

SPRING 2015



cascade
Christian Counselling Association

Working as a Contract Counsellor

By Mike Ayers

My name is Mike Ayers. I have been a contract counsellor in Abbotsford at Cascade Christian Counselling since April, 2013. I consider it a privilege to come beside people, hear their story, and help guide them out of their problem saturated stories to one of hope and new opportunities. Previous to becoming a counsellor, I served as a pastor for 10 years. I have been surprised to find that I am able to do as much ministry as a counsellor, as I did as a pastor. Meaning that as a counsellor, I am delighted to be able to have an impact on people's lives and participate in God's advancing kingdom. I believe that as a counsellor my two greatest spiritual gifts of shepherding and teaching are maximized. **I also believe that as a counsellor I am able, at times, to show people a glimpse of the love, acceptance, and unconditional positive regard that God has for each one of us.**

I remember seeing the ad for the part-time position in Abbotsford. The ad said that Cascade was looking for a counsellor who used empirically validated counselling methods and had a Christian worldview. I thought, "This fits me to a tee!" When I did my training at ACTS/TWU in Langley for a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy, I was so excited to see just how much of empirically validated (which means it has been proven) research aligns with principles already contained in scripture. This excitement comes from seeing how God's truth can be illuminated, not only within scripture, but also outside of scripture. This enables me to help couples, families, and

individuals with more than just my opinions or my interpretation of scripture, instead it gives me tools I can use with my clients and practical tools and tips that I can share with them as well.

My training has also allowed me to more fully integrate my faith into everyday life. Thus underpinning my orientation to counselling is my Christian perspective and worldview. **I am thankful that Cascade has given me, and the clients I work with, the opportunity and platform to explore the complexity and difficulty of life's issues in an environment that supports a Christian worldview, and at the same time uses empirically validated methods as a way to promote healing and growth as persons.**

In my time at Cascade I have seen many couples, families, and individuals for a host of relational and interpersonal issues. I have also met with a church board of elders to talk about how various counselling issues intersect with the church. This was a fascinating conversation where we looked at problems that elders face in church and how to approach these problems in ways that are consistent with scripture and with counselling principles. Currently, I am talking with another church about putting on a marriage conference for their congregation and the surrounding community. I would be happy to work with other churches that support Cascade to find ways to promote healthy people and relationships.

Changes within CCCA

The beginning of this year has marked some dramatic changes at Cascade. Towards the end of 2014, our executive director, Penny Armstrong submitted her resignation to the board due to health reasons. This occurred after Penny was with us for only one year. We are sorry to see Penny leave us and we wish her the best in her future endeavours. We also pray that Penny may recover well enough to continue her passion of working with people.

The board met and discussed several options as to how to proceed for the well being of the organization. The board came to the decision that we would try a new model compared to the one we had been working with for the past many years. Rather than hire another executive director/therapist we would try to move forward without hiring one person as our main counsellor, but rather go the route of working with contract counsellors.

Already working for Cascade as contract counsellors are Jan Bryant, who is the school counsellor for Vancouver Christian School and counsellor at Bulkley Valley Christian School and counsels clients in Smithers one day per month. In addition we have on staff, Mike Ayers who counsels one day a week in our Abbotsford office and Brent Unrau who counsels one day a week in our Surrey office. Recognizing the need to hire another contract counsellor to meet the needs of clients we hired Hollie Tomkinson as a contract counsellor to work one day a week in our Surrey office and one day a week in our Abbotsford office.

With this new model in place and with the above mentioned staff utilizing both offices, we are able to offer our services uninterrupted to those clients who come to Cascade for help and assistance. We also have our office administrator, Marion Ottevangers, working in our Surrey office who does all the scheduling and ensures the organization keeps running smoothly.

But, all this would not be possible without the continuing prayerful and financial support of so many brothers and sisters within the Lower Mainland, as well as the Smithers area. As board, we pray that our Heavenly Father may continue to bless the work our counsellors and staff are doing in helping those in need and that the needed support may not diminish so that Cascade may continue to move forward with this new model.

Casey Dehaas – Board chairman

Introducing Hollie Tomkinson



Hollie started with Cascade in early January. She received her Master's degree in Counselling Psychology from Trinity Western University. She is also a Registered Clinical Counsellor (RCC) with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (BCACC).

For over a decade, Hollie has worked with children and families in a public mental health setting as well as individuals and couples in private practice. Hollie has received training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Solution Focused Therapy and Gottman Method Couples Therapy.

It is her belief that counselling should be a collaborative experience where the client feels heard and understood, as the client is the expert on his/her own life. It is Hollie's hope that with the counselling process, clients will be able to implement new skills that are applicable to their current life situations. These skills and new perspectives will also facilitate the change necessary for growth in many different areas.

Besides her work, Hollie enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, home design, and being outside as much as possible with her kids.

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