

CARING FOR OTHERS THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

Before I begin, I would like to say that I am thankful for the privilege and opportunity to work with the Christian community as an associate counsellor at CCC. To help others during difficult times of life is truly a blessing.

As I reflect on this, I cannot help but think about how all Christians are called to the care of others. This is no easy task; and yet it is this task that gives hope to the community of saints. It is to this task of helping others, by first loving them, that all Christians are mandated (John 13:34).

In order to begin to help each other, there must be a relationship. It is very difficult to help another person without knowing that person and his or her needs. Yes, it is possible to give our offerings on Sunday and trust that others know who needs that help, but to truly help a person or family there must first be a relationship. Have you ever received help from someone that did not fit your need? It is like receiving a gift of a sweater on your birthday and it being the wrong size (and the wrong style). If the giver does not know exactly what the receiver needs, it is difficult to be effective in helping.

First and foremost this relationship starts on the foundation of Christ and knowing the other as a brother or sister in Christ; all other levels of a relationship must be built on that foundation.

For many of us this may mean stepping out of our comfort zone to engage with those we do not usually talk to in our communities and congregations.

For others it may mean that they ask the other if there is anything in their life that they need prayer for.

Prayer is a gift we can give to those in need. Again, a relationship with the person is necessary; to pray for another's specific needs means you must know what the needs are.

Possibly the largest hurdle to get over is that after the relationship has begun, the helper must listen with love and acceptance. Acceptance allows us to value the other person as different from ourselves (different from our own needs and values), created in the image of God, and thus precious and valuable.

Acceptance is a mimicking, or an outward expression, of God's acceptance toward us. God did not first accept us when we were all neat and tidy with all our problems solved; quite the opposite really. Meeting those who are suffering allows an opportunity to show God's love and acceptance toward another as God accepted us as valuable before He cleansed us through Christ.

To be sure, this acceptance is often difficult because humans do not have the perfect love and acceptance which God has.

Acceptance does not mean that the helper must condone the actions or values of the other. Accepting the other allows them a space to tell their story of joys and sorrows. This will allow the helper to understand how they got where they are at, as well as how to begin to help. Thus, caring

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You're Invited!

Annual General Membership Meeting of the Christian Counselling Centre to be held on

Saturday, December 4, 2010

In Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church - 575 Shaver Rd., Ancaster
During the meeting, CCC counsellor Kevin Hoogstad will give a short presentation on

MENTORING IN THE CHURCH

We hope you can join us



BRINGING GLORY TO
BY CARING GOD
FOR EACH OTHER

www.christiancounsellingcentre.ca



We would love to hear from you!

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for others will necessitate hearing things that the helper may not particularly like. Acceptance is being able to look beyond the problems and see their value as a child of God, created in the image of God.

In the counselling office it is important to know the client outside of the problem that has brought them in. To know just the problem is not a true representation of the person; there is so much more to the person than the problem. By listening to and accepting them, a counsellor is able to see the image of God in the other. The counsellor's role is to help the client through the difficult time and to become more of who they were created to be by God. I do not know what this image will look like, and in the words of Bonhoeffer: "I can never know beforehand how God's image should appear in others...to me the sight may seem strange, even ungodly. But God creates every man in the likeness of His Son" (1954, p. 93 add book title or remove reference as just a general quote from Bonhoeffer).

Each person has a different looking image and only a close relationship will help to bring that image out.

Chairman's Report

The Lord has made it possible for the work of CCC to continue over the summer months. As we transition to a new era at CCC, there are always questions about how things will develop. Kevin Hoogstad could take up his work at CCC at the beginning of the summer. Although the summer is a slower time, yet we could thankfully note that he has already been busy in his new role as counselor at CCC. Kevin is currently working for CCC two days a week. While his focus will be on counselling activity, he is also busy developing programs and support groups that can be offered by CCC to the reformed community that we serve.

It should be noted that the origin of CCC was to fill a need within the reformed community, yet CCC is open to also help others who may seek our services. CCC is not intended to be an outreach program, which is the responsibility of the church, but if we are able to reach out and help others, we will do so to the best of our ability.

Kevin is making contact with the ministers and councils of the churches in order to discuss with them their needs and get a sense of how he may fill some of those needs in a counselling setting. It is also a good opportunity for Kevin to build a relationship with the office bearers who may at times seek counselling help in difficult situations. Kevin is presently working from our Burlington office, while Monica DeVries is

working from the Lambeth office. We also notice that the work in the Lambeth office is picking up as Monica is doing more and more counselling. We realize that our counsellors cannot be all things to all people but we expect that as they grow they will also develop expertise in different areas. Above all it is our prayer that they may grow spiritually in their work. Counselling can be difficult and hard work that takes much wisdom and insight. It is easy to get caught up and brought down by the problems in the lives of others. Therefore we also need to keep them in our prayers, asking that the Lord may uphold them in His care and give them the insight and wisdom necessary to effectively help others.

While the work has its challenges, it can also be very rewarding and uplifting. There is great joy to see God's people meet the challenges in their lives and with the help of the Lord make progress in difficult situations. Therefore I would also like to encourage those who might consider a career in counselling to contact CCC about such a possibility. It is our vision to have a number of counselors on staff who will develop strengths in different areas. As we build a team of counsellors we will be able to better serve the needs with which we are confronted. Therefore if you are interested or would like more information, please contact us. You can contact the administrator at our

Acceptance does not mean we must consent to the other's actions and ideas. There is a place to correct the actions of another. Children must be corrected by their parents in order to become more fruitful in their lives. A friend needs to hear if he or she is doing something inappropriate. Both of these examples involve close relationships. It is very difficult to tell someone you do not know well how they should live their life. In community these relationships are paramount. Henri Nouwen wrote that humans need open, authentic relationships because "very few people know that they are loved without any conditions or limits" (add title 1989, p. 38). This is an opportunity for us to show that unconditional love to other members of the body of Christ.

Christians are counter-cultural in this respect. Western culture prides itself on the needs of the individual as being most important. The church is a body, a living community that has a need for each member. 1 Cor. 12 teaches that each member is important: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it." This is counter-cultural. This is difficult. Again, it assumes a relationship. If one part of the body is unattached, it will

not have the joys and sorrows that the rest of the body experiences. Each member of the body brings something to the community. If that member is not attached, the body will miss it.

The joy of this aspect of relationships and community comes when the one that began as a helper now becomes the one who is in need. When both helpers and receivers are able to change roles, the ability to grow as community is immense.

Therefore, each of us are called to care for others. To care for others means a relationship must exist. In this relationship there needs to be acceptance of the individual as a child of God. In this relationship the helper can come to understand how to help the other (whether to just listen, or go for a walk, or make a meal, or something else) because the person in need will be able to convey their life in an open and honest way. To help each other grow is a privilege and an honour. In this we may be able to spur one another on.

CCC phone number (1-866-833-2741) and she can arrange for someone to contact you.

In my last report, I reported that we were planning to move our Burlington office to another location in the same building. Unfortunately that plan could not be executed. We are thankful for the generous offer we received to sublet from one of the tenants in the building, but we did not receive cooperation from the building ownership group when it came time to renovate the space. The result is that we have renewed the lease on the present office for 2 years. This will give us both the opportunity to see how our needs will develop as well as time to look for other alternate locations. If anyone has any leads on suitable facilities, we would certainly like to hear from you. We would also like to thank those who have generously responded to our appeal for donations to renovate the space we had hoped to use. We are grateful for the financial support that we receive from our supporting community.

In December we will have the annual membership meeting. This meeting is usually held in conjunction with a seminar. This year Kevin will give us a presentation on the concept of mentoring. This will give you the opportunity to get to meet and interact with him. We hope to see many of you at this meeting.

Rev. Matthew VanLuik, Chair



BRINGING GLORY TO GOD
BY CARING FOR EACH OTHER

From a Previous Counsellee

As a male survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I grew up confused and angry. If not for the counselling I received at CCC, I'm not sure where I'd be today. I cannot exaggerate when I think and speak about the depths my counsellor and I explored concerning my maladjustment to the world of adult living.



Through prayer and thoughtful meditation, my counsellor walked with me and helped me prioritize my reality to accommodate functional living. I was lost. Many times I was in crisis. But I always had the ear (and phone number) of my counsellor at CCC.

"The truth in love" was a major thing I learned from him. Honesty with self. Honesty with God. Honesty with others. My counsellor was a holistic counsellor, who saw all of life under the umbrella of the grace of God. And he was real. Always there to catch my wayward thinking, he would try to bring me back to today and to the knowledge that God's mercy is new every morning.

We were talking about heavy stuff: sex and drug addiction, shame and guilt, and dark depressions that would envelope me for weeks and months on end. And never once did I feel like he was judging me. Had I ever felt that he was judging me, I don't believe any constructive work could have been done. I had nasty things to say and he had nasty things to listen to.

Over the years I have taken many lessons from our talks and have applied them to new life situations. The Christian Counselling Centre has been a major part of my recovery from childhood trauma. I thank the Lord that there is an organization like this.