

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1998

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At a conference in early September, a speaker said that, unless the vision is clear - the price is too high! Since May, this statement sums up the thinking and task which has faced your Central Committee. What vision has the Association? Is the vision clear? After several months of assessment and evaluation the Committee has agreed that for the years 1998 and 1999 there are to be two targeted areas of work for the Association.

1. Raising awareness about mental health and the pastoral care needs of sufferers, carers, relatives and friends by making contact with and being invited by church and ecumenical groups to lead half day and day workshops with the expressed intent of supporting such groups in setting some type of project related to 'Friendship.'
2. Befriending schemes; such schemes could take the form of Drop-in Centres, One-to-One Visiting Schemes in Acute Wards, or, in the community, or any other places where those with mental distress or recovering from such an illness needed friendship, recognition and acceptance within their community.

It is known that churches and ecumenical groups are concerned about those who have or are experiencing mental distress and how best to address their needs. A research report findings shows that 33% of those questioned on a random sample said that they attend church or a worshipping group of some kind in their community, an unusually high percentage in today's terms. The Association is aware that churches and ecumenical groups want to do more in this specific pastoral ministry and are seeking help from us to carry this ministry forward. The Committee's conclusion is that it has excellent examples of 'good practice' which could be adopted provided that churches and ecumenical groups know about the procedures to follow.

Excitingly, seeds are beginning to germinate. This year the Association was invited by the Knighton and District Council of Churches to lead two seminars. A small steering committee was formed and with a lot of hard work and determination a Drop-In Centre is to be opened to serve the town and rural community. It will start by opening twice a week. The project is called 'JUST FRIENDS' and its vision is about empowerment of its members, with the help and support of volunteers, to achieve such goals. Their vision is clear. Hear about it at our Conference and AGM in London on 21 November, at St John's Church, Waterloo Road, starting at 10.00am. If you are coming it is important to book a place if you require a lunch and refreshments.

The title of the Conference is 'HEALING PRESENCE' and we are fortunate to have as our keynote speaker the Rev John Swinton, a founder member of the Aberdeen Branch and its first Chairman. Prior to his present post as a university lecturer with a particular research interest in the pastoral care influence of the friendship of people in the margins of community, he was chaplain of the psychiatric hospital. We have used the title of an article he wrote about friendship as the title of the Conference.

The success of the Conference is dependent upon you for its ultimate success because you have a unique contribution to make as a member. There will be plenty of opportunity for you to share your ideas and experiences with us and influence the preparation of a Pack of Friendship, which we hope to prepare as the result of the Conference. Such a pack is urgently needed by the Association to distribute after an Awareness Raising Seminar. Why not bring a friend along as well?

Can I leave you with a thought or two? How much does your worshipping community know about mental health and the pastoral needs of all involved in the experience? When did you last hear prayers in the service for all involved in mental health? Did your worshipping community take any action on World Mental Health Day on 8 October to see that the subject is brought to the fore? Have you or I done anything to take such a challenge forward eg a Coffee Morning?

In the last newsletter a plea was made to members to offer their services to help the Association forward. Sadly, at the time of writing, no contact has been made by anyone. The Association has a positive future, the fields are white but the labourers are very few. The longer we leave the future to others the weaker the Association and the more dispirited the General Committee become. Ultimately as responsible trustees they will have to face an uncomfortable decision. Is that what you want of the Association?

Please write or telephone me and share your views about the future of the Association. To contact me telephone : 01323 833984 or write to **Orchard Croft, North Road, Bodle Street Green, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 4RH** and mark the envelope 'Confidential'.

Many thanks and I look forward to hearing from you and meeting you at the Conference and AGM on 21 November.

David Walters

NSF defines severe mental illness

NSF defines severe mental illness as being dependent on a person's experience of three characteristics:

- receiving a **diagnosis** of schizophrenia or related functional disorder, or a severe mood disorder, eg manic-depression.
- being severely **disabled** by the symptoms of their illness preventing their involvement in many of the activities that most people take for granted;
- having experienced the symptoms of such an illness for a significant period of time (**duration**).
- 1% of the people know someone with a severe mental illness.

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CHANGE

An Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

- I. I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find my way out.
- II. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I'm in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.
- III. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.
- IV. I walk down the same street.
There is a hole in the sidewalk.
I walk round it.
- V. I walk down another street.

Portia Nelson

contributed by Linda Cartwright

I'M DIFFERENT!

Our Father who art in Heaven

It is Sunday morning, I must get up ... or must I?
My voices tell me to stay put, I am so very tired ...
funny that ... I was in bed all day yesterday.

Hallowed be Thy name

I want to praise Jesus, I think you are here with me but it is so hard
and nobody understands me because you see ... I am different.

Thy Kingdom come

I am on my way; but late as usual, the crowd is going in,
I hang back, they frighten me, they do not glance or smile at me ... I'm different.

Thy Will be done

The welcomer (funny that) glares ... you're late ... keep quiet ... I was only singing "Alleluia!"
praise the Lord! ... but then I'm different.

On Earth as it is in Heaven

I slip into a seat ... the occupant looks at me ... and moves I know I forgot to wash and look
unkempt. A child smiles, his mother pulls him away and mutters, "she's odd, you know."

Give us this day our daily bread

I have managed to sit throughout the readings and the homily, and now it is that wonderful
time when Christ will come to me in Communion ... but dare I get up to receive Him? ... They
look at me and shake their heads ... I can't help it, this talking to myself ... but then ... I'm
different.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

At last I am before the priest; I sway upon my feet ... I can see it in their eyes
(she's had one too many) Did they have to take tablets to pluck up the courage to
come in? ... The priest he does not look at me, but yes, I have received "My Lord and
My God". I move towards the chalice, our eyes meet, a smile of recognition as he says "The
Blood of Christ" ...

And lead us not into temptation

... that is a lovely statue, Our Lady looks cold.
I know, I'll put my scarf round her.
They gasp as I approach her and drape the warmth around her and
her child. I am pulled back. They do not understand, I meant no harm
... but I'm different.

But deliver us from evil

I rush out, tears run down my face, the sun is shining and suddenly I hear a voice ...
I hear you say "They rejected me" ... You and I are no so different ...
Are we?

Audrey Pennicott

VOLUNTEERS

Golden rules for charities following a recent survey

1. It is important that people are correctly placed.
2. If volunteers are too formalised they can feel like paid staff without pay.
3. Many volunteers feel valued but some feel that their skills are under-used.
4. Some volunteers are professional workers who have a wealth of experience that can be shared by the charity - eg accountancy.
5. Volunteers can often afford time but not money. They should be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses.
6. It is important for health and safety that a proper insurance scheme is in operation for volunteers.
7. It is essential that volunteers are told as much about the organisation and what jobs the volunteer would be required to do.
8. It is desirable that the volunteer has a trial period so that all concerned have a chance to make sure the placement is right.

NB Lord Young of Dartington has a newly established School for Entrepreneurs. The school provides training for people who want to learn how to be efficient and businesslike in the voluntary sector. "Voluntary bodies are high-minded - business is hard headed - each can learn from the other:" says director James Smith.

FRIENDSHIP

Our identity and our ability to be ourselves is established through human relationships. These relationships must be real, most of us have many acquaintances, which are important, but only a handful of real friends, or none. If we are cut off from friendships we would go mad. I am certain a great deal of mental illness is caused by the lack of any real friendships. We cannot get a proper perspective of ourselves by being continually alone. We need to grow. The problem is always trying to find the right people to relate to.

Most of life is a game, where people pretend to care about each other. Take the work situation for example, where generally money comes first, and people are just used. Or the Day Centre where staff care for you only between the hours they are employed. Or are the staff only there to be used?

You may ask where does religion have its place in all this. Well the fact is, the basis of a sincere religious faith is to teach people how to live. Love is the basis of everything, but we have to learn how, to love one another.

Those who ignore the need for friendship may find some degree of satisfaction through work, achievement, travel and the pursuit of knowledge, but will never know the experience of health, and wholeness through relating properly to other people.

Howard Isenberg

TO BE A MENTAL PATIENT

... is to be stigmatised, ostracised, socialised, patronised, psychiatrised.

... is to have everyone controlling your life, but you. You're watched by your shrink, your Social Worker, your friends, your family. And then you are diagnosed as paranoid.

... is to live with the constant threat of being locked up at any time, for almost any reason.

... is to live on Income Support, which won't let you buy Kleenex to dry your tears, and to watch your shrink come back from lunch, driving a Mercedes.

... is to take drugs that dull your mind, deaden your senses, make you jitter and drool, and then take more drugs to lessen the "side-effects".

... is to apply for jobs and lie about how you've spent the last months and years, because you've been in hospital, and then you don't get the job anyway because you're a mental patient.

... is to watch TV and see shows about how violent and dangerous and dumb and incompetent and crazy you are.

... is not to matter.

... is never to be taken seriously

... is to be the resident of a ghetto, surrounded by other mental patients who are as scared and hungry and bored and broke as you are.

... is to be a statistic

... is to wear a label, and a label that never goes away, a label that says little about what you are and even less about who you are.

... is never to say what you mean, but to sound like you mean what you say.

... is to tell your psychiatrist he's helping you, even when he's not.

... is to act glad when you're sad and calm when you're mad, and always to be "appropriate".

... is to participate in stupid groups that call themselves "therapy". Music isn't music it therapy; volley ball isn't sport, it's therapy. Sewing is therapy; washing dishes is therapy. Even the air you breathe is therapy, and it's called "the milieu".

... is not to die, even if you want to - and not cry and not hurt, and not be scared, and not be angry, and not be vulnerable, and not laugh too loud - because if you do, you only prove that you're a mental patient, even if you're not.

And so you become a no-thing, in a no-world, and you are not.

by Rae Unzicker

*The author is a member of the American Group,
Survivors of Mental Health Treatment*

APCMH CROYDON BRANCH

A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

I felt important to share with our members and supporters the good news that one of our groups has had recently. I represented APCMH on a project begun in 1995 called Waterloo Breakaway which offered homeless people an opportunity to try a change of scene and activity.

After a research project funded by the National Lottery, the Church Urban Fund have granted £75,000 to fund an administration worker and office to further the work. The project is based upon our belief that every individual is of unique value and has within him or herself the potential for development and positive change. With care and encouragement this is capable of realisation through planning, experiencing and evaluating these activities. People are empowered to take responsibility for their lives and gain a new appreciation of their worth. As many homeless people have mental health problems this is another experience that APCMH share in.

Also, I am a trustee of the Federation of Smaller Mental Health Agencies and we have recently appointed a Director who has already set up a meeting with Paul Boateng to discuss various issues concerning small groups who are doing their best in various communities to help those with mental health problems. We are one of 150 member organisations and 100,000 users so APCMH has contact with many groups throughout the country.

At the recent AGM held in Torquay, the themes were centred around employment and there were workshops on running your own business. Awaz Employment Transitional employment. Clubhouse Starfish Project in Hackney which I am going to visit.

Media Issues

In the Media Workshop Terry Williams, the Director of UK Federation, told us that we must always be readily accessible. Write letters to the press - react immediately if there has been a misrepresentation of facts and make sure that we celebrate good practice as well as criticise bad.

Meeting representatives from other groups is very stimulating and interesting. One such person is Carol Jenkins from Black Buddies in Bradford. From small beginnings in her own home she has built up an organisation that is helping the students in many areas - consulting with the local health authority and hospital.

Friendship is paramount in helping those whose confidence has been shattered by illness. The highlight of the conference for me was the bank Beacon Quay, the members are from a therapeutic community in Devon, whose philosophy is client led, which means if a client has an idea and it is feasible, the staff will do everything in their power to encourage and develop it. The group started as a weekly jam session and is now a well known group having made a CD, and having regular gigs. What impressed us was the way the members shared the lead whether in singing, guitar or drums. The standard was very high and we stayed until 1.00am in the morning as we were enjoying it so much.

Friendship is the key word which will be developed more at our AGM on 21 November at St John's Church, Waterloo 10.00am - 4.00pm. Do try and come.

Where beauty shines clear, let us enjoy it.
Where beauty is hidden, let us unveil it.
Where beauty is defaced, let us restore it.
Where there is no beauty, let us create it.

Another year gone!
Another year older!
Meister Eckhart sighs

Not so! Not so!
I'm as young as ever!
His soul replies.

*Slightly adapted from Robert McAfee Brown
and quoted in The Tablet, 9 May 1998*

C. Richard Skinner, *Echoes of Eckhart*

CROYDON BRANCH A.G.M.

Croydon branch held a very successful AGM at Cornerstone House on Monday, 7 September when about 40 members and friends met together for a buffet ... short meeting and a showing of the Bishop of Ely's video "With a Little Help from my Friends".

The video sparked off a lively discussion and members felt that it was a beginning and sewed the seed. It was rather sanitised in places but it gave people plenty to think about. Mental illness affected the whole family and sometimes family pressures didn't help the sufferer.

During the business meeting future plans outlined included a training course - a library exhibition and a service on October, 11 at Croydon Parish Church. There was also a swimathon on Saturday, 17 October.

It was clear that members appreciated that the Development Officer, Mary Hillier and volunteers had worked hard to ensure that the work in Croydon was successful in helping members to have support in the community.

David Walters was a welcome visitor to the AGM and he and Pam Freeman were impressed with the fellowship and friendly atmosphere that volunteers and members alike share in the Croydon Area.

Pam Freeman

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Chris Davenport, one of our members, has written to me on several occasions and I am very impressed with his positive outlook. Some of the points he has made in his letters are as follows :-

- 1) Gratitude to the staff at the hospital he was in.
- 2) The opportunity to talk things through. Events, thoughts experiences and traumas are expressed through language.
- 3) Loving concern shown by friends and acquaintances.
- 4) The importance of music for emotional healing.
- 5) Radio programmes both as entertainment and as educational.
- 6) The help the church has given him in coming to terms with many of his problems.

Pam Freeman

"Compassion" is a word full of meaning. It means :

sharing the same passion,
sharing the same suffering,
sharing the same agony,
accepting into my heart
the misery in yours.

Your pain calls out to me.
It touches my heart.
It awakens something within me,
And I become one with you in your pain.

I may not be able to relieve your pain,
but by understanding it, sharing it,
I make it possible for you to bear it
in a way that enhances your dignity
and helps you to grow."

Jean Varnier

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting follows the Conference starts at 3.15pm and should be completed by 4.00pm.

To be able to take an active part in the AGM and to have voting rights you have to be a fully paid up member. Your Conference name badge will indicate by colour coding as to whether you will be able to vote at the AGM. You should forward your current membership fee immediately to Neil Mackenzie, Hon Treasurer, 59 Purley Park Road, Purley, Surrey, CR82BW. There will be no facility during the Conference proceedings or the AGM to pay membership fees for the current year.

How important is an AGM to an organisation? There is surely a question which precedes this one and that is, Why am I a member? What does the organisation do for me? What do I do for the organisation?

The Association Committee would like to resign en bloc this year, so that we achieve a fresh start and in future years only one third of the Committee will resign, which will be in accordance with the Constitution.

The Constitution clearly states that the Chairperson is elected by the Committee. All the present Committee is willing to be nominated for their present positions on the Committee, except for Pam Freeman, who wishes to vacate the General Secretary duties. Pam wishes to stand for Committee in 1998/99, but taking a different role. Pam has carried out the work of General Secretary to the best of her abilities and has done sterling work in keeping the Association running at a very difficult time in its history. A new General Secretary is needed and the workload is very heavy, requiring a commitment of ten to twelve hours a week. The person required will need excellent secretarial skills, and should be able to work well on their own.

It is only reasonable to share with you the work load of the committee vacancies. New committee members will be expected to accept responsibility to service a branch, to actively help with development, accept invitations to speak on behalf of the Association, to represent the Association at national level on various committees and more specifically, there are vacancies for a Press/media Officer, Membership Secretary, Training and Research and a Lay and Ordained Chaplain. We hope John Rawson will be willing to head up and edit the newsletter.

Certainly, I am sure the Committee will be looking to members and inviting members to join small working groups to address a specific issue or event.

May I take this opportunity to thank all the present committee for all their hard work which has carried the Association through a very difficult year.

Please give serious thought to either nominating someone you know to stand or offering yourself for nomination.

It is an exciting time ahead! Why not be part of the growth of the Association?

The Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health

An association which supports those who are mentally ill and their families.

Registered Charity No. 327532

National office : Edward Wilson House, 26 Queen Anne Street, LONDON W1M 9LB

The views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association