

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Ep. 5 How Christian Counselors Can Connect with Churches and Pastors

Camille McDaniel, LPC (00:01.884)

Welcome to the Christ in Private Practice podcast. I am your host, Camille McDaniel, licensed professional counselor. And today we are going to be talking a little bit about how Christian counselors can connect with churches and pastors. I am super honored and so thankful to be talking to Bishop Matthew L. Brown today, who

My pastor, we went to Bishop Brown's church for several years and we go closer to home but he's still my pastor because he's super relational which you will see as we move forward. So let me just introduce you to Bishop Matthew Brown. He is the senior pastor of Greater Community Church of God in Christ in Marietta, Georgia.

and he served in various leadership roles at the local, district, jurisdiction, and national levels for over 40 years. And Pastor Brown brings just a wealth of experience to helping churches and people and organizations and communities to develop and transform.

And like I said with Pastor Brown, he's very relational. I thanked him for taking the time. You would not believe how busy he is. It'd be a whole podcast. So thank you so much. Thank you really so much.

Matthew Brown (01:37.035)

I'm so embarrassed.

Thank you, Camille. Thank you for this time. And I just got out of a meeting to jump on this podcast. And I was saying to them, we were talking about something, and I said, I just don't want to be always identified as the busy guy. But it is what it is. But we're very productive. And taking time to be with you is very important regarding our conversation moving forward.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (02:05.596)

Thank you. Well, you know, I know you don't want to be the busy guy, but you know, I think part of that is stepping up to the challenge. There's just so much to do, right? So the labor is plenty and the workers are few. So, you know, you're doing a lot of work. I'm sure if you could clone yourself a few times, you still wouldn't get it all done. But thank you, nonetheless.

Matthew Brown (02:16.875)

Yeah.

Yeah.

Matthew Brown (02:34.475)

That's true. That's true. Thank you so much.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (02:36.444)

So, well, we'll jump into the first thing that I wanted to ask on behalf of a lot of other mental health professionals who are Christians and want to do business and counseling God's way. And one of the things that comes up is that they would like to be able to make better connections with churches and offering services. And so, and some just don't really know where to start. So,

My first question would be, you know, from a pastor's perspective, what are some of the key qualities that you would look for in a counselor when considering like a collaboration with a counselor? You know, how do you think counselors can complement pastoral care that's provided through the church?

Matthew Brown (03:26.059)

Well, that's a great question. My initial answer is that I believe that counselors are... counselors to me are like para -ministries. There are like ministries that are set up that are not religious organizations, or they may be... they have religious tendencies, but they're not organized as a church, you know?

but they supply a specific service that will enhance the work of the local church. And I see the professionalism, I see this need clearly in our churches. And again, I'm going to speak predominantly from an African -American Pentecostal experience that...

there is a critical need for counselors to come alongside pastors who may not be professionally trained. And as a result, while I've been doing this and pastoring for almost 30 years and doing a number of things relative to what is called or what was then called counseling that I have deemed now as conversations because you can't call something counseling...

in this age if you're not licensed to do so. So we're in the space now, you've got to protect not only the optics, but you have to protect the operation and the corporation. So I think there's a tremendous need for it. I see when you talk about qualities, clearly qualities like you possess, professionalism, sincerity, competence, right?

Camille McDaniel, LPC (04:46.844)

Mm -hmm.

Matthew Brown (05:12.523)

an understanding of the culture in which clients are coming out of churches. And then having... you got to have some acceptance of how people have framed their thinking and way of being so that it doesn't become sort of a spiritual, secular war in a conversation.

So I would say that those are some things that we look for. I think pastors would be, are in this day and time, particularly post -COVID, and not that, you know, COVID is eliminated, but post -pandemic. Let me say this, post -pandemic, that churches are very open to counseling, therapy, and a number of other things in that space. So I think that's a great, it is a wonderful opportunity.

to have collaboration right now with your profession and the church.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (06:18.299)

Okay, that's a that's a good one and I and I like how you even mentioned which I think is it's something that if we have time I'll swing back around but you know so that you don't get into a Kind of a secular faith -based war like how do you serve the people in? in ways that don't go down that path without compromising on On your own beliefs, but still serving all of all of the Lord's people. So yeah Well, let me let me go in a different direction and just ask, you know What do you notice as far?

as some of the mental health needs within even your congregation or since you have again you've gone nationwide I mean you're even in in other countries so what are you seeing as far as the mental health needs?

Matthew Brown (07:06.795)

Well, I will tell you that... Let's just talk about the local church that I serve. We have been promoting May, I believe May... May is Mental Health Month, National Mental Health Month. So we've been promoting that. We've had a series of opportunities and events around that. We do quarterly at our local church something that I created called Grief Chat.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (07:17.916)

Mm -hmm.

Matthew Brown (07:36.651)

And so we actually have one of our members, and this is a weird, not weird, but it's a funny thing that one of our members, Dr. Jackie Jones, is a member of Greater Nation. So, you know, based upon the pandemic, we have had a lot of members from around the country who are not necessarily in the state of Georgia or in person at Greater who have joined our church.

She's in Oklahoma, she literally comes to greater on a monthly basis just to be in service, but she's in all of our hard -bred stuff. And so when we start doing grief chats, she is that therapist that's there in our grief chats that takes place once a quarter. And this happens between services, between our eight and 11 o'clock service, and then it happens twice after the 11 o'clock service.

And what we're finding is we have sort of in those two sessions, almost around 50 something people who are just coming to be in conversation, to share their grief and to talk about things. And so we balance it both biblically and through biblically and therapeutically. So when you ask me, what do I see? There is a great need for people to understand their lives now post pandemic.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (08:55.068)

is.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (09:00.188)

and I'm going to go home.

Matthew Brown (09:01.899)

to people are still grieving. They have not figured this thing out. And then it is accumulated grief. It's compounded. It's not just what has happened in the last four years. What's happened in the last four years has triggered and compounded or accumulated on the stuff that's been going on for the last 20 years. And so I think as people are grasping for...

biblical and spiritual clarity and truth, they must wrestle with the lived reality. So you can have all of the positive faith that you want, but when your active faith intersects with your lived reality, then people struggle. And they struggle, I think, they struggle with their mental health, they struggle with their emotional health.

They struggle with their spiritual health. And I'm a practicing theologian. So let me give this part, that that's clearly the way, according to the Hebrew Bible, and according to what we believe, that man was created. Man is a spirit, has a soul, meaning will, intellect, and emotions, right? And lives in a body. And so what I am a big proponent of is what we call it greater TNT. That's theology and therapy. That you need both of them.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (10:25.212)
Mm -hmm.

Matthew Brown (10:26.955)
because I say to them that if man is three parts, you need a pastor for your spirit, you need a therapist for your soul, and you need a primary care doctor for your body. So I think the issue of fear, I think the issue of anxiety, I think the issues of relationships, I think the whole understanding of self -awareness.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (10:40.764)
Yeah.

Matthew Brown (10:56.107)
all of these things are... and then let's throw on family, relationships, marriages. We've created Marriage University as an outlet to help us in these particular pieces. So therapists or counselors, and I'm not sure the proper terminology, but your profession

Camille McDaniel, LPC (11:19.612)
Mm -hmm.

Matthew Brown (11:23.979)
literally could come along to every facet of our church. You know, we minister to men, women, marriage, youth, and evangelism. And in those particular spaces, there is a conversation about relationships. And so, I didn't mean to go that long on the answer, but I'm just telling you, the need is great.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (11:41.884)
Mm -hmm.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (11:49.372)
No, that's and that's a great perspective and information that you gave and I think it also shows for everyone listening to this podcast or watching Who will be watching on the video to see that there are there are pastors out there who are open and understanding of the benefit and and would definitely come alongside and do like you You definitely have a lot of innovative ideas that are being played out in the church to support members

right where they are, like you said, whether anxiety, stress, relationships, you're doing all of that. I think sometimes what we find, you might be a little bit of a diamond in the rough, maybe not for everybody, but you know what we find is that, is you know, we kind of hit a wall in truth be told. Maybe this will go into some of the answer that you give me next, I don't know, but.

I think that I would not have been able to.

have had all of these kinds of conversations if I didn't participate. I mean, I didn't just call you randomly and just say, hey, can I talk to you? And I like to ask you a whole bunch of questions, right? You know, I have participated in the past. You've gotten to kind of check me out and you've helped our family. And so, you know, there's some relationship there and you're all, you're oftentimes talking about relationship. And so I guess that with that, you know,

Matthew Brown (13:02.923)
Right, right.

Matthew Brown (13:18.859)

Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (13:20.35)

the thing that I would ask is, so what would you suggest if let's say someone, they weren't necessarily looking to reach out to their own pastor and maybe they weren't known, you know, what are some of the ways that a counselor could even initiate contact, you know, with a church or a pastor, or, you know, a specific approaches or something to be mindful of?

Matthew Brown (13:38.827)

You know what, I -

Yeah, I think, you know, unfortunately, it depends upon the pastor, their personality. But I think it's a matter of picking up a phone and saying, hey, this is the services that I offer, but more than what I offer, I'd like to have a cup of coffee. I'd just like to meet you. I think that it's important for pastors to feel comfortable about those...

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:04.476)

Yeah.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:10.172)

Yes.

Matthew Brown (14:11.851)

that they will introduce to people because you get to think about this, the counselor is going to utilize the pastor's influence and the pastor's credibility, right? And so credibility is a difficult thing whether we are in the marketplace, whether we're in the sacred space, the civic space, wherever.

Credibility is difficult. So I think before, like for you, it was easy because you guys, your family was there, you were involved. We understood what you brought to the table when you walked in the door. And so I happen to be the type of pastor that understands that my role is to build platforms and to see that everything we need that this church needs to thrive to be healthy and holistic is in the house.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (14:52.636)

Mm -hmm.

Yes.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (15:05.96)

Thank you.

Matthew Brown (15:10.507)

Well, it's just a matter of trying to find people like you to say, yeah, I'll come alongside. I'll sit here. And once you get to know a person, then it's very easy. So I would say if you don't know the pastor and you really believe that you can come alongside to assist their congregation, you pick up the phone, you go through whatever their bureaucracy is, but just to get on their calendar, have a quick conversation.

and then try your best either to do a video conference or a coffee clutch just to talk about who you are as a person, not what you do and not what you can offer who you are and get to know that person. And pastors will open up and share themselves and then also see the benefit that you bring.

for their congregation. I think that's just one of the ways. But I think, Camille, I really believe it's like everything else. I believe that everything rises and falls on relationships.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:11.388)
this.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:16.7)
Yep, you've definitely said that consistently over the years and you're right. Yeah, so I'm hearing it like, no, you know who you are as a mental health professional and you trust yourself, but without relationship, how is the pastor going to know who you are and that you're trustworthy? And like you said, we're using your influence. We're using your reputation because if you endorse us,

I understand.

Matthew Brown (16:37.739)
Right.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (16:45.788)
people trust you, right? And so you're very careful. You all are gatekeepers. And so you're very careful with who you introduce to your congregation and understandably. Yeah. So it's like, slow down. This is not a race. Form some relationships. OK. OK. Thank you. All right.

Matthew Brown (16:49.579)
Right.

Matthew Brown (16:57.579)
Yeah. Yeah.

Matthew Brown (17:06.443)
There you go. Yeah. And then I think in that relationship building, clearly you know there is that whole trust building. It is a verification that you are who you say you are. And then before we start, can you imagine, I use this example all the time. I say to people, yeah, if I was, I could put on scrubs.

and a mask and everything else, and walk into an operating room and ask someone and say, hand me a scalpel. That doesn't make me a doctor, a medical doctor. And what pastors are doing is that we're running an ICU. We're running a critical care unit where we are operating on people's emotions and

Camille McDaniel, LPC (17:41.724)
Hmm.

Matthew Brown (18:04.203)
We're dealing with their lives. We are handling and birthing. We're midwives to handle and birth relationships. We are para counselors, marriage counselors, and we're job developers. We're visionary. We're life coaches. It's just too much for one person. But just because someone says that they are a licensed professional counselor,

Camille McDaniel, LPC (18:21.116)
you

Camille McDaniel, LPC (18:26.652)
Bye.

Matthew Brown (18:33.931)

doesn't mean that they are very good at what they do. And so I think that the first thing is making contact, making, having conversation, showing, displaying your abilities and then allowing an organic relationship to form. It's going to take time. It can't be transactional in this day. It's got to be transformational. It has to be organic.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (18:56.092)

Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm. Mm -hmm.

Matthew Brown (19:02.731)

and then move at that space.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:05.884)

That's great. I have to try to remember. I'll have to play it. It can't be transactional. It has to be transformational. I like that. OK. You know, Pastor Brown is going to come with the information for you all. goodness.

Matthew Brown (19:12.619)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

you

Camille McDaniel, LPC (19:23.548)

So then, what would you suggest as far as advice for just keeping that relationship going? Because maybe they have a church home. Maybe they're somewhere not close by. Or like I said, they have a church home. But how could they keep relationship going with the church? What does that look like?

Matthew Brown (19:34.538)

Yeah.

Matthew Brown (19:46.699)

I think that once they make contact with the pastor or the executive pastor, again, everybody has a different setup, right? So if they make relationships with someone on that key team and they just stay consistent with communication, that's all you need. Then needs will constantly arise and then people will show you how to be a part of that. So I just think it again, it's just relationship 101. It's bringing your why.

and leaving your what in the car. Bring your why to the conversation. Bring your why to the meeting and then let the other people ask your what.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (20:23.972)

We'll be back.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (20:31.196)

All right, okay, so we're not jumping in with sales. We're not jumping in with, you know, I have this program, I have this workshop, I have these services, I have the, yeah, come with your heart. All right, so then.

Matthew Brown (20:44.267)

Yeah. Yep. Yep.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (20:47.996)

What would you leave us with ultimately? You know, like, you have, first of all, you have answered a lot of questions that I have seen in online spaces where people have been told, you know, you reach out to churches and people wanting to reach out to churches and having a heart for God's people, and you've really clarified...

quite nicely with great information about how we can do that in genuine ways that are sustainable if we want to be in this for the long term and really want to build connections over time. And so I guess I just want, what final thoughts, what encouragement, what wisdom would you give us as we try to partner with churches and congregations?

Matthew Brown (21:42.315)

Yeah, you know, Doc, I would, I think my final thought is to say to professional counselors, you are needed, you are welcomed. There is a space, there is a seat, there is a place on the bench of that church's team because you provide, you provide a substantive, invaluable resource that will only assist people in their life journey.

I think we get caught up a lot of times, particularly in the African -American space of, you know, well, you got to be a member of my church. And I promise you, things are different now. You don't have to be a member and you're in it's probably best. We have, and I'm giving you another example. We actually have a licensed professional counselor in our church. She's a psychologist, wonderful person. But when I first met her a couple of years ago,

She was very clear to me, no, this is my church. I come here for me. So she won't take on clients. She won't be a part of our team. And I got that. At first, it was a little weird. But then I understood, guess what? She needs her own space, her own boundaries. And I think that's important, right? But I will also say that this is a tremendous opportunity.

It's a welcoming opportunity for clergy. I'm so glad we're even having this conversation because I think this is critical. And I think what you're bringing to your audience is super, super important that we can sort of deconstruct all of these cultural walls, this misinformation about, no, you know, and sort of demystify all of the mysticism and spiritualism and all that stuff. People are hurting.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (23:29.728)

Right.

Matthew Brown (23:30.219)

and there are pastors that care for congregations that may not have the skill set, the tool belt to assist in all of those areas. And where counselors can be helpful, we ask that you reach out, we'll reach back, develop a relationship. And what we ultimately want is the wellness and wholeness of our congregations.

Camille McDaniel, LPC (23:54.62)

Thank you so much, Bishop Matthew L. Brown, for taking this time. Thank you so much for answering with so much great information. Yes, we are definitely going to benefit from this, and we are going to act upon it. Yes. Thank you so much for joining us.

Matthew Brown (24:12.299)

Great. That's great. Thank you so much, Camille. I appreciate you so much.