



Healing Hearts • Restoring Relationships • Liberating Lives

An Authentic Caring Community is Critical.

My oldest daughter, Abi, loves The Whole Foods Market. When she travels up from Oklahoma for a stay with mom and dad – even if only for a couple of days – I know that she will be intentional about a trip to Whole Foods. No purchases will be made – it's not about the shopping. For a long time, I didn't get it. What was the draw? On one of her trips home, I asked her if I could come along. Within minutes of entering Whole Foods, I now understood. The draw for her was community. On that day I learned that one of the Whole Foods core values states "*we want our stores to become community meeting places where our customers meet their friends and make new ones.*" And it's true! Employees (my new friends) invited me into a world of beauty and bounty in healthy food pleasures. They initiated thoughtful conversations about health and wholeness. They were eager to literally walk with me to find a product that might match my needs.

Whole Foods is one of thousands of offerings for a culture that craves community. "*Whole Foods has replaced churches and cathedrals as the most important and relevant buildings in the community,*" says an anonymous blogger. There is an urgent need to distinguish the Christian community from all others.

Ten times out of ten clients don't come to meet with a counselor because they need to have a conversation about community. And yet, this need lies at the root of all human longing for connection. When I ask clients about their thoughts and feelings on belonging to a church community, they lean toward hesitation. Some are desirous and hungering for it, others overwhelmingly disappointed, skeptical and cynical. They want to know if there is room in churches for people with messy lives as though they were among the leprous and should look elsewhere. It is an opportune moment for a counselor to present community as Jesus meant for it to be.

Life is messy and unmanageable at times. The layers of hurt and pain can run deep. It's about this time that I am eager to help clients see their counseling as part of a bigger context called community – Christ community. It is here that pastors and congregations and counselors can work together – all wounded sojourners along with clients intentionally creating safe places where people can grow. It is beautiful when the counseling center can come alongside pastors and leaders. Eugene Peterson states "*The formation of community is the intricate, patient, painful work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot buy or make community; we can only offer ourselves to become community.*" (Eugene Peterson quoted from the foreword, *The Safest Place on Earth*, Larry Crabb)

Lisa Lessing, PLPC, Staff Counselor
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Meet the Counselor:

Lisa Lessing is a Provisionally Licensed Professional Counselor (PLPC) in the state of Missouri. She holds a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Counseling from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. She completed her internship at Wellspring Christian Counseling and joined the staff in 2006.

Lisa is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC.) As a pastor's wife, Lisa has a heart for men and women who serve in the ministry and their families. She works with individuals, couples, families and groups. Lisa is specifically focused on matters related to women including codependency, mid-life transitions, abuse (sexual, emotional, spiritual and/or physical), self-esteem, sexuality, and self-destructive behaviors. In addition, Lisa has written and led retreats for pastors' wives, congregational women, and seminary women. She speaks and teaches on a variety of scriptural and heart-centered themes. These themes are aimed at helping women integrate the Gospel and God's love into how they understand and explore their internal world. Before her career as a counselor, Lisa earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from St. John's College in Winfield, Kansas and taught in Lutheran and parochial schools. Lisa is married and has two daughters and a son. She attends The Lutheran Church of Webster Gardens in St. Louis. Her hobbies include roasting her own coffee beans, mountain gazing, reading and hiking.