

## Hamish's Story

I think the Gospel meets human need, if I can put it that way,  
and if the Gospel didn't meet human need,  
I don't know that I was going to be all that interested in it.  
To meet human need in some kind of a practical way,  
for myself, what was that going to mean?  
I wouldn't have dreamt early on  
that I would have gone in the direction of what eventually became counselling.  
Apart from anything else, counselling wasn't a word that people used very often.

I was working as an artist, working freelance for a number of years.  
Meanwhile in church terms, I trained for the office of Reader,  
at the end of which, there had been no kind of training in pastoral work.

My minister at the time, I spoke to him about pastoral work  
and he said that he had been at a course with Dr Frank Lake  
and he said, "I think you would benefit greatly from meeting Frank Lake."  
So that then took me in that direction  
and I met Frank.

Having met Frank, my wife came to the seminars along with me,  
she said she thought she was better in it along with me  
than out of it.  
So we did the 2 years of seminars with Frank Lake.  
And at the end of it, Frank said, would you like to do another course and become  
a tutor?  
So we both then did that  
and tutored for the Clinical Theology Association for about 20 years.

The Tom Allan Centre directorship became vacant in I think it was '76,  
and they were looking for somebody who had a different sort of vision for the  
place.  
It was needing to change, and I applied for the job.  
It seemed to me that there were as many needs for counsellors here in Glasgow  
as there were in Easterhouse  
or Anderston  
or any other place.  
So I thought the Tom Allan Centre was the place to go.  
I thought it would be ideal, located in the city centre  
if they were prepared to go along with the notion of developing it as a counselling  
centre.  
At that time there were very few counselling centres about.

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Because of its history,  
 The Tom Allan Centre was very concerned with single homelessness  
 and that end of things.  
 I thought, well that's fair enough  
 but if we can get them before they get there,  
 it's infinitely better.  
 So we developed a short stay unit  
 and a long stay unit  
 and also this family unit.  
 So I took the counselling training not only into the centre  
 but into the other units.

Some were a wee bit opposed to it,  
 particularly those who were a wee bit further over to the right.  
 I think there just was a suspicion of quotes psychological stuff,  
 and there was that very strong feeling with some that prayer was the only  
 answer.  
 I'm sure prayer is the answer in many situations.  
 There's no way in which I would play down the worth or the value of prayer by  
 any means at all.  
 But it seemed to me to be kind of blinkered.  
 It would be like forgetting anaesthetics had been invented,  
 if you were ignoring all the things that had happened in the field of psychology,  
 and therefore I thought that the Church should be in there,  
 I thought this was the kind of service that the Church should be providing.

When I went to the Tom Allan Centre, I think it was important that I was an artist,  
 I was a creative being,  
 I was going to be open to creative things  
 and I had a vision for the place.

From the outset I wanted people of a faith,  
 and most of them of course came from the Church of Scotland.  
 Although I wanted that,  
 I made it perfectly clear from the outset that there was no way that when  
 somebody came through the door  
 that we should immediately try to convert them.  
 Now, we had counsellors from right across the spectrum  
 and I used to get a wee bit anxious about one or two of them  
 Every now and again I would remind them  
 "if people themselves wanted to speak about it, or wanted to raise issues, fair  
 enough  
 but converting them – that's different."



If I was looking for a word that linked the theology and the psychology,  
I think it's acceptance.  
It's an incredible thing if you really believe,  
the kind of unconditional acceptance that's there for us.  
And I think very often, when people get into a troubled place,  
that sense of acceptance for them is just not there.  
So to sit down with someone  
to be able to give them undivided attention,  
that it seems to me is the kind of thing that through the Gospels we see Jesus  
offering.

The religion or the psychotherapy or the art  
it's all wrapped up – in me anyway.  
It's all the one thing.

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