

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1999

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I feel that APCMH has reached an important stage. Your National Committee has formulated a "mission statement" and a plan for future action. The mission statement is as follows:

"APCMH is an ecumenical association of Christian foundation comprising members and affiliated groups who recognised the importance of spiritual values and support in mental health. It has a network of supporters and welcomes and encourages people regardless of their own faith or belief system.

Its aim is to enhance the quality of life, self-respect and spiritual growth of those affected by mental or emotional difficulties by encouraging :

- ♦ church and other faith communities to be alongside individuals who are so affected
- ♦ local initiatives to be developed and continued for the support of people with severe or enduring mental health difficulties
- ♦ those working in the field of mental health to recognise the importance of spiritual needs."

This puts emphasis on "encouragement". We hope that by raising these issues and keeping them on agendas both in faith communities and amongst mental health professionals, attitudes and practices will be changed for the better. We also hope that local initiatives will develop. The concept of "affiliation" rather than creating formal "branches" should provide more flexibility. There will be less legal responsibility on the Nation Association which, in any event, does not have sufficient resources to fulfil the role of a parent organisation.

We also hope to develop a series of fact sheets and build up other resources which would be of particular interest to faith communities. We intend to establish a web-site and increase the membership and the circulation of the newsletter. If possible, we aim to promote regional conferences which would highlight the aim and core values of APCMH. Media publicity would be another way of promoting our message. We believe that APCMH's experience of practical pastoral care over the past 12 years, particularly through the activities of the branches, is very special. It is this experience which should be shared if possible.

I would encourage as many of you as possible to come to our members' day and AGM on 6 November at All Saints, Battersea. Maybe you could also bring a friend. The title of the day is "Growing Together". We will be looking at our core values and sharing experience from the existing branches. The day is open to members, supporters, volunteers and friends.

At the AGM we will be looking for new Committee members and others who may be willing to help in particular ways eg media/PR, preparation of resource material, fund-raising and administration. Neil McKenzie, our Treasurer, has given us notice that he wishes to stand down next May. So a new Treasurer is a priority - and maybe someone to help with membership, covenants or day to day book-keeping (mainly payment of expenses). We are also looking for a Minutes Secretary. We do not expect any of the roles to be too onerous. The more people involved, the more the work will be shared. If you do not like Committee work, there may well be another role for you which does not involve being a Committee member. Please consider offering your time and talents. Either Pam Freeman, (c/o Edward Wilson House, 26 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 9Lb) or myself (30 Chalk Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2AD tel: 01483 428131) would be delighted to hear from you. Otherwise I look forward to seeing you on 6 November.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Sunday 10 October 1999

NATIONAL A G M

Saturday 6th November 1999

All Saints Church, Battersea

10.00 am to 3.30 pm

THE GRAHAM BURROUGH CHARITABLE TRUST

The Graham Burrough Charitable Trust was created in memory of the late Graham Burrough, who died in 1997, having for many years been a patient at The Retreat Hospital in York, an establishment run by the Quakers for the treatment of those suffering from Psychiatric and other (connected) illnesses.

The Trust was created with the intention of relieving those suffering from mental illness and to provide practical relief in the way of enhanced staffing and improved facilities at Psychiatric Hospitals and Psychiatric Care Centres. The trust will also provide financial support for respite and/or long term care for families of patients suffering from psychiatric illness and disorders where the families are in financial need. Support will also be available to promote education and research into the causes of mental illness and either a scholarship bursary or grant for a suitably qualified candidate to be chosen by the Trustees to investigate a specific subject in the field of mental health.

The Trustees will consider applications in October, 1999 from those persons or organisations who feel that they may be entitled to benefit from the Trust.

All applications should please be submitted to Mr T I Keats of Messrs Preston & Redman, Hinton House, Hinton Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 2EN. Fax 01202 552758.

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A QUAKER VIEW OF PSYCHIATRY

(Reprinted from "The Friend" 9 July 1999)

The term 'therapeutic Quakerism' has a vibrant ring to it, but how can we put it into practice? What does our tradition teach us about the nature of mental illness and the best strategies for helping those who are both recognised as 'mentally ill' and those who are not, even though they are suffering?

The sad news is that psychiatry is in desperate need of rescue all over again. Indeed contemporary psychiatry has painted itself into an even more cramped and unpleasant corner than it did in William Tuke's day. Two hundred years ago it was obvious to Tuke and his prolific supporters in Yorkshire

Quarterly Meeting that a 'Retreat' was sorely needed to save 'lunatics' from the barbarism of conventional medicine with its 'cupping', its bleeding and its axiomatic belief that the insane could feel no cold. Today other more serious misconceptions have crept into psychiatric thinking which, though less straightforward, are as debilitating.

I have never been comfortable for example, with the notion that certain individuals are 'untreatable'. It has always seemed to me that a doctor should try a whole series of different approaches - and should never give up on anyone, simply on the grounds that they are 'untreatable'. Surely there is always something you could do?

At a recent Quaker conference this was borne in upon me as one aspect of the axiom that there is always that of good or of God in everyone of us - so no-one should be mislabelled in this way. In practice of course, this deplorable psychiatric concept has now entered the statute book in the Mental Health Act.

Further, approved psychiatric practice now distinguishes between those who are 'mentally ill' and those 'merely' undergoing social or emotional stress. In particular, sufferers from 'personality disorder' are not regarded as 'mentally ill' and so are excluded from the general psychiatric remit. Even someone who severely damages themselves and is clearly in great mental agony is not, in the conventional psychiatric view, 'mentally ill'. To me, this makes no sense.

These points may seem over technical, so let us turn to one which affects us all. Over the last few years I have become increasingly involved with court reports, and have watched legal practice in action at close quarters. What has particularly interested me is the concept of 'intent' - as in 'when you picked up that spade, did you intend to dig or to kill?' Now 'intent' is slippery and elusive and in an important sense 'unknowable', which might explain why it has not been mentioned in the last 10 years in the *British journal of psychiatry*. Indeed, academic science in general prefers to contend that it simply does not exist. So here we have a major credal challenge. In earlier times people could be divided between those who believed in God and those who did not. In the present context a more relevant choice is 'do you believe in intent, or not?' Either we are machines controlled by electrical impulses and chemical triggers or we are sentient beings with a measure of choice and a degree of control. Quakerism teaches me that these intentions not only exist but are fundamentally benign - indeed my work in Parkhurst prison confirmed this for me, and convinced me anew that we are all born loveable, sociable and non-violent.

This has peculiar relevance when we come to examine how we view the mind and consciousness, and of course mental illness. If intent does exist and is of literally vital importance, you might expect a long description of what it is and how it works. But, so far as I can see, no such description is ever going to be possible. Even so, there is abundant evidence that intent is currently 'operational', indeed it seems to me to be a vital yet utterly elusive aspect of all living things. But this, perhaps more than any other aspect of life, is something that has to be explored and decided for yourself.

As regards mental illness however, I now see intent as playing a crucial role. In my new job I have three customers all of whom express the intention of killing themselves as soon as possible - generally because a 'voice' or some 'thing' or 'somebody' inside them is insisting that they do so, or so they tell me.

Now intent, in my view, acts something like a sheep dog shepherding thoughts, scouring out those that don't make sense, and generally ensuring mental stability and indeed sanity. Accordingly I have been actively encouraging my charges to raise their confidence in themselves, engage their intent or their purpose in distancing themselves from their invariably horrendous pasts, and take adult control of their lives. Two have responded so far by adjusting their declared intent, saying they no longer wish to die. These are early days but benign intentions like this are decidedly encouraging.

Now suppose for the sake or argument that intent does play just such a crucial role in consciousness and in irrationality. Then modern day academic psychiatry (and science in general for that matter) does not even enter the same dimension. They both might as well be living in a parallel universe.

How can you improve a person's self-esteem and indeed self-control, if you come from a 'scientific' background which says, we none of us are capable of having 'intent' anyway? Freud, a nineteenth century determinist is equally unhelpful.

The next issue involves human rights. These too are subject to interpretation and indeed misinterpretation. But on this view, they can be seen as seeking to nurture and encourage new growths of intent which oppressed people will, when suitably encouraged, beginning to sprout and put forward. And here these theoretical discussions come down to the political earth with a bump. There is a distinct danger that the new Mental Health Act with its innovation of 'renewable sentences' may actually bludgeon precisely those parts of the human mind that most need encouragement to grow. Human rights have a practical therapeutic impact, quite apart from their ethical (and belatedly legal) imperative.

Continued

A Quaker View of Psychiatry Continued

Much has changed since Tuke's day. For one thing the retreat nowadays in my view stoutly extols orthodox psychiatry (or did a couple of years ago when I worked as a consultant psychiatrist there.) For another, psychiatry is vastly more powerful today than it was, as is well capable of disenfranchising those who differ. Over the last three years, my work has been prematurely terminated firstly in a maximum security prison, then in a private mental hospital, and finally in a maximum security hospital. Although I now have to travel half across England, I am fortunate to have a job where I can still continue my work.

The more I learn, and the more I explore the fascinations which abound in human consciousness, the more crucial do the fundamental Quaker wisdoms become. For me, the term 'therapeutic Quakerism' has a vibrant ring to it. Could it be that in the next millennium, as two centuries ago, it could again illuminate a more fruitful and humane way forward?

Bob Johnson

(Bob Johnson is a member of Southampton & Portsmouth Monthly Meeting, occasionally attending York PM.)

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NOTHING IS LOST

A favourite phrase from the Scriptures is to be found in the second letter of Peter:

"With the Lord, a day can mean a thousands years, and a thousand years be like a day." It contains so much in so few words. We all know the feeling of when a day seems like a thousand years - those days when we are sad and miserable, and time just drags. We also know the opposite feeling - when we are happy and time flies by.

Peter is talking about the way God holds all things in being, describing God's embrace, encircling us all in his love. Time does not escape him. Not one day is lost. And a thousand years are all present to him. The world has not spun out of control. God is patient with us all, giving us many days and years to make our way to him. Some think such patience looks like absence - as if God is not there at all. But nothing is lost - no day, no hour, no moment. We may waste time, lose opportunities, and we say "they will never come again."

But God holds all these events, and moments, and experiences, as it were in a big basket. We drop them, he picks them up, like a parent after a child. Nothing is wasted, **nothing is lost**. He embraces all life - and he will help us to embrace ourselves wholeheartedly in every moment of life.

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(Well **almost nothing!**)

I believe that the shrine of St Dymphna, Patroness of people with mental health problems, used to be in Seaton in Devon; however, it has been moved. Does anyone know where it now is?

(Eric Mulvihill, 19 Brockley Avenue, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 7BP)

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Do not suppress your feelings
of resentment and disappointment
when someone lets you down.
Do not hide them
under a cloak of so-called unselfishness
and concern for the other's welfare.
It will communicate itself
as anxiety or condemnation.
The truth is that you are afraid to be angry,
and expect rejection if you are.

(From Cairns Network by The Rev Jim Cotter)

A Talk by Rhona McMillan at an APCMH Seminar on " Depression " - March 1999.
(Published with her permission.)

I've been asked to share some of my experiences of depression with you and the helpful or unhelpful things the church have done during those times and where my faith has fitted in.

Firstly of course, everyone's experience of depression will be different. There may be some common ground shared by many, but tonight I can only speak for myself. So please don't go away thinking that your friend or relative or neighbour will necessarily feel all, or indeed, any of the things I share.

I thought I'd start by explaining that my depression has largely been of the reactive kind, rather than purely clinical depression, though, I have had experience of that. But life throws things at us (all of us here I guess) and my experience of depression has often been preceded by a life experience, of which there have been many. Life started with an unhappy childhood which suffered from abuse and poor relationship with my father. It continued with the stillbirth of twins to my Mum when I was 13, the death of my mother when I was 16, my middle daughter's death at the age 4 months, along with an horrendous and painful marriage and subsequent divorce and eighteen years of single parenthood with all the problems divorce can sometimes bring for the children involved in a marriage breakdown.

However, having said my depression has been mainly reactive, in my case, I think an accumulation and continuance of one crisis and stress after another led to what I can only describe as a residue of pain that reared itself as clinical depression long after the events that led to the original depression.

How has it felt? There's lots of words I could use, words like a black heaviness that totally engulfs you. A feeling of physical pain inside from which there seems no escape. A disinterest in life and living and an inability to think of anything other than your own pain and darkness. In my case I have suffered bouts of constant thoughts of suicide, longing for an escape. And behind all of it, a terrible fear and panic that it would never end.

I have swung from feeling I cannot face talking to anyone, even if I could stop crying long enough to string a sentence together, to knowing I have to be with someone or I would probably go quite mad. Decision making of any kind, even down to what to eat, or whether to eat at all, or what to put on in the morning have been difficult, if not impossible sometimes. I have had no energy and suffered constant tiredness, both of which led to housework and all other activity being laid aside, with the ensuing consequences. It has been a mountain with no peak and a tunnel with no light or end.

How do you keep the faith, as it were, through that experience? Sometimes I have just about hung on by my fingernails to God. Other times I have known that my prayer life and relationship with the Lord is faltering. I have felt guilty that here I am, a Christian, who has known God all their life, and I can't trust Him enough yet to not sink into depression.

Unfortunately, I have to say that my experience has been that depression can still be a difficult area within Church family life. And here I should make the differentiation between individuals within a church and the larger institution of the Church. Looking at the Church as a structure, I think there is a great deal that can be done and sometimes it is missed, almost because it is too obvious. Educating the Church about what depression is vital, because a greater understanding of the nature of depression will aid better decisions within the Church as to how to help those who suffer.

For example, it is no good waiting for a depressed person to ask for help, because they almost certainly won't feel able to. Look out for someone who has been missing from church and call them to see if they would value a lift or someone to sit with even when they get there. Make the first move, be like the friends who carried the lame man to Jesus, make the person important enough to want to climb onto a roof for, do anything as long as they get to Jesus.

Continued

A Talk on depression continued.....

Please don't make anyone the church project for healing, because this can lead to great feelings of failure and pain for all if someone isn't healed. Try to make the church a safe place where it is OK to say you're depressed. Look out for their practical needs as well as the spiritual ones. There's sometimes too much talk of demons and other spiritual problems. Maybe they need an afternoon away from the children, or food for the cupboard if they've been made unemployed or redundant, and in some cases it may even be right to make financial help available.

Helping the depressed within a church should never be left to the few experts, we're all called to heal the sick, help the oppressed, look out for the sad and lonely and set the prisoner free. And people who are depressed can certainly feel like a prisoner. And who knows when it will be your friend, or family member or work colleague or maybe even you yourself, who gets depressed. You just don't always know all the people who are suffering, because not everyone feels safe enough to say so.

So get your church educated, get yourself educated and look out for each other as the Bible instructs us to.

Having said it is a difficult area in the Church family sometimes, I should, however, make the point that the one thing that has remained constant for me is that everyone who has tried to help individually, has always wanted to help in the best way they know. Of course that hasn't always been helpful, but everyone is human. So here are some of the reactions I've met of a more individual nature.

There have been the people who have prayed long and hard, and become frustrated when there's been little or no improvement and consequently given up, sometime not only on the prayer but on me. Looking back, I know now from a different perspective that it's truly difficult to stick it out with someone when you desperately want things to get better and they aren't. But at the time it brought feelings of rejection, guilt and enormous hurt. A feeling of having let everyone down and of not being a good enough person, never mind Christian. That feeling also hung around and left its mark when I was told that I must have a problem with my faith, or have committed some dreadful unconfessed sin. Being told that others in my position coped better didn't help a great deal either.

For a number of people depression is something you don't talk about and is consequently ignored as are the people who suffer from it. People and maybe particularly, Christians, don't know what to do when something drags on and on, people who are ill should hopefully show signs of improvement (unless the illness is known to be terminal) and if this isn't happening they start to back away. You don't get spoken to and no-one dares ask how you are for fear you'll tell them. Depression it seems is not only frightening for the sufferer, but for those around them also.

What has helped? Well it's been the people who are just there, they don't put expectations on you, however well intended. They're the people who are happy to just sit with you, or who can pick the phone up and really want to know how things are. They're not scared that you'll fall apart and cry for ever all over them (though of course you might, and I certainly have to some.) And what's more they don't put lofty expectations on themselves to make it or you better. They don't think they must heal you, change you or be some super person. They just love you as you are and have loved me as I am and have been.

For me those have been the people of real faith, the people who have been there for me but actually left me safe in the hands of Jesus, to do whatever was needed to heal me. There's been plenty of them, I know. People who have prayed behind the scenes quietly and alone, with no show and who I now hope are reaping the rewards. People who have been on the end of the phone for hours. People who have listened and counselled me but without expectations or pressure to go any further than I felt able. People who just sat with a cup of tea with me, even if a word was never spoken.

It's really hard to love like that and I am so grateful and love dearly the people like that who God placed into my life.

Continued

And my faith? - well - my relationship with the Lord has been through highs and lows, but I know for certain that I would be here today if God hadn't been in my life. If I hadn't had my relationship with him in the good and the bad times. If I hadn't held to a sure and certain hope of a life with Him eventually. His great faithfulness has surely been my rock.

Someone once said to me, "Never let go in the dark of what you knew in the light". And I think that's the best advice I can give to someone in the middle of depression right now. Hold on and God will surely bring you through. You may have to hold on and hold on and hold on, but whatever you do keep holding on to Jesus, because He's the one who will never let you down.

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THE LORD GOD, OUR FRIEND

God remains with us, wherever we go,
And in my heart I know that is so,
If we choose the wrong path for the road ahead,
God will take us back to the road He's always led.

He will neither mock nor condemn us for going astray,
As long as we listen to Him and Him we obey,
Christ is our Saviour and I know this is true,
We must listen to Him even when our dreams fall through.

For when things do not go as we might intend,
In the road we are travelling Christ stands at each bend,
His love is unconditional, His goodness is pure,
So follow His path and all difficulties endure.

Rest your fears and your trust in Him,
When the light ahead is growing pale and dim,
Devote your love and life in the Lord,
He stands like a bridge crossing over a ford.

Get rid of all those irrational fears,
Replace anger with understanding, bring about laughter
where once there were tears,

Life is a perilous journey with no ending in sight,
But Christ is our Salvation and God is our Light.

(anonymous)

RECOGNISING GRIEF

In the midst of winter
I finally learned
That there was in me
An invincible summer.

Albert Camus

Reprinted from :

The Buckinghamshire Association for Mental Health - March 1999

"BEING ALONGSIDE" Two illustrations

(1) The first is in the book *Facing the Storm* by Eddie Askew. In one of his meditations he refers to a television comedy called "Bread" about a family in Liverpool. Grandad lives next door. In one episode Grandad was unhappy; he felt lonely and was bad-tempered when they called in to see him. The family responded by taking him small gifts to show that they loved him. Grandad's response was that he did not want to be given things. "I just want you to stay awhile," he said. The family found it difficult to understand that he didn't want gifts. All he needed was a little of their time. Eddie Askew writes about this "parable"

"Love can be shown through gifts, but the best gift is often one's time. Love is a relationship, reaching out across the gap between people, pulling them closer. When someone is lonely, it's not presents they want, it's *presence*. Someone to sit with, to talk to, someone to listen. Someone who values them enough not just to give their money but to give their time."

(2) The other is in the recent biography of Henri Nouwen entitled *Wounded Prophet* by Michael Ford. About two months before his own death, Henri Nouwen had responded to a message from an old friend, Thomas Day, pastor of the Huguenot Church in Berlin, that his 20 year-old son, Lars, had died in tragic circumstance. He went to visit the pastor and apparently stay for several days. Thomas Day recalls how Henri said Mass around the dining-room table every day at about 5pm and then describes the visit in these words :

"The first thing Henri did was to try to soak in our situation, just to listen and talk to us, to get us to describe our feelings about what had happened. He didn't know our boy so he wanted to learn as much as possible about him. He read everything we had that Lars had written, and what had been written about him. I can't remember Henri giving advice - but he was one of the few Christians who realised that he helped most by being their and listening. He didn't feel he had to teach us anything particularly - although he taught us a great deal."

John Vallat

Tim Harvey, one of our members, has prepared a leaflet on mental health which he is sending out to a large number of Churches. He is supported by Joni Earickson's project, "Through the Roof". In the leaflet he encourages churches to be aware of mental health needs and possible Christian responses. We offer him our prayers for this project. May God bless Tim as he strives to serve our Lord in this way.

OPEN LETTER TO OUR PATRON, THE RIGHT REVEREND STEPHEN SYKES

Dear Bishop Stephen

I would like to thank you for all you have done and continue to do to promote mental health and to support our Association. We are very fortunate to have you as one of our Patrons and are delighted that you are prepared to continue in that role following your resignation as Bishop of Ely.

Your personal contribution has been considerable. I was amazed to hear that the mental health video you promoted "With a Little Help from my Friends" has sold approximately 600 copies in the first year. And that the excellent resource material you compiled for APCMH for use by churches on World Mental Health Day on 10 October (and at other times) is being sent to 30,000 churches by the Health Education Authority. I understand that the factsheet incorporating this material "Mental health promotion and the Christian Church" can be obtained from : Mental Health Programme, Health Education Authority, Trevelyan House, 30 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW Tel: 020 7413 1991 or fax: 020 7413 8935.

Jeremy Boutwood and I were very pleased to be at your retirement service on 5 September. It was a moving experience. It also made us aware of the extent of your achievements and commitments in other fields and of your involvement in so many charities. This emphasised how privileged we are to have you as such an active patron.

And your support for APCMH is underlined by your nominating us as the beneficiaries of the collection at your retirement service. We are immensely grateful not only for the much needed funds but also for the support which this demonstrates. Thank you.

I pray for God's blessing on you and Joy in your new post as Principal of St John's College, Durham.

Yours gratefully
John Vallat
Chair APCMH

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.

The Editor welcomes contributions for the publication

Please send to : John Rawson, 20 Lindsey Close MITCHAM, Surrey CR4 1XQ or Fax 0208 679 2679