

REGRETS AND RISKS -

if only ...

Several years ago I heard a sermon in which the preacher referred to the two saddest words in the English language. I cannot remember anything about the sermon now except those two words. What were they? Very simply they were, 'If only...'. I suppose they could begin many sentences, such as: 'If only I hadn't ...'; 'If only I'd thought ...'; 'If only he/she didn't ...'. The implication following on from such 'if only's' is that life would have been, or would be, so much better, free of feelings such as regret, guilt and disappointment. And yet, living a full life has to include the possibility of making mistakes and taking risks.

Here is a short poem I recently came across:

*'There was a very cautious man
Who never laughed or played;
He never risked, he never tried,
He never sang or prayed.
And when, one day he passed away,
His insurance was denied;
For since he never really lived,
They claimed he'd never died!'*

Not all clients present with 'if only' regrets but we are pleased to be a resource for those wrestling with these and any other issues. We are privileged to be able to help those who come to us to deal with the past and to look to the future. Perhaps some may be able to stop focusing on their 'if only's' and substitute the more positive and open-ended 'what if's' or 'how about's' in their thinking; and even some reading this newsletter might want to take this thought into their own lives.

Thank you as always for your on-going interest and support for the SCCS as we seek to be a useful and reliable service.

Stephen Scott, SCCS Chairman

Introducing SCCS to clergy

Most of the everyday work of the counselling service is done in private and because of the confidential nature of what we do, we avoid activity that might unnecessarily draw attention from outside. With only occasional newsletters and the Open Public Meeting providing regular opportunities to engage with our supporters, we can suffer the disadvantage of new people to the area not realizing that we exist!



This includes clergy, new to our district whom we want to tell about SCCS. As Director of Counselling, one of my responsibilities is to keep up to date with changes in church leadership, and whenever someone new arrives, I try to make contact within the first year of their arrival, to invite them to visit SCCS and meet with me so that I can tell them about our work.

This invitation is usually warmly welcomed and during the time we spend together I show them our premises, tell them the history of the service, and describe the nature of our work – which of course has developed since its inception in the early 1980s.

I tell my visitors that in addition to counselling, family therapy and clinical psychology, there are training opportunities and the provision of clinical and pastoral supervision.

Sometimes as a result of the visit I am asked to send a representative to the church to speak about SCCS. Clergy come from different Christian denominations and theological backgrounds so we usually spend some time discussing our philosophy and ethos as a service.

There is also time to answer other questions as well as hear a little about their needs and how SCCS might be of support to them and their congregations. I always ask our visitors to remember us in their prayers – giving them one of our SCCS prayer cards, and conveying how much SCCS relies on their prayer and financial support in order for us to be able to continue to exist.

Maureen King

Kathy Reed



It is with sadness that I write of the recent death of one of our counsellors Kathy Reed. Kathy worked with the Team at SCCS for several years until she retired on health grounds just over two years ago.

Trained initially in pastoral counselling, Kathy went on to become a qualified Creative Arts Therapist and a Spiritual Director. Before joining us she worked for a time with Emmaus Counselling Service in Tunbridge Wells, and then in private practice in Bromley.

She enjoyed tutoring on our *Counselling Skills for Pastoral Care* course where she was able to bring her particular interest in the interface between theology and counselling to the fore. Kathy was highly respected by her colleagues, students and clients.

The first picture that springs to mind when I ask my colleagues for their memories of Kathy is her wonderful creativity. She worked in rooms containing a fascinating array of toys and play materials, but you would be mistaken if you assumed these were for children coming for counselling. These resources were used by Kathy to offer adult clients opportunities to explore their inner world in ways that did not rely on words. This meant that she often worked with people on a very deep level.

The marginalized in society were treasured by Kathy and she would often go the extra mile in her work. Her Christian faith was lived out in the way she related to those around her – she felt it to be her calling to work in a way that enabled people to move a little closer to a place of healing and wholeness. She will be sadly missed by us all.

Maureen King

‘ENCOUNTERING DEPRESSION’

A new book by Andrew and Elizabeth Procter

My wife Elizabeth and I have a new book out this month called *Encountering Depression*. Elizabeth is a consultant psychiatrist and I am an Anglican priest as well as working part-time as a counsellor at SCCS.



Depression is sadly becoming ever more prevalent. Recent NHS figures show a 28% increase in the prescription of anti-depressants since 2008, some 43 million prescriptions in the last year.

A major survey done in 2011 by the University of Bremen for the whole of Western Europe showed that 14%, or 1 in 7, of young people aged 11–18 will now have a clinical anxiety disorder whereas it was virtually unknown in this age group in the previous such survey undertaken ten years earlier. It showed other increases too, notably amongst women. At SCCS we get large numbers of our clients who are clinically depressed.

When depression affects Christians as it often does, the impact can be harder for them. Professor Brian Thorne, Emeritus Professor at the University of East Anglia, in his endorsement of our book, says, ‘Many therapists, including myself, have often found their depressed Christian clients the most difficult to help. For such clients it has often seemed that their belief system and the practice of their faith have proved impediments rather than aids....’

Depressed Christians often feel they have let God down. Or that God has let them down. They feel Christians shouldn’t get depressed. They are shaken that most of what they have loved and valued about being a Christian – prayer, worship, church fellowship, Christian service and ministry – suddenly seem pointless. They sometimes wonder if they must have committed some sin to be like this. Or that they have been attacked by the devil. Others around them in church don’t always cope well, and can say things which are inappropriate and hurtful. These are just some of the particular problems depressed Christians can have in addition to all the ordinary pressures of depression which are bad enough in themselves.

Our book tries to help depressed Christians. It is in a simple Question and Answer format. Each chapter stands on its own, so it can be read in any order. Each chapter is divided into short readable sections which offer helpful information, encouragement, a light Biblical meditation and a simple exercise for the reader to try out. We are pleased that it has received endorsements from some eminent counsellors like Professor Thorne.

Its full title is: *Encountering Depression: Frequently Asked Questions Answered for Christians.*

It is published by SPCK, ISBN no 978-0-281-06472-4,
eBook 978-0-281-06739-8
and costs £8.99.

Elizabeth and I will be speaking on this subject at the SCCS Annual Open Meeting in May – details below.

Andrew Procter

Sevenoaks Christian Counselling Service
Annual Open Meeting

“Encountering Depression”

Speakers: Dr Elizabeth Procter and Rev Andrew Procter

**Monday 14 May 2012
7.30pm refreshments; 8.00pm start**

**Vine Evangelical Church
Hitchen Hatch Lane
Sevenoaks TN13 3AT**

Copies of ‘Encountering Depression’ will be available to buy.

Two recent admin volunteers



I have lived in Sevenoaks for twenty- five years. I am married and have two grown-up sons; also two elderly parents whom I visit often. I have worked as an administrator/receptionist at a local doctor's surgery for seven years. I still some-times do the odd locuming for them.

After two interviews with two Directors from SCCS and receiving my CRB clearance, I started work at The Bridge in August 2011. I help out with administrative duties on a Friday morning.

My duties include dealing with messages, answering the phone, booking appointments and putting them in the diary, liaising with counsellors and clients as necessary, photocopying, checking counselling rooms and kitchen and noting any supplies needed, making tea and coffee and washing up, sorting the post.... I also welcome clients on arrival with a warm smile and try to make them feel comfortable when entering the premises.

I'd like to add that all the staff at SCCS have been very helpful to me and made me feel extremely welcome. Thank you so much.

Anita Kirkpatrick

After retiring from a career as a chartered engineer I wanted to use my time as best I could and decided to train as an advisor with the Citizens Advice Bureau. Apart from work within the church, this was my main occupation for the next ten years. Not only was it very fulfilling to be able to help people in need but I also learned to have greater empathy for those among whom I lived and worked. After that time my wife's health started to deteriorate and increasingly my life became devoted to her care, until she died in October 2010.

I praised God for still being physically and mentally fit, so was able to resume various church activities, although still with time to spare. When I was approached to consider filling one of the admin assistant vacancies, I saw this as a clear call from God; reinforced by the fact that the need was for Thursdays, which were free from any other commitments. It is a real privilege to work in such a good cause among a dedicated group of people and I pray that I shall be able to carry on into the future.

Frank Amott

You are invited to a film evening to raise money
for SCCS



“CAPTAIN CORELLI’S MANDOLIN”

from the book by Louis de Bernières

**THE STAG CINEMA
Sevenoaks**

**on Monday 19th March
7.30 for 8.00pm start**

Soft drinks and nibbles will be served at the beginning

**Tickets £10.00 (seats unreserved) can be obtained
by phoning the SCCS office on 01732 450118**

From our Webmaster Frank Mancktelow

As many readers will know, the SCCS website has been updated from its original rather functional design and many have said they find it more user-friendly.

The very attractive, clever and meaningful SCCS logo has been retained as a ‘watermark’ on the index page. This logo must be one of the best seen anywhere as its meaning is so obvious, unlike many that are a mystery except possibly to the designer.

The Newsletter is now presented as what is known as a ‘pdf’ document. This not only allows it to be seen in its original format and colour but also printed off as hard copy. The site continues to be accessed at a very steady rate and over the last six months has received an average of 2,500 hits per month.

Most of these come via a Google search but it’s interesting to see that a number have come via the Sevenoaks District Council website. Apart from the index page, the *Councillors/Patrons/Directors* page receives the most hits probably confirming that this is an important way of making an initial contact with a client.