



"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims
beneath the wheels of injustice,
we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison (1943-1945)

To clarify the professional issues around Dr Mike Davidson raised in the SBS Dateline programme "Yes or No?":

"Your interim suspension has been progressed into full removal from the Register" concluded the 2013 letter from the UK Council for Psychotherapy, a professional body I was affiliated to. I appealed. My arguments were ignored – never engaged with. The outcome was the same: "you may re-apply to continue training should you consistently cease to promulgate your *current opinions* (sic) and be clearly able to demonstrate that you would only undertake and advocate work that falls within and complies with the UKCP/BPA Codes of Ethics for Practice and all associated Guidelines". To me this had a creepily Orwellian feel – I had been found guilty of thought crime.

So ended my three years of formal training in psychotherapy, paid for out of my own savings. I'd worked for 25 years in the higher education sector. My early theological training, pastoral experience and then PhD in education (and an interest in indoctrination!) had prepared me to some extent for a career as a psychotherapist. I'd hoped to complete my professional training, but it wasn't to be.

My new status, outside the professional bodies, meant that access to supervision, professional indemnity insurance and professional collegiality came to an end. The important thing is that there had never been a complaint from any client. It was just that the powers that be didn't like my opinions and objected to my non-compliance with practice guidelines which stated that to attempt to reduce a client's *unwanted* homosexual feelings is an ethical offence.

Still I'd come a long way since my family and I emigrated from ... to the UK in 1999. We'd survived my own confusion with unwanted same-sex feelings. I'd been through therapy myself, rejected advice about leaving my wife to be true to my real self, and covenanted with my God that I'd live according to the values that were important to me. Best of all, my family still wanted me.

I never did buy the idea of "orientation". I'd struggled with habits that made me think my sexual feelings were inborn and unchangeable. but as I worked on behaviours and emotional issues, the feelings began to change. I'm not perfect, but I don't struggle with the same things today.

We started Core Issues Trust in 2007. A decade later, we are still a registered charity operating across the UK, wherever we are needed. I've just ended a counselling session with my 14th client this week.

We campaigned strongly against the UK's equal marriage act, and the Irish referendum. To me there's a commonality between the un-registered counselling work I do and the re-definition of marriage. The common denominator is fatherlessness. That's not

necessarily to invoke the stereotype about “absent father, domineering mother” as the root of homosexual identity. It does recognize the fruit of radical feminism and the demasculinization of society – leaving men unable to fulfil their role as fathers. Far more than being about procreation, true marriage confers fatherhood on men, who otherwise are sperm donors. True marriage blends and shapes men, and liberates women.

Men with unwanted same-sex attractions long for meaningful connection with other men. Their longing has become sexualized. Counselling work re-launches them to build healthy same-sex relationships. As these are developed, the mystique experienced with the same sex is replaced by the ability to connect in healthy, non-sexual ways.

Most of my clients are long-term. We seek to understand family issues, how they have interacted with or withdrawn from peers. We often untangle emotional dependencies that develop as they learn to connect meaningfully. We build self-esteem, check body image issues, understand the role of big “T” and small “t” trauma. And thankfully, it appears that, at the very least the client’s well-being is enhanced. This is not because of a particular technique, (we use standard ‘talking therapy’ approaches) but because the work facilitates connection and affirms the masculine identity, in multiple ways, that didn’t quite resolve itself in early adolescence. We see homosexuality as a developmental issue, and for that reason something that can be addressed.

In July 2017, when the Church of England was debating whether to support a ban on what they call “conversion” therapy, we asked some of our current clients about their experience of Core Issues Trust Counselling. We shared their stories [insert link?] with the church – though to no avail.

I’m excited because in November, after two years filming in 8 countries and interacting with some 38 participants, we will release “Voices of the Silenced: Experts, Evidences and Ideologies” a feature documentary looking at the role of sexual ideology and sexual politics in some parts of our modern world. The film evidences the growing network of groups and individuals in various countries who no longer look to the established mental health bodies to set the ethical and practice guidelines that underpin our work. I have no doubt that in time, these efforts will produce an international self-regulating body that leads practitioners and protects recipients of initiatives such as ours.

As I reflect, I’m grateful that I had the opportunity to speak to therapists and counsellors who respected my desire to stay in my marriage and father my children in the way that was meaningful to me. Why are men who have struggled as I have, being refused help to reduce these feelings?

Directors:

Dr Michael Davidson, CEO (NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre);
Mr Dermot O’Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI)

Council of Reference:

Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI)

Registered Office: 102 Kinedale Park Ballynahinch BT248YS | Charity Commission, number 105095| M: 07833098998 | L: 02897563008 | W: www.core-issues.org