

History Of Apostolic Christian Counseling & Family Services

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

The first and primary mission of the church has always been to reach the lost by preaching and teaching the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. Because of the structure of our church, the elders and ministers spend a significant amount of time meeting with people for many different reasons. Often this involves converts and dealing with specific spiritual issues. At other times, however, this involves dealing with marital and family problems, adjustment issues, depression, etc. The elders of the church recognized their need for additional help in understanding and dealing with the mental health issues and relationship problems with which people were struggling. They also felt that the church had a responsibility to assist them in meeting this need.

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14

In 1988 the Elder Body asked a group of brothers to form the Mental Health Committee to look at ways the church could help address some of these needs. The committee was formed and was comprised of two elders and four lay brothers who had experience or interest in this area. This committee met for many years. Their projects included a questionnaire to find out what needs existed in the churches and what services brothers, sisters, and friends were using at that time. A directory of counselors who were being used by elders and local churches was compiled to assist people trying to find services. The committee also set up a hotline for people to call and get information, referrals, and screening for services. The resultant Mental Health Hotline was answered by registered nurses who were willing to offer assistance to those dealing with mental health issues. This hotline was discontinued in September 2006, as calls were then answered by a full-time receptionist in the ACCFS office.

In addition, the committee compiled tapes of presentations that had been made by brothers on topics that were related to mental health and relationships. These tapes are available through Apostolic Christian Publications in Eureka.

Gateway Woods Family Services

In September, 1994, Gateway Woods made a proposal to establish an Illinois Satellite in order to serve families from a base of operations in Central Illinois. The program was based on three components: home-based support services, training seminars in family principles, and biblical counseling services for troubled families including members and friends, whether affiliated with the Apostolic Christian Church or not. The Elder Body gave its approval in February, 1995, and Gateway Woods Family Services (GWFS) began operating with one counselor providing seminars and home-based mentoring services. Eventually GWFS would be expanded to three full-time counselors.

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Apostolic Christian Counseling Services

As a part of the original Mental Health Committee proposal to the Elder Body, a suggestion was made to create a counseling service. However, this part of the proposal was put on hold while other parts were being developed. In 1999 the Mental Health Committee brought the proposal back to the Elder Body and was directed to implement a counseling service. The committee appointed a task force to work out the details of the service. Several brothers gave many hours of their time to complete the plan to create a counseling service. Apostolic Christian Counseling Services (ACCS) was opened in March 2000. The program focused on counseling services for mental health issues and relationship problems, consultations with a counselor, as well as presentations and educational materials.

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works ... exhorting one another; and so much more, as ye see the day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services

The year 2006 was a year of transition, as the services previously provided through Gateway Woods Family Services and Apostolic Christian Counseling Services were combined and made available through one new entity. A new Board of Directors was appointed for the agency, named Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services (ACCFS), and began offering services in October 2006. At that time, ACCFS was located at 73 E. Queenwood Road in Morton, IL. As a result of the expansion of services, programs and staff, it was recognized that this facility was too small. Enabled by significant financial support from many brethren, ACCFS decided to build a new 5000 square foot facility at 515 E. Highland St. in Morton, IL. In October 2008, operations were moved to the new facility. ACCFS is extremely grateful to God for His providence in providing the necessary staff, facility, and support from the brotherhood for offering counseling and family services.

Recent History

From 2006 to 2017, ACCFS has grown from 3 full-time and 5 part-time staff to 10 full-time and 8 part-time staff. We have grown from 2 full-time and 2 part-time counselors to 5 full-time and 2 part-time clinical counselors. In 2014, ACCFS rented office space in Paulding, OH for a counselor, and in 2016, we added psychiatry services for central IL clients. Our number of annual session-hours has grown from approximately 850 to over 3000. During this time, the budget has also grown from \$500,000 to approximately \$1,300,000. We thank God for providing the necessary people and financial resources to be able to continue to serve those who are hurting.