

40 Years of Conversations

by Susan Schwartzentruber

Looking back:

In September 1983 Shalom Counselling Services Waterloo Region opened its doors with three counsellors. The idea of a Christian based counselling agency was a dream of founder Ralph Lebold that germinated in 1980. Within the first year approximately 87 clients received service and counsellors provided 666 sessions to these clients in Waterloo.

Shalom has been led by strong advocates paired with clinical expertise. This leadership began with Delphine Martin (1983-1989) to Reverend Glenn Brubacher (1989-1997) and Wanda Wagler Martin (1997-2021). A continuous value thread that has been upheld by each leader is the commitment to providing counselling that is “accessible and affordable to all.”

Looking ahead:

We have a vibrant group of nine clinicians with experience ranging from 1 to 34 years. This rich depth of clinical knowledge creates a supportive environment and gives clients the ability to be well matched to their needs. Our administrative team also keep us functioning, organized and financially stable. Last year approximately 915 clients received service and counsellors provided 5,700 sessions to these clients.

Over this year we will be turning our attention to acknowledge the history of Shalom and look forward to dream about what may be next for Shalom. We are entering a time of strategic planning facilitated by Credence and Co. We will share with you what new strategic priorities emerge as we look at who we are, where we need to improve and how we can best serve the mental health needs of our diverse community.

We are thankful to have a strong Board of Directors and a faithful donor community. We are excited about opportunities to deepen and expand our mission to help people grow toward peace and wholeness. Keep your eye open for various 40th anniversary events throughout this upcoming year.



Spirituality and Coming Out

by Peter Boullata

I began my time at Shalom Counselling as an intern in fulfillment of the program requirements for my doctoral studies in psychotherapy and spiritual care. I have subsequently joined the staff as a part time counsellor as I complete my PhD. My academic pursuits are giving me an opportunity to explore longstanding interests in spiritual formation and social justice. How do spirituality and mental health care intersect with the concerns of oppressed people?

I am concentrating on the experience of sexual and gender minorities, with a focus on gay men and the coming out process. My hypothesis is that coming out as gay is itself a journey of spiritual formation, an engagement with powers of being and becoming with distinctive spiritual, moral, and existential characteristics.

Even among gay men with no religious affiliation, the essential questions posed in coming out (“Who am I? Who am I becoming?”) elicit answers with recognizable spiritual features. There is talk of integrity and honesty, of being true to oneself, of not wanting to lie, of coming against powerful forces of homophobia and heterosexism, including those inward ones experienced as self-loathing and shame. Developmental stages of coming out parallel those of faith formation, each process informing the other.

An appreciation of these processes in sexual minorities, and an openness to their spiritual nature, is called for in work with gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and questioning clients. Counselling that understands a client’s social location is a more robust engagement with that person’s whole life experience. Accompanying clients this way is helpful in breaching the divides between religion and sexual orientation, between spirit and sexuality as a person journeys toward wholeness.

Record Breaking 10,000 Steps



On September 17, 2022, around 50 runners, walkers, and rollers came out to support Shalom Counselling Services at our annual 10,000 Steps for Mental Health event. Waterloo Mayor Dave Jaworsky, MPP Catherine Fife, and Executive Director Susan Schwartzentruber spoke at the sendoff. The trail took participants from Shalom through the close by residential area, then connecting to the Iron Horse Trail, making a 4km trail and 8km return. It is often thought that 8km has roughly 10,000 steps.



The idea of the event comes from medical studies showing that walking 10,000 steps in a day can have significant impact on various parts of our health. Although the event may benefit all its participants on the day of, the real impact is the funds raised to support the subsidized counselling Shalom Counselling Services provides.

Shalom set an ambitious goal to raise \$30,000 and thanks to your support raised **\$37,800!** This is the most this event has ever raised! These funds could fully subsidize 290 hours of counselling, but paired with other generous grants, programs and donors will go much further.

Thank you again to our over 130 generous donors and our sponsors: Kindred Credit Union, Leis Pet Distributing Inc., Menno S. Martin Contractor Limited, Eby Financial, and RBJ Schlegel.



Get to Know Shalom: Staff and Board

Greg Chandler Burns Business & Operations Director

Greg began at Shalom in September 2022. Greg previously worked with Mennonite World Conference and Mennonite Central Committee in various operations roles. Greg lives with his partner Steph in midtown Kitchener.



Katie Steckly - Board Member

Katie joined the Shalom Board in October 2022. Katie is the founder of a small social media marketing agency called Creatorly Media, which she started after graduating from the University of Waterloo in 2018. Katie lives with her husband Dan in downtown Kitchener.

Upcoming Events

Shalom Spring Brunch

Saturday,
May 6, 2023

10,000 Steps for Mental Health

Saturday,
September 16, 2023

Support the journey of hope and healing

Cheque

Cheques can be made
payable to:

*Shalom Counselling
Services Inc.*

Credit Card

Credit card donations can be
made online or by phone:
shalomcounselling.org/donate
(519) 886-9690

Monthly Gifts

Consider a regular
gift to Shalom either
by Credit Card or
Bank Transfer. Call
us to find out more.

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