



Newsletter

February 1994

AT THEIR LEVEL

I have walked in the place of the poor
I have been at their level
I have measured their helplessness, their dependence,
their ignorance
I have confronted their limits, their infirmities and their
illness
I have tried to communicate with them, to better
understand their poverty
I have tried to calm them, to reassure them, to steady
them
For I need to be calm and approachable and steady
To give them joy I sing songs, I talk to them about
happy things, I am always in a good mood
I listen to them
I teach them to read and write, I write letters for them
I take them to the toilet, to meals, to work
When they are angry, I do not get annoyed
Under their abuse, I am quiet
If I reprove them, it is without violence
Sometimes I put my hand on their shoulder, and when
they are upset, I cuddle them a little
Serenity.... delicacy.... wise counsels...
I understand that they are not like others
who show authority and are demanding, bitter and
combative
When frustrated they rebel
When helpless they cry
They do not want to hear advice and comforters
Be silent, be discreet
To their outpourings be attentive
When they are tormented surround their hearts with
silence, offer few words
Be kind to all
Create a climate dominated by happiness in spite of
everything

Rene Dante Clair. Originally printed in Amite et
Esperance,

Editorial

Welcome to the first newsletter for 1994.

The National Committee has decided that we shall
publish a newsletter in January - yes we are late and I
apologise! - May and September. Our hope is to stay in
touch with branch activities and to raise issues for all of
us.

After conquering my ineptitude with the desk top
publishing computer, the source of more than a little
delay this time, the main need for following issues will
be the arrival of some interesting copy from you about
your activities, and your thoughts about our shared
concerns.

Can I ask for copy for the May letter by April 9th, at
the very latest the 13th, in order to be able to publish in
the first week of May. Similarly in September can we
please have copy by the 6th August, the 10th at the
very latest to publish in early September.

In my moments of despair wishing that I were eleven,
since all eleven year olds in my school seem quite
computer literate, I have been reminded that someone
with much more experience of this task than I has
constantly reminded me that it is a thankless and
impossible one.

So I am appealing to you! Let's prove them wrong and
make this newsletter informative, educative and
interesting for you in the organisation and the branches
and for those further afield.

Please send all material, marked 'Newsletter' to:

APCMI, THE RECTORY, OUNDLE ROAD,
WOODSTON, PETERBOROUGH, PE2 9PJ.

Association for the Pastoral Care of the Mentally Ill

An association which supports the mentally ill and their relatives

Registered Charity No. 327532

BRANCH NEWS - Croydon

During the last few months the branch has been busy setting up their training course which is facilitated by the Rev. Andrew Wilson and has about eighteen participants. They are a lively and enthusiastic group as well as a challenging one.

Members of the three drop-ins with which APCMI are associated have attended various outings, among them 'Oklahoma' and a country walk. Members of the rainbow drop-in have joined the Committee and two felt well enough to sign on for an evening class which was very pleasing.

We have put in a bid to the Social services for funding for a part time worker as we would like to expand but need someone with the time to organise this, and also more volunteers.

We owe a great deal to Norah Croft our chair, who also bridges the gap between Mind and APCMI so ably, and to the Rev. Andrew Wilson whose vision and enthusiasm have inspired us all.

Training Day March 5th. 1994 A FRIEND IN NEED

ALL SAINTS, BATTERSEA PARK

PRINCE OF WALES DRIVE

10.30A.M. TO 4.30P.M

Contact: Pam Freeman 081-764 9725

Please bring your own Lunch

Waged £3 Unwaged £1

**AGM 1994
NOTE THE DATE NOW!
JUNE 25TH. 1994
in Hastings**

Membership 1994

Enclosed with this newsletter is a membership form for 1994.

If you wish to renew or re-establish your membership of APCMI please can you complete and return this form either to Holy Cross, or direct to me at:

59 Purley Park Road,

PURLEY,

Surrey. CR 8 2 BW

I am not proposing, as a general rule, to pass on a proportion of the fees to local branches as was the case last year. In the event only a handful of people requested that this be done. However, if anyone feels strongly on this point I will be more than happy to continue the practice in individual cases.

Neil Mackenzie (Hon. Treasurer)

Thanks to the Lindons

After a great deal of hard work, an inspiring initiative out of which all that APCMI currently is has sprung, Jane and Austin Lindon are retiring from involvement with APCMI Anglia.

We must thank them for so much that they have put into the organisation over the last seven years and all the effort when things looked promising and when they didn't.

We wish them well now as they finally take a break from active involvement, and concentrate on their family and the looking out for each other.

Thank you Jane and Austin.

BOOK to read

Good Books about mental illness and Pastoral care are not all that easy to find, so maybe you would like to read

**HELPING THOSE WITH SOCIAL NEEDS - A
CHRISTIAN APPROACH**

by

Pastor Ken Bunting RMN

Published by Moorleys Print and Publishing

If you have read a particularly good book about our concerns why not share the secret with the rest of us; drop a line to the Newsletter.

What does Pastoral Care mean to you?

- Words from the workshops

Workshops at last year's AGM looked at Pastoral Care, at least that is what they ended up doing! The initial question was 'What does pastoral mean for you?' and immediately produced differing understandings of the question; one group replied 'CARE', while another read the question as 'PASTORAL CARE' anyway.

So the question became 'What extra dimension is added to care when it was pastoral?'

Fortunately brainstorming is a way of avoiding too many quibbles about definitions, and hence we ended up with a collection of words and phrases often interlinked.

Some common themes and perceived key words are noted below. It is not a developed thesis of Pastoral Care but surely many of us will recognise themes that have engaged us over the years.

GROWTH by a process of cultivation - we sow and water and it happens,

leads on to WHOLENESS the potential of all God's creation

by EMPOWERMENT valuing the other's different gifts through SHEPHERDING with Jesus the good shepherd.

Such a process would be achieved primarily through PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS rather than by creating organisations and institutions.

In practical ways this meant;

meeting people where they are; being there in the love of Christ; so that they feel wanted, valued; conveying empathy; associated with non-judgemental, unconditional acceptance.

But the effectiveness lay not in our own strengths but in the Holy Spirit; for in God is our motivation and inspiration; in Him we are enabled to be the feet and hands of Christ, through our attitudes in Prayer, in Listening and in just being ourselves in our vulnerabilities.

'Pastoral' implied a two way gift; for when we are unable to accept the other, warts and all, we reject not just them but Christ.

Concern was expressed at the use of words to confine our vision.

Part of the greater mystery was exemplified by a couple's experience of finding Christ in their distress.

Apart from relieving pain Pastoral care should surely assist in providing meaning, and giving the

opportunity for spiritual growth.

PASTORAL CARE WORK

Pastoral Care Work often reflects burdens that we impose which limit it.

Among these are; Attitudes inherent in a society that prizes self-sufficiency; often unrealistic expectations; needing to do 'it' right; needing to justify (y)our existence (to get funding); obsession with training; misuse of Power; smothering people by doing it for them; Patronising - through misconception of needs, lack of awareness, fear and guilt. Feelings may be around that Christians should not have 'it' (Mental Illness or whatever euphemism we may invent).

But there are supports which free us and assist us to perform Pastoral care, such as;

training, communication, Financial independence, value of 'small' groups, self-help groups, friendship, valuing every individual's worth to the community, community care structures and statutory agencies, partnerships.

In many of these there seemed to be an emphasis on personal relationships, and there it was felt we needed;

discernment, being open to other's insights, open to other's stories, growing in awareness, personal growth, sharing in groups.

All of which seemed to share something of the commandment 'Love one another'.

Underpinning all is (the Body of) Christ and (the word of) God, although it was felt that we had to acknowledge that the Church community (the visible Body of Christ) did not always live up to the expectations of the Gospel of Love.

So often a human structure can be both potentially positive and negative. Prayer is essential, but even this can be destructive if we try to manipulate God, persistently telling Him what He should do.

We so often fail to pray as Jesus taught us 'Thy will be done' or 'If it be possible take this cup from me, but...'

It is difficult to convey the vigour of someone else's discussion, but probably many of these words and areas of concern will have come up in branch discussion and in our own attempts to understand what our commitment to PASTORAL CARE means.

The thinking goes on.....

SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Exploring the Spiritual Dimension of Mental Health

Organized religions have always made me uneasy, and I am not a member of any church. My parents chose not to have me baptized. Nevertheless, at the age of seven I went to a school in the Scottish Highlands where religious instruction was of central importance, the Bible was studied and we learnt passages from the old and new testament by heart. As a result, the stories of the Bible are clear and familiar to me. The imagery of both testaments is part of my consciousness.

I suppose I have a predisposition towards belief and frequently go into churches or other religious places to 'pray' (meditate/relax). I believe there are powers we cannot see and fully understand - perhaps love, perhaps electromagnetism. Like many people I am not indifferent to questions about the meaning of life.

At the same time the course of my own life has been shaped and, to some extent, diverted from its expected direction by a number of occasions when I have gone through profound, vivid and disturbing interior experiences which might be considered to be spiritual crises.

At these times - times of elation, exhaustion, anxiety, fear - I have lost firm contact with the reality accepted by those around me, have entered a space where other realities and other powers are more urgent and have experienced the consequences.

Once, down Hammersmith Broadway, considering myself Christ like, I laid out all my possessions by the west door of a church in a diagrammatic Calvary and was picked up for crying in the street. Another time, more recently, I believed myself the cause and focus of an impending collision between the earth and the setting sun and was found mute and unmoving in the shade of a garden hedge on Dollis Hill.

Inevitably my beliefs and actions at times like these led to a confirmed diagnosis of 'psychotic mental illness' and all that follows from it. On more than one occasion when I have been struggling to hold on to my humanity, uncertain whether I was good or evil, Christ like or Satan I have found myself locked up and abandoned in a cell, deprived of human contact, observed but not comforted.

Who am I? What have I become? Am I truly human? For many people who have become 'mental patients' spirituality and spiritual understanding are vital concerns.

The relationship between madness, religion and medical science is complex and has a long history.

The fact that in Western societies we nowadays almost always talk of madness as 'mental illness' indicates the triumph of the medical (psychiatric) viewpoint that these human behaviours are predominantly to do with the mechanisms of the body and mind and not the workings of the spirit.

As Suman Fernando has said 'Western Scientific' medicine tends to exclude ethical and spiritual considerations, but the indigenous medical traditions of Asia are different - and this applies I think, to Indian Chinese and Islamic traditions.

The dichotomy between mind and body, a concept inherent in western thinking is not so evident in non Western cultures. While on the Indian sub continent there has been a long tradition of the religious people also being the medical people, many survivors of the mental health system in the UK experience psychiatry as an inflexible discipline which cannot adopt a holistic approach and is suspicious of discussions about spirituality.

What concerns me most are the spiritual difficulties facing individuals who enter the mental health service system.

How do they value their experiences in crisis? How do they withstand the scrutiny of science? How do they locate themselves within a society which sees them as damaged human beings?

There are a number of possible responses to 'psychotic episodes'. One is to view them as aberrations without intrinsic value. This seems to be a common approach in psychiatry and is the one I have almost always encountered there. Although it is important to define the causes of crises, the contents are not important.

As a result the main action that is necessary is to intervene, often in medical ways, to control the episodes and prevent them happening again.

I feel such an approach is destructive. It not only suggests to me that the contents of my crises are dangerous and impenetrable, but also presses me to separate myself from them. This I cannot easily do. Nor, I suspect, can many who experience similar crises. They remain part of us. Telling people that their perceptions in psychosis are meaningless or have only negative value places obstacles on the path to spiritual understanding. Ignoring the content altogether merely confirms our suspicions that we are already beyond the pale.

Approaches that place a high value on 'psychotic episodes' and seek to explore their significance in spiritual terms have a considerable history. John Perceval, a pioneer of the self advocacy movement left a detailed record of his exploration of his psychosis in the light of a Christian belief.

In more recent times a number of psychiatrists have published reports of successful therapeutic approaches which rely on a sympathetic and valuing approach to psychosis.

I welcome such approaches. Not because I claim my experiences have any special significance for others but because they give me the opportunity to place the contents of my crises within wider and more creative frameworks.

I want mental health services that are sympathetic to the spiritual dimension. I would certainly like mental health workers to address my experiences in crises. But I also want them to make connections with the more usual aspects of my spiritual life I mentioned earlier.

I have spoken with hospital chaplains of various denominations during 25 years of psychiatric admissions and I have found their perspectives increasingly valuable. Nevertheless, their contribution always seems marginal to the main purpose of psychiatric hospitals.

In an institutional system that focuses on malfunction, spirituality, creativity, and imagination can easily become separate speciality concerns discussed at appointments with priests or in art therapy. People can be fragmented rather than being made whole.

The health system does change. Mental health services are already varied and the new arrangements for community care may encourage greater variety. It is more likely that people with a diagnosis of psychotic illness will receive talking therapies.

But we still live in a society that is suspicious of belief and connects unconventional belief to madness. Service users can end up in a trap, silenced by the prejudices of their fellow citizens, their integrity doubted by both traditional psychiatry and major religions.

When I read R. D. Laing he let me see that what I was going through could be part of a spiritual process and that the journey might be worthwhile. Psychiatry and society have rarely been so generous.

Peter Campbell

Reproduced in abbreviated form from OPEN MIND
February 1993.

What's in the Name?

At the last AGM it was decided to appoint a small committee to look at the current name of the association, with especial concern expressed about the use of the term 'mentally ill'.

Everyone in the group that met felt that a positive image should be portrayed, giving an indication of striving towards wholeness and away from sickness.

But, as Evelyn Sumption said, 'mental illness is very real' and we must not pretend that it is not for the many people who suffer it and know that it is.

Peter felt strongly that we must recognise that we are all people first and not just the 'mentally ill' - (or any other label?) The association should be standing by people to help them on a spiritual and practical journey of growth in life.

It was recognised by all that it would not be opportune to change the overall name at this moment.

People now know about APCMI and we need to hang on to this. We also need to recognise that the Association is a professionally run organisation resting on three essential planks;

1. letting people be valued as persons
2. helping them stand on their own feet
3. providing an environment of warmth, friends, security, creative occupation

Many names were suggested;

FORWARD, PATHWAY, ADVANCE, ENTHUSE, ENCOURAGE, ASPIRE, OASIS among them.

As a contribution for discussion we came up with a surprising choice - KENOSIS.

Kenosis is not a Greek terrorist organisation or a Soho restaurant but a greek word meaning the emptying. It is applied to Christ's emptying of himself on the cross, so it has a sense of a forward dimension which is very positive after darkness in the present.

In mental illness others may offer to empty themselves and share the condition of those suffering.

So, APCMI - Kenosis?

If anyone has any responses to this idea please get in touch, and see the note about the name on another page.

apcmi's address is

c/o HOLY CROSS CENTRE TRUST, THE CRYPT, HOLY CROSS CHURCH, CROMER STREET,
LONDON WC1H 8JU

BRANCH NEWS - Hastings

We are completing our fifth training scheme for volunteers prepared to join our Befriending Scheme. We have got nine keen volunteers of various ages - it's nice to have young as well as older volunteers - and the course has gone well.

We have a waiting list of mentally ill people who have requested a friend so once the end of course assessment interviews have been completed, we will be able to get straight on with the matching.

We seem to have spent most of 1993 bidding (ever hopefully) for funding for our much needed Co-ordinator, but despite being told from time to time that we were in a very favourable position, and were listed for three different bids - so far nothing has come of it, and we are giving up what little hope we had. It means we will have to curtail expansion plans for the foreseeable future.

Our hardworking committee (several of whom work full time) is having to adjust to losing a key member, our Vice-Chairman, who is seriously ill. Judy Tyler was a founder member of our branch, and passionately dedicated to helping anyone in deprived circumstances, especially the mentally ill and she will be a great loss to APCMI and Hastings.

BRANCH NEWS - Anglia

With the retirement of some members who had made a great contribution and the loss of others to the professional demands of busy jobs, mostly in related fields of concern, we find ourselves in a time of retrenchment and sorting out our priorities.

A brief questionnaire to all bodies subscribing to the District Council of Churches brought more than a 33% response, which was encouraging.

Most people, if not all replies, asked for more information about mental illness and its consequences. Perhaps ignorance even in Christian circles is still the biggest barrier.

We hope with help from concerned professionals and our local Bishop to put on a course to inform about mental illness, and responses to it.

Enthusiasm for a 'meeting point' in Peterborough is somewhat dimmed by the existence of a fine MIND project, but this does only operate in day times and during the week. Weekends are often the loneliest times.

We have made contact with the Richmond Fellowship Workshop where this newsletter is being printed and hope to build up some involvement there.

MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

East London boroughs

I have been in post since mid-January 1993, working 19 hours a week and my brief covers the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

My work has included:

- setting up with the Chaplain of Claybury Hospital, a support group in Walthamstow for relatives of people with mental health problems

- working with Newham Deanery to look at how the churches can offer befriending and support to people with mental health needs

- consultations with St Mark's Beckton about mental health needs in the area and the church's response

- involvement in shortlisting, interviewing,

and induction of social support workers Newham Mind's weekend Club for people who might otherwise be in psychiatric hospital

- addressing groups and talking to individuals in key positions in the statutory and voluntary sector and in the churches about the Brentwood Mental Health Project

I have built up links with many statutory and voluntary bodies in the four London Boroughs, especially with Goodmayes Hospital; the Newham Mental Health Shadow Task group, which is currently being consulted about the draft Community Care Plan for Mental Health; and with Newham Mind where I am now on the executive and publicity sub-committee.

I have had a number of requests for help in dealing pastorally with people with mental health problems and I have built up a resource bank of information about counselling services and courses.

In the course of my work three things have stood out and I offer these for reflection as the churches can have a particular role to play in each of them.

1. People with mental health problems and their carers and relatives need to be consulted about how they would like the church and the local community to support them

2. The relationship between homelessness and mental illness is something which churches need to continue to address

3. Although volunteers play a vital role in helping people with mental health needs to integrate into the local church and community, there needs to be adequate support from the Statutory services to make 'Care in the Community' a reality.

Lorna Bröckett RSJ Development Worker

MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

Essex and Havering

Working on the mental health project in Essex and Havering has been as much about failure as success. I make no apology for this, aware that the area of mental health is friable and delicate. To address success alone would be to camouflage some basic features of the project.

Raising awareness of mental health problems in churches is not a popular activity. A few people may respond, usually those having had experience of mental health problems themselves. At other times, there is a sense of relief that these issues are being addressed in public.

I have responded to a number of invitations to speak to church groups of all denominations from Wivenhoe to Romford and from Harlow to Kelvedon. Two valuable opportunities arose to address church representatives in Brentwood at their respective AGMs. Appreciable time is spent in travelling.

To date I have held three preparation courses for volunteers to work with people who have mental health problems. A site for a day centre in Brentwood, preferably on church premises, has yet to be found.

It is hoped that volunteers will be able to assist in a day centre on the premises of an Anglican Church in Romford. A further preparation course for this started in January. Courses like this involve a sizeable amount of planning time and administration work.

Networking with other agencies has afforded opportunity to forge a working relationship with a development worker from MIND for mutual support.

Frequent contact is made with statutory services. I have shared resources and information with a number of people, carers, clergy and voluntary agencies.

To these activities it is necessary to paint a broader backcloth. Generally church people always confuse mental health problems with mental handicap. I always need to define clearly my area of work. There may be pockets of interest concerning this work but this changes to a 'not in my backyard' syndrome, with numerous excuses as soon as a possible project is proposed.

The mental health project is uphill, lonely, and at times painful. It is also rewarding and tempered with humour. The privilege is of serving people who are broken, rejected and misunderstood by society. Halfway through the Mental Health Project now I look forward to what is to come.

Rosemary Alonso

Project Development Worker

Our Befriending Scheme continues to provide a much needed service locally, currently involving approximately 14 volunteers. The last Training Programme for potential befrienders was completed by the end of May 93 but we decided not to run another course until we had undertaken a review of our work.

The Review Day was held in September and was attended by both Committee and Befrienders. While recognising that in principle such an exercise could usefully take place on an annual basis we also realised that the first review was taking place because many of us (especially Committee members) felt that more was being asked of us than we could offer. As a result we wanted to take stock and look at the resources we needed to move forwards without over-extending ourselves and lowering the quality of the service being offered.

We looked closely at the different functions performed by the branch, including finance, training, befriender/befriender, co-ordination, support and publicity. The enthusiasm generated on the day was very encouraging and gave us all fresh impetus to go on as we realised afresh what had already been achieved.

Perhaps the single most important observation to come from the day was that we had already reached the stage as an organisation where we had stopped looking outside for the resources (especially people) we needed. Everyone committed themselves to evangelise and bring new people in.

At a subsequent committee meeting we were able quite quickly to see the structure we needed to go forward, and the people we needed to make the structure effective. We have now coupled Recruitment with Publicity and this is where most of our new blood will go.

In addition we identified the need for an Honorary Branch Secretary who can keep an overview of our programme, represent us at local meetings and generally co-ordinate the work under the management of the Committee.

Hopefully we will find some funding for this post but in the meantime we are head hunting a volunteer.

CAN YOU THINK OF A NAME?

It might be helpful to find a crisp catchy name for the Association - rather like the MIND name for its association.

If you have any ideas, and have tried them out on your friends and checked they aren't French for something rude, etc, WHY NOT send them in to the National Secretary at Holy Cross.

No Prizes but you could see your efforts in print some day!

BRANCH NEWS - Guildford

A relatively quiet year in 93 gave way to a flurry of activity in the Autumn.

Aims and Objectives.

The year has seen the natural emergence of a new direction resulting in the adoption of clearly defined aims and objectives namely;

- 1.To encourage and facilitate the use of local church communities and resources for mental health purposes.
- 2.To increase awareness amongst the local churches of mental health needs and issues
- 3.To foster mutual respect and understanding between churches and mental health professionals and to encourage them to work together in supporting those afflicted by mental ill-health.

We believe our limited resources be put to better use in this way rather than by trying to be the provider of services ourselves.

We also intend to establish a local membership to be affiliated to the national organisation and to publish regular newsletters of local interest.

THE GRAPEVINE is a new 'meeting point' which has recently been established in Haslemere. The Methodist Church Hall is used weekly and in addition regular outings are arranged. APCMI was involved in the initial discussions and meetings which led to this new venture and two of our Committee members are central to its organisation. However, in line with our new policy we do not control this project which is now completely independent and supported by Social Services as well as the churches.

THE RAINBOW FELLOWSHIP group was also an APCMI initiative which now runs itself under the leadership of a member of Guildford Community

BRANCH NEWS - Forest Hill

The best news from the group is that we have moved into the refurbished church hall which Christ Church lets us use.

This means that we can offer more in the way of things to do such as table tennis and pool as well as there being a lot more room for games and a bit of art work.

We continue to provide a listening ear, support and advice, particularly in one instance of problems with obtaining a hostel place.

We were appalled by the lack of communication over this.

We have very devoted volunteers without whom we could not carry on. We would like to do more, but to do so we need more volunteers. We are not in a position to make comparisons with other areas, but are very aware of needs that are not being met.

GUILDFORD.cont.

Church. An interdenominational Christian group, it meets fortnightly for Bible study and fellowship.

A short time of worship and a seminar in memory of The Rev Derek Parsons was organised by APCMI under the title 'Healing the hurt Mind'. A moving and memorable occasion attended by sixty people with even more at the following seminar.

A day Seminar on 'Making Friendships' was attended by thirty six and the topic brought a good enjoyable response.

DON'T FORGET

YOUR MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your next Branch News - by APRIL 9th, please

Your Letters, Articles, Comments, and Features for our future issues

APCMI NEWSLETTER published on behalf of the National Committee; opinions and points of view are those of the contributors only unless stated otherwise.

The Newsletter is printed by the Richmond Fellowship Workshop, Wharf Road, Peterborough.