

MENTORING

When two people are in a relationship, both cannot help but be impacted by their time together. At Christian Counselling Centre, this dynamic is called coming alongside. These relationships are intentional for growth and change in an individual's life. It is through these relationships that meaningful change can occur. Terms that are used in other settings include coaching, discipling, teaching, tutoring, being the body of Christ, encouraging, and mentoring. Each word infers one or more relationships in which one person helps another toward change and growth. Although the Bible does not use the word 'mentoring' specifically, the idea is there. The term mentoring refers to the relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The concept is easy at first glance, but it can be more difficult and have more nuances when implementing.

Relationships of this nature have long been a part of church life. In the past mentoring was often done by religious leaders in the community – the clergy, priests, pastors – with the mentoring done in a more formal setting. Mentoring does still exist today in our churches, however, it has become more informal within congregations. The informal mentoring already occurs when a younger congregant asks an older about an issue in life, or when one congregant asks a peer about an area in their personal life. Granted, we do have more formal relationships –

elder or pastoral visits, but these are not often frequent enough to know the everyday events of a person's life. It is in the everyday where mentoring is most effective. One author describes it as seeing God at work in the mundane things of life (driving, eating, doing dishes), not just in the grandiose events (births, weddings, deaths).

Mentoring is best used, in a church setting, when one individual wants to grow in their spiritual journey. This is when formal mentoring can be most effective. This relationship is one in which both people must remain humble before God, and they both must expect to be impacted by this relationship. C.S. Lewis writes of his experience with mentoring: "Think of me as a fellow patient, in the same hospital, who, having been admitted a little earlier could give some advice." The key is that there are always others ahead and others behind in this metaphorical hospital. At some point a person will become more experienced and better equipped to help others, just as he or she was helped earlier. Another important point is that a patient is never alone in this hospital. Sometimes they may not have the courage to ask for help, or they may feel alone in their journey. This is when the more experienced patient may need to offer help without being asked. However, in some cases the patient does have enough courage to ask for assistance. In either case, one cannot be fooled into thinking they are alone in their journey.

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The board and staff of Christian Counselling Center wish to express their condolences to the VanOorspronk family on the recent passing of Mr. Johannes (John) VanOorspronk. Mr. VanOorspronk was the Christian Counselling Centre's first counsellor and many clients benefited from his compassion and counselling skills. We pray that the family may be comforted with the same hope of the gospel with which he encouraged so many in his counselling.

Thank You

The following businesses have donated either time, services or money to the CCC. We thank them (as well as our anonymous donors) all for their generosity!

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Also included in this list are those businesses who sponsored the CCC/CCEF conference on Depression, advertised in this newsletter. We are grateful for your generosity.



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A point worth mentioning is that when change is desired in our lives, the fastest way to learn new skills is to see them modeled by an expert. Think of any child watching their parent intently to see how they use something new. They wait until the parent is done and then ask "can I have a turn?" So it is with mentoring. The fastest method for change is for the person being led to be taught and shown a new way of living, so that they can begin to make changes in their journey with the help of the mentor.

Before I continue, some clarification of what mentoring is not might be helpful. Mentoring is not about problem solving. Although this is an aspect of mentoring at times, this is not its main purpose. It is also not instant. Most literature supports that life-altering relationships need to be a minimum of a year before any significant change begins. Today's generation lives in a microwave world – if it takes longer than 60 seconds than individuals get bored, or believe that the end result will not be worth the wait. No relationship is instant, no change is instant, and no growth is instant. Mentoring is not advice giving – some people may want to become mentors thinking that they can tell people what to do because their life is better than others, or maybe even they want to create a carbon copy of themselves in someone else. Giving advice without understanding the situation of the other person will lead to frustration for both parties. An analogy of a flashlight and a dark path is helpful. If one is walking down a dark path with another, it is not beneficial to shine the light in the person's face. This is confrontational, and will not help either person further in their journey. It is much more helpful to shine that light on the path or where you want to go. So it is with mentoring – to give advice, or tell the 'truth' to the one being mentored will likely only blind them. Coming alongside and illuminating the path will allow both persons in the mentoring relationship to journey forward, together.

Since pastoral and elder care already exists in the church, some might ask whether mentoring is necessary. In response, let me note first of all, mentoring does not replace pastoral care. Rather, mentoring adds to and supplements pastoral care. Elders and pastors simply do not have the time to meet with a congregant once or twice a week in addition to their other duties. Furthermore, our current communities are not set up for daily interaction with elders or pastors. In the past, small communities were the norm, and these relationships were more natural due the size and structure of communities. Now people live much greater distances apart, and the natural interaction is less frequent. It can even feel strange if, while at the supermarket, we see several people from our church community. Seeing others in our church community in their day to day life does not occur, and this can lead to the trap of individualistic living, observed currently in North American society.



training conference on
depression
with ED WELCH 


WHEN:
Friday, November 18 and
Saturday, November 19, 2011

LOCATION:
Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church

COST:
\$25 per person
if registered by Sept. 15, 2011.

\$30 per person
after Sept. 15, 2011

Registration: By email to:
ccclambeth@bellnet.ca
or call 1-866-833-2741



Mentoring can also complement counselling. I know that when a client has one or more people in his or her life to talk to outside of the counselling office, the success rate for counselling increases dramatically. Mentoring can also be helpful for ongoing, continuous spiritual growth. Most have felt a plateau in their faith life at one point or another and mentoring is a medium in which the plateaus can be minimized, or hopefully altogether avoided. Indeed, the church can survive without mentoring, but the church can become a better Christian communion with mentoring.

Who could be considered as a mentor? First and foremost, someone who is grounded in Scripture and has a deep knowledge and understanding of the Gospel. A person who can point out God's promises, and show how Christ by His Spirit is already at work in the everyday life of the mentored individual. The mentor must also be modeling God's promises and our obedience and love to Him. Again, the fastest way to learn a new set of skills is to see them being practiced. The

mentor must always point the relationship towards Jesus Christ – the relationship does not exist to fulfill the personal needs of the mentor. The mentor must also be a person with good relational abilities – being accepting, loving, and valuing the other individual as an individual created in the image of God. To find mentors within the church context, the search should begin with church leaders who can point to others in the congregation whom they think have mentoring abilities. Also, mentoring must always be done with the same gender - men with men and women with women.

Mentoring already exists in most of our churches, though we often don't think of it in that way. Mentoring is another way to come alongside individuals within the church to aide them when the issues of life need more relationships to confront.

Kevin Hoogstad, CCC Counsellor

Chairman's Report

The past year has been a year of transition with the retirement of our executive director. It has meant that many of the decisions that in the past were made by the executive director now needed to be made by the board. We are thankful that Aileen Pennings, as our administrator, has taken on many of those responsibilities. She has very capably organized the office and helps coordinate the work of the counsellors.

Kevin Hoogstad has quickly settled into his role as counsellor at CCC. We are thankful that he has been well received by the community. This is witnessed by the fact that he is being kept busy and at times is overwhelmed by the need. Monica Devries continues to work out of the Lambeth office and has begun to do some work in the Burlington office as well. It is our hope that, in the near future, CCC will be able to hire an additional counsellor.

In addition to our in-office counselling services, CCC is also giving support to students at Guido de Bres High School in Hamilton as well as Streetlight Ministries in downtown Hamilton. Most weeks, the students at Guido are able to consult with Kevin on issues in their lives. Stephen Fillmore is working closely with the folks at Streetlight to give support to many in that community who struggle with the issues of life.

In November, Kevin Hoogstad spoke to our supporting community about mentoring. He will share some of his ideas with you in this newsletter. After his presentation, the Annual General Membership meeting was held. We can note with much thankfulness that the Lord has provided not only counsellors but also the financial means to continue this work. The membership also approved the appointment of Arlene Bouwmeester to the board of CCC. We welcome Arlene to the board. While we may welcome one new board member, two other members of the board came to the end of their term. We would like to thank Bill Laman and Arlene Veenstra for the years of dedication they have given to the work of CCC. Bill's input from a business and financial perspective has been helpful and Arlene's contribution, especially from a counselling perspective, has been much appreciated. Their work has been of great benefit to this organization. At its last meeting, the board discussed the need to add new board members at our next AGM meeting in the fall. If you know of anyone who may have a heart for the work of CCC and could make a valuable contribution to its work, we would encourage you to pass on any suggestions to one of the board members. I may also add that there is a wonderful working relationship among the members of the board as everyone is committed to the development of CCC.

CCC will be organizing a major conference November 18-19, 2011. Ed Welch of CCEF will be presenting a seminar on depression. While depression often carries with it a negative stigma, so that people are often ashamed to discuss it, yet it is a common struggle for many of God's people. Those who struggle with it do not really understand it, and those who would like to give support struggle how best to do that. We hope that this seminar will be a blessing for both those who struggle with depression and be an encouragement for office bearers and others who seek to give support. I would like to thank those members in our community who have agreed to sponsor the conference with their financial support. Without your help we could not make this conference a reality.

Rev. Matthew VanLuik, Chairman

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