

# NEWSLETTER

*July 2000*

## THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

*"Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if revelation comes to anyone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged"*  
**1 Cor 14 : 29-31**

Within our association there are many "prophets" with a multitude of insights, interpretations, understandings and priorities. In the past this may have caused some friction and strife. Whose agenda should we follow? Who should be in control? But I believe that, recently, there has been a slight, but significant, change of approach which is reflected in the new concept of "affiliation" to APCMH. The areas of mental health and religion and spirituality are so complex and so diverse that there are bound to be differences of experience and perspective. We want to celebrate those differences and hope that, by carefully weighing each other's views, "everyone may be instructed and encouraged".

At the last AGM it was agreed to pursue the concept of "affiliation". We now have an agreed affiliation agreement. Any group, however small or large, may become affiliated to APCMH by signing the agreement and paying an annual fee of £25. The main commitment is to support the aims and values of APCMH. The main benefit is the connection with a national association of like-minded groups and individuals and the right to be known as "affiliated to APCMH".

Our first affiliated group is Trust Links at Southend. Cherry Higgins, an APCMH committee member, is the prime mover. They are bringing local churches together to raise mental health awareness. Already they have held two conferences. They are planning "training" courses for the churches and an information and agricultural project called "Growing Together" for both of which applications for substantial funding have been made. I went to their recent conference entitled "Who Cares?." It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm and commitment. The conference was excellent. And it is encouraging to hear Cherry say that it is a great help to be able to state in their publicity that they are "affiliated to APCMH". I hope that this may be the first of many affiliated groups.

### Other news:

The "relaunch" of APCMH provisionally planned for 2<sup>nd</sup> July has been postponed. The unavailability of key people made us rethink. The slight delays in registering the new APCMH company as a charity finally persuaded us that, regretfully, we should postpone this event. We will now have a formal "commissioning" of the new company at the members day on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November (see details on back page of this newsletter) I do apologise for having stated with such certainty in the last newsletter that the relaunch would be on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. I should have been more cautious.

The new APCMH Company has been incorporated and we now await registration as a new charity.

Our new leaflet is in final form and will be printed and distributed as soon as the new charity number is known.

Carole Allen has been engaged to help with administrative work. I hope that correspondence will now be dealt with more promptly than I have managed in recent months. We hope to appoint a new treasurer in the near future.

We believe that as an association we are now equipped and ready to set sail once more. **We need more crew.** Supporters are the essence of the association and we look to our members and supporters to join, and encourage others to join, our network of active workers. **We need more national committee members.** Also we shall **need a new "Captain"**, a chair, who, as agreed at last years AGM will be elected by members at this years meeting. I am not able to make a full commitment for the coming year. We need someone to come forward to lead the new corporate Association on its exciting and , hopefully fruitful, journey.

Above all we need to know your views. The way the committee is going seems right to them but we still need to hear your views to ensure that the journey is one that our fellow pilgrims want to make with us. We must listen to your advice.

*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*

**Proverbs 12 : 15**



## **" RESPONDING TO MENTAL HEALTH "**

*Some thoughts expressed in the closing of a day-long seminar of the same name, held in May this year. The audience was composed of religious leaders and people with caring roles in local faith communities with the South London and Maudsley Trust area of Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham and Croydon (SLAM)*

"Most conferences nowadays have a slogan. So here's the slogan for today:

### **"STAMP OUT STIGMA!"**

We all know that one of the most difficult things a person has to face on discharge from hospital into the community is stigma – the stigma of being mentally ill. There is a huge amount of work to be done in changing attitudes towards mental illness and mentally ill people. And you are in a particularly good position to do that work because you are all VIPs in the field of opinion forming, you are opinion leaders in your own communities.

What I am urging you to do is no great crusade of conversion, just a slow, patient but persistent dripping of disapproval onto the hard stone of prejudice. In this work, language is the key tool. By this I mean taking every opportunity to pick up on words such as "nutters", "bonkers", "loony bin" etc. Just make it clear that you think these words are neither funny nor acceptable. And again, there's no such thing as a "schizophrenic" or a "manic-depressive", although there are people who suffer from these ailments.

So – gently, ever so gently, of course, we must challenge these words, these attitudes and these fears (for that's what they mask) which exclude "some of the least of these" from being human."

*Thoughts expressed by Daphne Cowan*

*Hon Chaplain at Maudsley Hospital, London*

## **COMPASSION**

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.

*Spiritual Pain – Jean Varnier*



## DANGER IN MENTAL HEALTH PROPOSALS

Members of the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health (Croydon) are concerned about the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act, which include the possibility of the detention for an indefinite period of those deemed to be a potential danger to the public because they suffer from a severe personality disorder.

While there are notable anomalies in the current Mental Health Act, including the requirements for treatability before it is possible to admit someone to hospital, the proposals are a dangerous solution to this problem.

Apparently a panel of psychiatrists will make an assessment of the danger posed, and will, if they deem that the person poses a potential danger, recommend indefinite detention.

Such prediction is extremely difficult. In the current atmosphere of increasing litigation, it seems likely that to protect themselves psychiatrists will err on the side of caution, resulting in the detention of many people who have committed no crime and who pose no real danger.

It is worth considering what will happen to those who have exhibited mental health problems while in prison. What will be the future of young people who have attended special schools as a result of behaviour problems?

There have been instances of harm done by people with personality problems. There are more instances of harm done by those who have never up to that point exhibited any oddity of behaviour.

There appears to be a tendency for the enactment of dangerously illiberal law in the mental health field. This suggestion, and that of the compulsory treatment orders, both seek to control those with mental health problems in ways that would be unacceptable if applied to the wider population.

The motivation appears to be for the government to be seen to be taking some action in the wake of the high profile cases covered in the media. These cases do not give a balanced picture of the problems associated with managing these vulnerable people.

**Sue Albery** – Development Officer, Association of Pastoral Care in Mental Health.  
Recently published in a Croydon newspaper.

~~~~~

### PRAYER

Some time ago, my wife visited an old man who was a member of her psychotherapy group. He had been taken ill and admitted into the sick ward.

On suggesting that he should have faith, so that the Lord would hear his cry and make him better, he replied with fear in his eyes: "I'm praying like the devil missus!"

Now although this may sound humorous, it just about sums up the attitudes of most people today. They only utter 'panic prayers' when in a tight corner, usually accompanied by frantic promises to serve God when they've recovered, or when the crisis has resolved itself.

Experience teaches ministers to believe promises about intending church attendance when he sees the person coming to church regularly. For a great many these days, it is often a 'one off' effort, and even following a funeral, the social custom of being present at the following Sunday's 'memorial service' is rarely observed.

Printed prayers abound, and some books of prayers contain delightful passages which uplift and delight the soul, as one identifies with them. Perhaps one of my best-remembered spiritual experiences was in singing the 'Te Deum' as a choirboy, with the morning sun streaming in through the stained glass window.

How Saul of Tarsus must have felt 'transported' as he took his seat as a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, chanting his set prayers in the great temple in Jerusalem. Yet for the first time in his life, following his conversion, he began to really 'pray'... as Ananias informed the naturally apprehensive Christians in Acts 9.11 "Behold he prayeth".

Certainly not, I would imagine, in the flowery language written by another person, but in simple earnest words, right from his own heart. Probably little more than a deeply grateful "Thank you, Lord for saving my soul."

The reader may judge for himself which type of prayer would have been most acceptable to the Lord.

*Christian Definitions – Ken Bunting*



## Talk Given By RHONA McMILLAN at an APCMH Seminar In WOKING

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 a 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 of four months along 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 lack of interest in life and living, and an inability to think of anything other than one's 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 has 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 is vital because a greater understanding of the nature of depression will aid better decisions with 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 even someone to sit with, 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.

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 recently or long ago 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 do. 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's 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. Sometimes not only the prayer but 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 don't, but at the time it brought feelings of rejection, guilt and enormous hurt. A feeling of having let everyone down and 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. They aren't spoken to and no one dares ask how they are for fear they will tell them. Depression it seems is not only frightening for the sufferer, but for those around them.

What has helped? Well, it has been the people who are just there, they don't put expectations on you however well intended. They are 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 forever 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 has 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 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 whom God placed into my life.

And my faith? Well, my relationship with the Lord has been through highs and lows but I know for certain that I wouldn't 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.



## BEANNACHT (for Josie)

On the day when the weight deadens  
on your shoulders and you stumble,  
may the clay dance to balance you.

And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window  
and the ghost of loss gets in to you,  
may a flock of colours, indigo, red, green and azure blue  
come to awaken in you a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays in the curach of thought  
and a stain of ocean blackens beneath you,  
may there come across the waters a path of yellow moonlight  
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,  
may clarity of light be yours,  
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,  
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow wind work these words of love around you,  
an invisible cloak to mind your life.

*Found written in a church*

~~~~~  
**"HOW TO LIVE ON 24 HOURS A DAY" – Arnold Bennett**

The supply of time is truly a daily miracle ..... you wake up in the morning and lo! your purse is magically filled with twenty-four hours of the unmanufactured tissue of the universe of your life. For remark! No-one can take it from you. It is unstealable and no-one receives either more or less than you receive ..... waste your infinitely precious commodity as much as you will and the supply will never be withheld from you.

*Submitted by **Peter Sommers** – High Wycombe*

~~~~~

## **A FRIEND IN NEED**

It is a thoughtful person who helps you in your difficulties  
It is the type of person who puts you first and themselves last  
And when you want to thank them they say "Don't mention it"  
They shun publicity and blend into the background  
Such people are the salt of the earth  
It's a pity that there weren't a few more of them.

~~~~~

***There are many forms of injustice and aggression.*** One of the most subtle and destructive forms, which can afflict well-meaning people, is the conviction that God is totally on our side, so that in God's name and for the sake of justice and peace, we begin to act unjustly and aggressively towards others.

***Gerrard Hughes***  
***God, Where are You?***



## ONE PERSON'S THOUGHTS ON COMMON HUMAN VALUES

All people really appreciate :

1. being treated with respect and courtesy, especially when they are feeling distressed or slightly out of control.
  2. being helped to understand their predicament.
  3. being helped to express their concerns fully.
  4. being appreciated.
  5. a responsible attitude to life in themselves and in others.
  6. being seen for the responsible people that they are.
  7. sensitivity.
  8. being given feedback that helps them come to terms with their own distress.
  9. being reminded that there is no need for blame or self-blame in this world.
  10. being taken seriously, especially when their ideas are uncommon, extreme or bizarre and especially when they are feeling angry, sad or frightened.
  11. being consulted about matters which affect them, especially when they don't fully understand the need for what is being proposed.
  12. being encouraged to choose their own labels for their states of being.
  13. being encouraged to take charge of their own lives.
  14. being trusted.
- ~~~~~

**THE TASK** which faces all of us in the caring profession has a lot of similarity with the old fable of the handsome prince who was turned into a frog. How many people do you know who feel like that prince – trapped in a body from which they can't escape and feeling that some circumstance beyond their control has put them there?

The frog feeling comes when you want to be bright – but you feel dull. You want to share – but feel selfish. You want to be thankful – but you feel indifferent. Who hasn't felt that way at some point in their life?

You find yourself all alone, floating in a large pond on a lily pad with life passing you by. You don't like yourself much. You feel ugly and unloved. You have no sense of purpose or direction to your life. Your close relationships are at rock bottom – life is not much fun. You feel frightened, disgusted with yourself, pooped and poopy – just too sluggish to budge.

But you and I know what happened next in the fable. A beautiful young maiden came along and kissed the frog. Now I ask you – when have you ever seen a beautiful young woman kiss a slimy, green old frog? Most people won't touch one much less kiss it. But the young maiden knew something you and I often fail to recognise. Inside that ugly old frog was trapped a handsome young prince.

The same is true of every human being who feels like a frog. There is human potential just waiting to be released. And it may be as simple as another human being coming along and recognising the spiritual pain a person is in and experiencing – a pain which sentences many people to years of feeling low self-esteem, no sense of purpose to life, relationships to self and others in a terrible state – and recognising the full potential of the person feeling this way – realising that every person is created in the image and love of the Creator and is just waiting to be kissed so they can be released from the bondage of feeling like a frog.

So what is **THE TASK** of caring for people? ..... **TO KISS FROGS – OF COURSE!**

*Spiritual Pain – Jean Varnier*



## **MIGHT ! .....IS RIGHT ?**

The following, taken from "The Oldie", is reported as an actual radio conversation released by the UK Chief of Navy Operations, October 1995. It hails from the Sunshine Coast, British Columbia, Canada.

**Navy :** Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

**Civilian:** Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees South to avoid a collision.

**Navy :** This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert your course.

**Civilian:** No. I say again divert your course.

**Navy :** This is the aircraft carrier Enterprise. We are a large warship of the US Navy. Divert your course now!!

**Civilian:** This is a lighthouse. Your call.

*Submitted by Peter Sommers – High Wycombe*

### **Members Day & A.G.M.**

## **"Being Alongside"**

**Saturday 4th November 2000**

**10.00 am to 4.00 pm**

**At All Saints Church, Battersea**

**All supporters of APCMH and their guests are welcome.**

**A charge of £5.00 for the day includes a Sandwich Lunch, tea & coffee.**

**Concessions available on request.**

#### **The Programme will include:**

- **Revd Canon John Foskett** on the theme of "Being Alongside"
- **Revd Canon Chris Mackenna**  
Director of St Marylebone Health and Healing Centre
- Group Discussions
- Relaunch of APCMH as a New Company
- News from Local Groups
- Annual General Meeting and election of Committee, Chair and other Officers
- An opportunity to meet other supporters and members of APCMH

If possible, for Catering purposes, please book in advance with Pam Freeman  
APCMH c/o Marylebone Parish Church, Marylebone Road, LONDON NW1 5LT

### **The Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health**

An association that supports those who are mentally ill and their families

Registered No. 327532

**PLEASE NOTE NEW National Office Address**

**APCMH c/o St Marylebone Parish Church, Marylebone Road, LONDON NW1 5LT**

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

The Editor welcomes contributions for publication, please send them to:

John Rawson, 20 Lindsey Close, MITCHAM, Surrey CR4 1XQ or Fax 020 8679 2679 or Email: [john.rawson@ukgateway.net](mailto:john.rawson@ukgateway.net)