materials should include:

- A brief description of the Friendship Ministry.
- Contact information for the designated contact person.
- Reassurance regarding confidentiality.
- Information about how members can begin the process of seeking assistance.

Announcements by Pastor

Pastor's support is one of the most effective ways to promote the Friendship Ministry. Pastor can periodically mention the Friendship Ministry during announcements before or after worship services. Even brief reminders communicate that it is valued by the congregation and is available to any member who may benefit from it.

Pastor can also normalize emotional struggles by acknowledging that many faithful Christians experience periods of anxiety, discouragement, grief, loneliness, or other forms of emotional distress.

Referrals by Pastor and Church Leaders

Many members will first enter the Friendship Ministry through a referral from Pastor. Elders, deacons, board members, teachers, and other church leaders should also be familiar with the Friendship Ministry and prepared to recommend it when appropriate. Members often disclose struggles to trusted leaders before seeking help directly. These leaders can encourage individuals to consider the Friendship Ministry and explain how to access it.

IMPORTANT DETAILS TO EMPHASIZE

Promotional materials should provide a clear and accurate description of the Friendship Ministry. The following points are especially important to communicate.

It Is Individualized Help for Adult Members

The Friendship Ministry sees individuals. It does not have the capacity to see children, couples or families. It provides support and guidance, not professional mental health treatment needed for more complex issues.

The Friendship Ministry Is Grounded in Research

The Friendship Ministry is based on well-established principles that have been studied extensively in psychological research and adapted for use within the church. It integrates sound helping practices with Christian care and support.

The Friendship Ministry Is Part of Pastor's Ministry

The Friendship Ministry functions under Pastor's supervision and serves as an extension of the church's ministry of care.

All Help Is Confidential

As with conversations shared with Pastor, information discussed within the Friendship Ministry is treated confidentially. Members should understand that privacy is respected and protected.

Friendship Ministers Are Trained and Supervised

The Friendship Ministry Team (FM Team) includes Pastor, the Co-Leader, and Friendship Ministers who have completed the required training. Friendship Ministers receive ongoing consultation and supervision from Pastor and the Co-Leader.

The Program Is Short-Term, Structured and Accessible

Members may also benefit from knowing that:

- The Friendship Ministry is provided without cost.
- Meeting will typically occur weekly.
- The program is limited in duration, generally lasting no more than seven meetings.
- Meetings take place at church.

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Preview of Chapter 12

The next chapter concludes the training portion of this manual by describing how members enter the Friendship Ministry. It outlines the need to identify one or two contact persons to whom members will reach out, having the Pastor screen members for appropriateness, assigning a Friendship Minister, scheduling the initial meeting, and introducing the member and Friendship Minister to one another.

Chapter 12. Bringing Members into the Friendship Ministry

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

This chapter describes a recommended process by which members enter the Friendship Ministry. The process should be relatively simple, respectful, and well-organized. A clear process ensures that members receive timely responses, protects their privacy, and helps determine whether the Friendship Ministry is appropriate for their needs.

Chapter Summary

- One or two designated contact persons should receive all requests for assistance.
- Basic information should be gathered respectfully and confidentially.
- Pastor reviews all requests to determine whether the Friendship Ministry is appropriate.
- Members approved for the Friendship Ministry are matched with a Friendship Minister and should be contacted promptly.
- The first meeting should begin with a warm welcome and thoughtful preparation.

HOW MEMBERS REACH OUT TO THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY

Church members may seek assistance from the Friendship Ministry in a variety of ways. Some may respond to promotional materials in the church. Others may be encouraged by a family member or another church member. Pastor may refer members.

Regardless of how members first learn about the Friendship Ministry, all requests for assistance should follow the same process. This promotes fairness, protects privacy, and reduces confusion.

Designating a Contact Person

Rather than publishing the names and contact information of every member of the FM Team, promotional materials should direct interested members to one or two individuals serving as contact persons for the Friendship Ministry. Whether a member calls, sends an email or text message, speaks with someone after church, or is referred by Pastor, all requests for assistance should be directed to these contact persons.

The role of the contact person is to receive inquiries, gather basic information, and initiate the process of connecting members with the Friendship Ministry.

Gathering Initial Information

The contact person should gather the information necessary to begin the process of providing assistance. This information should include:

- The member's name.
- The member's gender.
- A brief description of why the member is seeking assistance.
- A brief review of potential safety issues or crises, such as danger to self or others.
- A brief query about whether substance use is a problem.
- The best way to communicate with the member.

A sample intake form for this first contact is included in the Appendix (*First Contact/Intake Form*). The FM Team may use this form as written, modify it as needed, or develop its own form.

Asking Permission to Call Back

Privacy should be respected from the very beginning of the process.

Before sharing the member's contact information with the FM Team, the contact person should ask:

⇒ *"Is it okay for someone from the Friendship Ministry to contact you to arrange a meeting?"*

The contact person should also ask:

⇒ *"If you do not answer, may we leave a message for you?"*

Some members may prefer not to receive telephone calls or voicemail messages because of privacy concerns. In these situations, the contact person and member should agree upon another method of communication.

Ending the Initial Contact

At the conclusion of the initial conversation, the contact person should reassure the member that the request has been received and explain what will happen next. For example:

⇒ *"The next thing is that I will share this information with Pastor. Either the Pastor or a Friendship Minister will call you."*

The contact person should then forward the request to the Pastor.

WHEN THE FRIENDSHIP MINISTRY IS NOT APPROPRIATE

Some persons will have needs that exceed the scope of the Friendship Ministry. This determination may occur after the contact person gathers initial information. Less commonly, it might become evident after the first meeting.

Indications that a person's has needs that exceed the capacity of the Friendship Ministry include: (1) safety concerns (i.e., that the person is a danger to self or others); (2) severe impairment (such as an inability to care for oneself); (3) severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, or psychosis, and (4) substance use problems.

As well, the Friendship Ministry is not equipped to help children, couples, or families, as these are complex treatments requiring professional intervention.

Pastor Reviews All Requests

The contact person sends all requests for assistance and the initial information to the Pastor. Since the Friendship Ministry functions as an extension of Pastor's ministry, Pastor's review helps determine whether the Friendship Ministry is appropriate and whether the member's needs fall within the scope of the program.

Pastor will often already be aware of the circumstances that led a member to seek help. In some cases, Pastor may determine that a member requires assistance beyond what the Friendship Ministry can provide. For instance, if Pastor might know that a member has a serious mental health problem or an addiction problem. In these instances, Pastor should call that member directly and discuss this with the member. Pastor can guide them toward more appropriate resources and care.

Determining That a Member Is Not Appropriate after the First Meeting

There might be times that a member is seen for a first meeting and is then determined by the FM Team to be too

severe for the program. After the FM Team meeting, the Pastor should reach out to the member and inform him or her that they cannot be seen.

SCHEDULING THE FIRST MEETING

Assigning a Friendship Minister

When Pastor determines that the Friendship Ministry is appropriate, the member should be paired with a Friendship Minister by the Pastor. Either the Pastor or the contact person can inform the Friendship Minister of the information gathered and the member's contact information.

Phone Call to Schedule a Meeting

Members seeking assistance should generally hear back from the Friendship Ministry within one week.

If the member has given permission to be contacted, the assigned Friendship Minister should reach out to arrange the first meeting.

Unless explicit permission has been given, voicemail messages should not be left.

A Friendship Minister might say:

⇒ *"Hello. My name is _____, and I am a Friendship Minister from our church. I was calling to see whether we could arrange a time to meet and talk."*

INTRODUCTIONS

Preparing for the First Meeting

The Friendship Minister should arrive at the meeting location before the member. Arriving early allows the Friendship Minister to:

- Ensure that the room is clean and ready.
- Arrange the seating appropriately.
- Gather any materials that may be needed.
- Review the procedures for the first meeting.
- Prepare to greet the member calmly and warmly.

As discussed in previous chapters, Friendship Ministers should avoid sitting between the member and the door and should ensure that the meeting environment promotes comfort, privacy, and safety.

Meeting and Greeting the Member

Although the Friendship Minister and member may have spoken by telephone, face-to-face introductions remain important.

Sometimes the two individuals will be meeting for the first time. In other situations, they may recognize one another from church but not know each other personally.

One possibility is for Pastor to be present briefly at the beginning of the first meeting to introduce the member and Friendship Minister. This reinforces that the Friendship Ministry is part of Pastor's ministry and communicates support and encouragement.

When greeting the member, Friendship Ministers should simply do what they already know how to do:

- Greet the member by name.
- Smile warmly.
- Offer a sincere welcome.
- Invite the member into the meeting room.

Small gestures of kindness and hospitality can ease anxiety and help members feel more comfortable.

Post-Script: Learning to Trust Yourself

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1Peter 4:10)

This chapter is addressed to those undergoing training to be a Friendship Minister. It discusses what I have observed in every student I have ever taught clinical skills. Students (and probably you) are anxious about being able to help. This chapter tries to address some of your potential concerns.

Chapter Summary

- This chapter discusses you and your potential anxiety regarding whether you can actually do the Friendship Ministry. It makes several points:
 - Being anxious about doing this is both normal and helpful.
 - You have been selected because you have been seen to have abilities that your yourself do not recognize.
 - The most important thing you will do is listen with kindness.
 - You cannot solve anyone else's distress or problems. But you can help simply by listening, empathizing, and offering gentle encouragement and suggestions
 - Be careful about taking on another person's problems, as that is not helpful to them nor is it healthy for you.
 - You will have Pastor and the Friendship Ministry Team with you.

IT IS OKAY TO BE ANXIOUS

Becoming a Friendship Minister requires a great deal of training, and at times it may feel overwhelming. In the opening pages of this manual, we reflected on St. Paul's encouragement to care for and support one another. There, we affirmed that, with training and guidance, ordinary Christians are capable of this important work—and so are you.

You have been selected because of your natural gifts of kindness, patience and good sense. The training is not going to teach you these things or somehow replace them with something better. Training will enhance those natural gifts, showing you what you are doing when you are listening well.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR INSTINCTS

Pay attention to your instincts regarding how you behave in a meeting with someone or when listening to discussion with the FM Team. Your natural or "instinctive" reactions are an essential part of how you and the FM will help someone. You cannot necessarily trust what you are feeling, nor should you instinctively follow every impulse you have. But if you are feeling something—afraid, upset, an impulse to say or do something—pay attention to it.

It is not always possible to know or understand why we feel a certain feeling. But we pay attention to our feelings to guide us in the moment.

- If you are curious about something, gently ask.
- If you are worried about something, gently ask about it.
- If you are concerned about someone's safety, pay attention to your instinct and gently ask. Such as, "I'm seeing that you are in a lot of distress. Sometimes people think of hurting themselves when

times are tough. Have you had any thoughts like that?” Part 4 has specific advice on how to handle someone who might be in an emotional crisis.

KNOW THAT YOU ARE HELPING

It is important to trust that the Friendship Ministry program will help. You are going through training to implement the Friendship Ministry, and you will be part of a team at your church that will help and support each other in doing the Friendship Ministry. If you do what you are trained, you will be helpful. And keep in mind that listening with kindness and empathy—which is something that you already do well!—is far and away the most important thing that any member seeking help needs.

TRUST THE MEMBER

Do not think incorrectly that you will be helping the person if you allow their problem to bother you or, worse yet, if you take on their problem as your own. You are a nice person, and you want to help, but trust that you are helping, even if the problem is not getting better quickly or not going away.

Be aware (and beware) unrealistic thinking that will cause you to feel anxious that you “must do more” to help the person. Beware these inaccurate thoughts, keeping in mind these accurate thoughts:

- “The solution seems easy. I am going to push the person to do the solution I think is correct.”
 - If the problem were easy, they would have solved it already.
- “I know what the person needs to do. It is obvious.”
 - It might be insulting to the member for you to think (and perhaps speak about) that you know what they must do to better their situation.
- “I really need to help this person. I know what they are going through and what to do.”
 - You are not them, and you cannot solve their problem
- “Their problem is not improving much. I need to do more.”
 - The goal of the Friendship Ministry is giving the person powerful tools with which to try to improve or resolve something bothering them.

The Friendship Ministry is designed to prevent over-involvement on the part of a Friendship Minister. First, it is time-limited, with a maximum of 7 meetings. A Friendship Minister must not go beyond this number of meetings, lest the Friendship Minister become overly involved in the problem or in the member’s life. Second, the Friendship Ministry focuses on a single problem every meeting, and the Friendship Ministers follow instructions. This puts an emphasis on change on the part of the member. Finally, the Friendship Ministry is part of Pastor’s ministry. Pastor will continue to be involved with all members after they complete the Friendship Ministry program.

The goal of the Friendship Ministry is to get the member in distress started on a path toward improvement. The Friendship Ministry will make a big difference, even though it will not likely resolve any problem.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rev. Michael Berg, Ph.D.

EXTRA NOS

Curved Inward versus Curved Outward

- We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:24-20).
- And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1b-2)

There are two human orientations to be curved inward toward oneself or to be curved outward. “Extra nos” means “outside us”. Truth, life itself, morality, identity, and justification come from outside of us.

Law	Gospel
Our natural orientation.	God, through his alien work of law and suffering, curves us outward.
Looks to self for identity, value, truth, morality and salvation.	Looks to Christ for all things.
Does not see neighbor as the goal of love but rather as something to be used.	Sees neighbor as the goal of love.

Truth, Life, Morality, Identity, and Justification

- But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:7-11).
- Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6-7).
- I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13).
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and

truth. (John 1:1-5, 14).

- The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17).

Jesus Christ is the Logos (Word of God). He is the reason up is up and $2+2=4$ and not 5. All things hold together in him. Looking inside of ourselves to find the order of the universe is looking in the wrong place. Finding truth, life itself, morality, identity, or justification inside of ourselves is equally foolish. We simply do not have the perspective or ability to do so. I would argue that we cannot even know ourselves fully. As Paul says, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Impossible Burdens

- Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Asking humans to create their own meaning places a divine burden upon our shoulders. Think of the burden society often places on teenagers who do not yet possess fully developed brains only have limited life experience. We are asking them to act like a divine being!

Vocation

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Vocation is when God calls the Christian into a neighbor relationship. God puts on Christians as His masks to carry out his love in the world. His standard mode of operation is to use ordinary means to accomplish extraordinary ends and to use physical means to accomplish spiritual ends. This way He is paradoxically hidden but revealed.

There are four categories of vocation: family, church, civic, and career. In each category a Christian is called to one or many vocations to love his or her neighbor with God's love. In vocation the Christian is God's coworker. This provides a divine purpose to everyday life.

Free From and Free For

- You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18).

If we use the addiction analogy for sin, we see that our desire for freedom is simply indulging our addiction. This is not freedom but a prison. If the opposite of sin is love, then righteous love looks a lot like freedom! There are a few motivations to do what is right. Avoiding punishment, receiving a reward (even the good feeling of performing a good deed), or simply because it is the "right thing to do". All of these are law motivations. The saint performs good deeds because that is simply who he or she is. These moments are rare for the sinner/saint this side of heaven but are a glimpse into paradise when good deeds are truly done freely without any law motivation.

Mental Health Connection

Being curved outward provides the Christian with the right orientation for both gratitude and purpose. If we are curved outward, we see our savior from sin and the provider of all we need. We also see a divine

purpose for our lives: the love of neighbor.

Mental health benefits from vocation:

Vocation provides the Christian with a purpose, a sense of godly pride, freedom from trying to be justified by human standards, honor in work, and a sense of respect from God.

Mental health benefits from being curved outward:

Being curved outward provides the Christian with the right orientation for both gratitude and purpose. If we are curved outward, we see our savior from sin and the provider of all we need. We also see a divine purpose for our lives: the love of neighbor.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rev. Michael Berg, Ph.D.

PASTORAL CARE

Everybody Worships

- Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. (Romans 1:24-25).

John Calvin famously said that the human heart is an idol factory. All people (even atheists) trust something or someone above all else. This is your god/idol or, to put it another way, this is your ultimate thing. An ultimate thing is the thing that you hold on tightly because if you let go, you are afraid that you will lose your very self. An ultimate thing is a thing that does what a divine being can only do: provide life, truth, morality, identity, and justification.

A penultimate thing is something that literally comes before the ultimate. In this context it means something that is less important than the ultimate. For a Christian a penultimate thing is a gift from God but not something to be trusted as a god. Examples of penultimate things are family, career, nation-states, political parties, health, wealth, food, sex, and possessions.

When we ask a penultimate thing to perform what only an ultimate task, two tragedies occur. First, we will be disappointed because the penultimate thing will fail us. They can only take from us but can never love us with true agape love. Second, we will hold on so tightly to the penultimate gift that we will ruin it.

Confession and Absolution

- And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:22-23).

From Luther’s Small Catechism: “Confession had two parts: the one is that we confess our sins; the other is that we receive Absolutions, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and in no way doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are forgiven before God in heaven by this.”

God places his words in the mouth of a pastor (or any Christian) so that there is no space between the sinner and God’s grace. The habit of confession and hearing forgiveness forms us to not find salvation anywhere else but God and also forms us to forgive others.

Reasons for Suffering

We must be careful not to speculate about the will of God. We cannot declare that God allowed certain events to occur for certain reasons. This is outside of our ability. However, the Scriptures provide reasons for suffering. We are barred from speculating but not barred from ministering.

- Character (Romans 5:3-5)
- Chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-7)
- Compassion (Philippians 2:1-4)
- Marks of the Church (Matthew 24:9)
- Contemplation (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

- Co-Sufferer with Christ (1 Peter 4:13)
- Contrition (Psalm 51:17)
- Pushes us to the Cross of Christ (Proverbs 3:5)

The modern West does not provide a “theology” for suffering, that is, it offers no meaning for suffering. Suffering is only something to be eradicated by the “three P’s”: a policy, a pill, or psychology. All three of the “P’s” are good gifts from God but cannot provide true meaning for suffering. If suffering has no meaning, then life has no meaning.

The Unseen Realm

- For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).
- For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him (Colossians 1:16).
- And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15).

The modern West tends to separate the physical from the spiritual. Either the spiritual realm does not exist (atheism), God is impersonal (deism), or we privilege the spiritual over the physical (pietism).

Demonic Activity

- Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world (1 John 4:1-3).
- They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”
- “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him” (Mark 1:23-27).

We should reject metaphysical naturalism (i.e. that there are only natural causes). We affirm an “unseen realm.” We should likewise reject the idea that mental health issues are purely spiritual (i.e. that there are only spiritual causes).

There are two kinds of possession: First there is spiritual possession that is not necessarily physical. These are unbelievers. In fact, all Christians are in a way “possessed” because they are sinners (unbelievers). However, Christians are also “possessed” by the Holy Spirit and are saints. The solution is the Word of God and, in particular, baptism. The second is a physical and spiritual possession. This is the indwelling of a person’s body by an evil spirit that results in physical results. It can be difficult to distinguish between physical results of possession with the physical results of mental illness (see below). It can also be the case that a person is both

possessed by an evil spirit and suffer a mental illness. It may even be the case that one results in the other.

Notice that the crowds were often wowed by Jesus, not just because of his supernatural ability, but primarily because he taught with authority. His words are his most important tool. They are also our most valuable tool.

It may sound strange to find something positive when we talk about demonic activity, but we should note that the reason both the demons and angels war in this cosmic battle is because we are that valuable. We are the prize!

Demons do not have the power; God does. This should give us great comfort. Also remember that God allows suffering (as awful as that sounds). This means that it can be used for our eternal good.

Mental Health Connection

Distinguishing between Demonic Activity and Mental Health Issues

Possible signs of demonic activity that MAY help distinguish between possession and mental illness.

1. Knowledge of foreign languages that had not been learned
2. Knowledge of secrets that could not have been known
3. Superhuman strength
4. Accurate animal noises not possible for humans
5. Aversion to holy things (i.e. the Word of God, the Name of Jesus)
6. Vulgar speech
7. Screaming
8. Convulsions or Seizures
9. Screaming
10. Trances

Please note that demons will not respond to medical solutions. Please also note that some of the above signs might be a result of mental illness (specifically 6-10). Signs 1-5 are the best indications of supernatural causes. For example, irrational speech might be a sign of schizophrenia (or another mental illness) rather than possession. Demons seem to speak rationally (see Acts 19:15 and Mark 1:24).

It is possible that a person could be faking possession for a number of reasons. It seems that demons would like to keep possession a secret and so would usually not announce their activity. That might be one sign that a person is faking demonic possession.

Protocol

1. Do not do this alone
2. Make sure to practice active listening to determine:
 - Was/Is there trauma in the person's life?
 - Did the person have a connection to occultic activity?
 - Did they invite or give themselves over to demonic powers?
3. Consult a physician (Rule out medical problem)
4. Consult a mental health professional (Rule out mental health problem)
5. Consult a pastor (it will always be a spiritual problem.)
6. Pray; Use the gospel; Use the sign of the cross

Please note that God's Word is the antidote. God's Word is not a magical incantation nor is it empty of power.

Remember that God works through vocations such as medical doctors and mental health professionals. It is dangerous to leave physical or mental disorders untreated because we are convinced of a supernatural cause.

Comparison of Demonic Influence and Mental Disorders¹

There are two human orientations to be curved inward toward oneself or to be curved outward. “Extra Nos” means “outside us”. Truth, life itself, morality, identity, and justification come from outside of us.

Demonic Influence	Parallels in Mental Disorders
Supernatural Knowledge	Hallucinations, delusions of psychotic disorders
Unusual Strength	Unusual strength displayed; might be bipolar disorder, other psychotic conditions.
Going about naked	Evident in most psychological disorders such as schizophrenia and schizotypal disorders.
Unable to hear, speak, or see	Convulsions and hysterical disorders.
Seizures	Common with epilepsy and other brain disorders like intoxication, trauma, and neoplasms.
Use of a “different” voice; presence of distinct personality	Displayed in cases of dissociative disorders such as multiple personality disorder.
Bizarre behavior	Common in psychoses.
Force, violent behavior	Common in psychosis, intermittent explosive disorder, and anti-social personality.
Claims of demonic influence	Observed in multiple personality disorder.
Involvement in occult practices	This can be observed in many disorders.
Loss of personal control	Common to many psychotic conditions
Invasive	Associated with psychotic conditions

¹ This chart is from Bufford, Rodger K. (1988). *Counseling and the Demonic*. Dallas, TX: Word Books. Quoted in Elems, Ugochukwu (2022) "Discerning the Condition: Disease or Demonic," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*: Vol. 18: No. 1, 59-67. Assessed February 26, 2026, from <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol18/iss1/7>

Notes for Part 3

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Appendices

Appendix A: First Meeting Summary

Appendix B: First Contact/Intake Form

First Meeting Summary

Member initials: _____

Friendship Minister: _____

Meeting date: _____

Meeting Time and Duration: _____

Summary of Presenting Issue

Behavioral Observations (such as attitude; mood; openness; understanding)

Other Information

Marriage/Relationship (Current and Past)

Education (Current and Past)

Work/School (Current and Past)

Friendships

Family History

Relevant Medical Problems

Other Comments

Recommendation: Does member seem appropriate for the Friendship Ministry?

Does member seem to need professional help?

.....

Notes about FM Team Discussion

First Contact/Intake Form

Date/Time: _____ Person taking call: _____
Caller First Name: _____ Last Initial: _____
Gender: Male [] Female [] Age: _____

Greeting

"I'm very glad you called about the Friendship Ministry. I hope we can be of help to you. Can I ask for some information so that we can best know how to help?"

Description of Problem

"Can you please describe the issue for which you are seeking help from the Friendship Ministry?"

Safety Issues or Crises

"There are a few other questions that we ask everybody to that we know how to help."

- *"Have you had thoughts of hurting or of killing yourself?"* Yes [] No []
- *"Are you currently having problems with drug or alcohol use?"* Yes [] No []
- *"Are you currently being emotionally or physically abused by your partner or someone important to you?"* Yes [] No []

Referral Source

"Did someone suggest you call the Friendship Ministry? Can I ask who that was?"

Contact Information

"Can I get a number where we can reach you?"

"Is it okay to leave a message at this number?" Yes [] No []

Answer Questions (if any) and Preview Next Step

"Before we end here, do you have any questions about the Friendship Ministry?"

"The next thing is that I will share this information with Pastor. Either the Pastor or a Friendship Minister will call you."

"Thank you again for calling."

This information should be shared with Pastor as soon as possible.

A Prayer for Friendship Ministers

Gracious Father,

You have comforted us in our afflictions with the promises of Your gospel. Though we are unworthy sinners, You have declared us righteous through faith in Christ and have called us to love and serve our neighbors.

Grant wisdom, patience, and compassion to those who serve as Friendship Ministers. Give them attentive ears to listen carefully, gentle hearts to show kindness, and discerning minds to understand those who seek their help. Keep them humble, remembering that they are not the source of healing, but instruments through whom You may bring comfort, encouragement, and hope.

When they feel inadequate, remind them that Your strength is made perfect in weakness. When they are uncertain, guide them by Your Word. Help them entrust those they serve into Your loving care.

Bless those who come seeking assistance. Grant them courage in facing their struggles and confidence in Your steadfast love. In all things, draw them nearer to You and to the people You have placed around them for support.

Make this ministry a reflection of Christ's compassion, so that burdens may be shared, the lonely may be encouraged, and Your people may build one another up in faith and love.

We ask all these things through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

*God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown
Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.*

(Hebrews 6:10)

