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March 4, 2022

To the members of the APO Committee,

I currently serve on the Executive Committee of the NC Association of Pastoral Counselors that provides support to the state board.

A letter outlining why or how I became a Fee-based Practicing Pastoral Counselor in North Carolina would be lengthy, but suffice it to say my personal journey involved Christian Laettner's end-of-game winning half-court shot, a move from KY to NC, and a commitment to the mental health of North Carolinians who desire to take the time and expend the energy to participate in personal depth work.

Pastoral Counselors are each different, and we bring different skills and training to our clients, patients, or analysands. We are first and foremost people who function on a deeper level of understanding than the *average bear*. And we are a group of theologically trained clinical practitioners that have VERY specialized training. When I say, I could have been a surgeon, it is no exaggeration.

The process starts with a 4-year college degree. This could be in any subject, but mine was in Psychobiology (neuroscience). Next comes 3-year theological training (which usually involves a calling of sorts) as NC Pastoral Counselors must be set apart (ordained) from their particular faith communities. This part is not so much conversion (outward) oriented as it is transformational (inward) oriented. In other words, we are the least "preachy" preachers you will meet. We have been set aside to counsel, marry, and bury. But chances are you will find us in offices, on hospital staffs or in agencies reflecting how people get sick and how they get better and then aiding folks in that process. NC Fee-based Pastoral Counselors possess a deep fascination with human growth, development and transformation. Lastly comes the finishing and integrating work of psychotherapeutic training. This part is the seasoning that distinguishes Pastoral Counselors from pulpit pastors as it involves clinical training and integrative work. One cannot pass the NC state exam without the ability to articulate an overarching theory of praxis and use professional case material to support one's theory.

North Carolina is one of a handful of states to credential pastoral counselors. My supervisor, the late Dr. Bob Johnston, helped craft the laws and article supporting us. I am extremely proud to be involved in this endeavor and I enjoy working in my full-time solo practice/woman-owned business in Davidson. I see clients from Asheville to the Outer Banks. Please accept my enthusiastic support of the Fee-based Board of Practicing Pastoral Counselors.

Sincerely yours,

The Rev. Dr. Mary Perkins Kinken

NCFBPPC #0073