



2008



FOCUS on Consistent Ethic

Consistent Ethic ~ Steve Thiessen, CEO

In this edition of FOCUS, we are looking at our Guiding Principle, *Consistent Ethic*. A related phrase, Consistent Life Ethic is founded in ethical, religious and political ideology based on the premise that all human life is sacred. Although we have applied it to relate more to a consistency in our relationships with all people, regardless of their level of intelligence, ability or social status, the original concept was intended to link the issues of abortion, capital punishment, assisted suicide, economic injustice and euthanasia. Those who subscribe to this ethic are usually pacifist and oppose war. While Cardinal Joseph Bernardin is credited with much of the thinking related to the principle of a consistent life ethic, the ultimate source is the Bible, especially the life and teaching of Jesus.

Its advocates typically find themselves at odds with conventional political ideologies. They differ with the right wing emphasis and interpretations on capital punishment, war and economic issues. With the left wing positions they

differ on issues such as abortion, stem cell research and euthanasia.

We are reminded that, as Christians, our calling is something that transcends



consistent focus on the value of life. It challenges us to reflect on the basic values and convictions that give direction to our life. It motivates us to become engaged in the creation of policies that guide our democratic society.

However, no matter how lofty a principle or concept is, its value is not merely in its words but in its actions.

the typical political categorizations, labels and structures that are so much a part of our world. Through Jesus' life and example we learn that we belong to another world, to an "upside-down" kingdom, where those who are weak and powerless have significance, honour and respect. This is the Jesus who says, "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 RSV). A consistent ethic challenges us every day. It encourages us to become aware of many issues with a

It is only in its incarnation, the "word becoming flesh" that real meaning takes place. It is when we befriend those who are otherwise marginalized or devalued, that we move beyond noble ideas and philosophies. It is when we live out a reality that all life is sacred that we, by the actions of our life, announce the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Problem Child... ~ Eugene P. Klassen, Chief Financial Officer

If you tell me that I am stupid, I will become that for you. If you tell me that I am beautiful, I will live up to your expectations. If you label me as a problem child, I will be that for you.

Many of us have heard of stories and studies about children living to the potential of what their teacher expects. (The story goes that as a child moves from one grade to another, the file that goes with the child gets mixed up. As a result, instead of the new teacher hearing that the child is a problem, they hear that the child is brilliant. Over the course of the year, the child actually lives up to the potential, to the disbelief of the previous teacher...).

Labels can be very helpful. They let us know what is in a container. They also let us

know what a person is able to do. It is good to know that you have a great pitcher/left hander/fast ball to do the final strike out, a good seamstress to sew the perfect wedding dress, etc. It is also relevant to know if a person is deaf, when you are attempting to have a conversation with them. On the other hand, that information is not relevant if the conversation is via an e-mail dialogue.

To be labeled as having a “disability” (for example, needing corrective lenses) can be helpful. It can result in getting the services and supports that are needed. To be labeled as being “disabled” can be a put-down. The difference is in the degree, and the assumption. The concept of disabled (dis a ·bled = adj = incapable of performing or functioning) gives the

connotation of being totally dysfunctional.

We all have abilities, of one form or another that differ from person to person. To address or label someone as being disabled often overshadows the abilities they carry. A much better way is to see the individual as a person, first, and the label only as it is relevant.

Communitas has made a commitment to see people as people first. This is reflected in our choice of language, attitudes and actions. We choose to see the people we support as a person who has a disability, rather than “the disabled”. I, for one, am very pleased to be known first as Gene, rather than The Migraine.

“Communitas has made a commitment to see people as people first.”



Coming in May, 2008

Communitas Ukrainian Fundraiser/Dessert Evening

Thursday, May 8, 2008, 7:00 p.m. Bakerview MB Church
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Dance performance by the Yevshan Ukrainian Dancers.
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Tickets: \$15.00 each or
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**Building Community
in the name of Christ**

Communitas Supportive Care Society (Communitas) is an organization that has roots in Mennonite tradition and history, deeply influenced by a Christian understanding of non-violence, pacifism and community. Consistent with the beliefs and values of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), its parent organization, Communitas commits itself to work with individuals who have been marginalized and stigmatized by the society around them. It has a specific focus on supporting and empowering people from all walks of life, regardless of faith, social standing, race or ethnicity.

In 1973 MCC in British Columbia was approached by a new, parent-initiated organization call “Samaritan Society for Comfort and Cheer”, asking them to assist in carrying out their vision of creating homes for their sons and daughters who lived with a disability. MCC BC accepted this responsibility, leading to the first two group homes being established in 1974/75, where there was a focus on nurturing people towards greater independence and interdependence in a supportive Christian environment. After over a decade of ministry and growth, MCC Supportive Care Services (MCC SCS) was established as a separate legal entity in 1992. In July 2007, MCC SCS’ name was officially changed to Communitas Supportive Care Society. This new name was carefully and thoughtfully selected as it identifies a noble calling and vision. It is a Latin noun rich in meaning, one of which signifies a community where all people are equal. Despite its new name, Communitas’ philosophy of service and support, and accountability remain.

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Value in Relationships ~ Natasha MacArthur, Receptionist

In a world bound by time and weighed down with uncertainty, we seek stability and a firm foundation. The perfect expression of consistency, of course, is found in our Creator and Lord. We can make it a practice to try to follow His example in our daily lives, and I believe that is the goal at Communitas.

As receptionist I see this at work in relationships.

Staff members are available to participate in the lives of those around them. I constantly see people who are comfortable with approaching each other, confident they will be received with warmth and care. The whiteboard in the staff room is often marked with prayer

requests or praise items on behalf of staff members or people who receive support throughout Communitas.

On Wednesday evenings the Brain Injury (BI) program has a drop in session at the office. I frequently hear words of encouragement between non-program related staff and program members alike. I have had the opportunity to learn about the lives of some of the people who participate in the BI program, and I feel blessed that they would take time to share with me some of the things they have learned about life.

On most Thursdays, some of the people from our Choices and Connections (CAC)

program come to the office to fill music orders. As I have walked by their work-space, I have often seen a non-program related staff member in conversation with the group (or with an individual) asking about how they are doing or how the day is going. And if staff members are busy working at their desks, the members of CAC will often take a moment to stop by.

What I see in all of this is a challenge to continue to promote a wholesome and stable community that is a medium for growth and relationships.

“I am called, first by God, secondly by Communitas, to treat all as equals.”

As Equals ~ Justina Penner, Human Resources Director

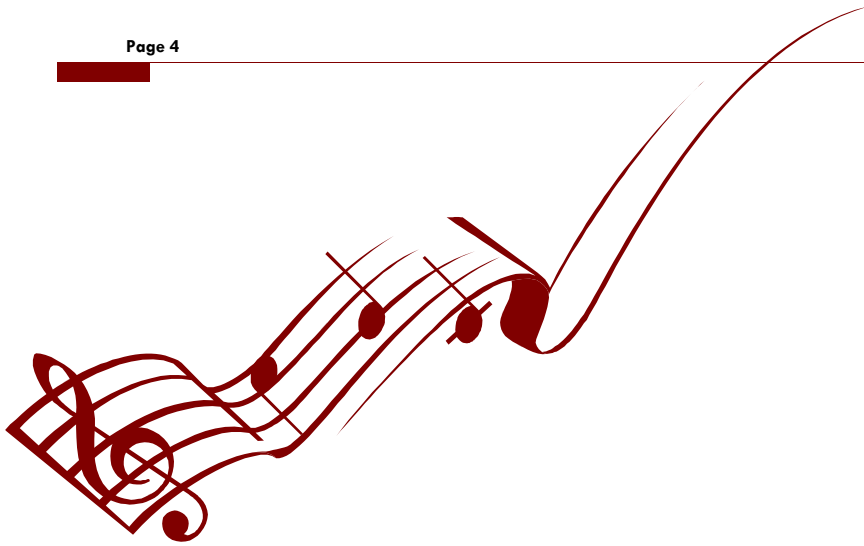
May of 2008 will be my 10th year as an employee of Communitas Supportive Care Society and I still appreciate and am thankful for the opportunity to work for this organization. I remember how great it was to discover that staff are expected to see and treat the people we support as equals.

Our Guiding Principle of Consistent Ethic says “We believe that all relationships, those with people we support and their families, our employees, constituency, and ministry partners are based on consistent values and principles”. What encourages and creates this is the foundational belief that “all human life is created in the image of God”.

Jean Vanier says that, in his many years of experience within the L’Arche communities he has often been told that it is easier to be kind to the people we support than to our coworkers.

As the Human Resources Director I am called to treat the staff person who is going through a discipline process or whose employment with our organization is being terminated with the same dignity and respect as the HR team, the lawyers I work with, our CEO Steve Thiessen, and our Board Members.

Whoever the person and whatever the circumstance, God loves her or him and I am called, first by God, secondly by Communitas, to treat all as equals.



Recordings Produced by Communitas Supportive Care under the IKR label

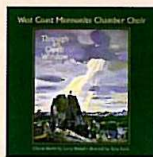
The West Coast Mennonite Chamber Choir



Songs My Father Taught Me (1991)



Carols for the Infant King Featuring Edith Wiens (1992)



Through an Open Window (1993)



A Mennonite Tapestry (1994)



Songs of Earth, Echoes of Heaven Special guest Ben Heppner (1996)



Come, Heart's Delight Featuring Edith Wiens (1997)



When I Was a Child (1998)

Other Artists & Recordings



A Rare Benediction (1999)



As Evening Shadows Fall (2000)



My Heart, My Home (2001)



Keeping Time Vol. 1 Nelson Boschman Trio (2004)



Keeping Time Vol. 2 Nelson Boschman Trio (2007)



The Wanderer Within The West Coast Mennonite Quartet (2005)



rest gemma & co. (2006)



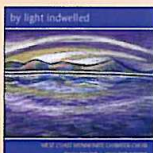
Requiem for Peace Larry Nickel (2006)



The Time of Eternity (2002)



And Night Shall End (2003)



By Light Indwelt (2004)

Calvin Dyck - VIOLIN



Meditation (1998)



This Shining Night (2002)



One Small Child (2004)



The Dancing Violin (2006)

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