

NEWSLETTER

A p r i l 2 0 0 1

THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

"....man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord"
Deuteronomy 8:3 NIV

During this time of Lent we are reminded by the temptation of Jesus that worldly values should not be our top priority. Jesus resisted the temptations of food, status, power and wealth choosing instead the word of God as his sustenance and the worship and service of his Heavenly Father as his role. I believe that this has special relevance to APCMH.

One of our stated aims is to encourage mental health professionals to recognise the importance of spiritual needs. The mental health system seems to emphasise the importance of worldly rather than spiritual values. People are assessed by reference to "normal" behaviour and their ability to function. Their "needs" tend to be assessed as medical and social with the emphasis on social support, food, housing, money and, if possible, work or "meaningful activity". The spiritual side of their lives is often ignored. I would hope that, both as an Association and as individuals, we might be able to encourage professionals not to overlook the spiritual side when assessing a person's needs. I realise that this raises a number of questions about what is meant by "spiritual needs" and how they can be met. Any comments from our members or readers would be welcome. It is an important topic to discuss. Maybe this could be considered further at our next annual meeting or conference?

On Saturday 10 March we held a day seminar led by the Rev Jim Cotter at St Paul's Church, Rossmore Road and entitled "Sounding from a Deep Depression". About 60 of us were there and the committee was very encouraged by the responses in the evaluation forms. There were certainly lessons to be learned eg the absence of a microphone in the morning meant that some people could not hear anything. But overall the day was a success and we will be considering a possible future programme of similar events.

The Association is dependent on its members for its support and for its funds. The main source of income is the membership subscriptions. In future we intend to send out annual renewal forms with the April newsletter so that everyone will be asked to renew their membership at the same time of year. Those who have joined during the previous year will not be expected to pay until the April following the first anniversary of their membership. Similarly, this year we do not expect you to pay if you have already paid during the last 12 months. We would also ask you to sign the membership application form unless you have already done so. The reason is that we are now a new company limited by guarantee. The membership of the old association does not automatically transfer to the new company. By becoming a member of the new company you are guaranteeing the company's debts up to a maximum of £1 each. I hope that this will not deter too many people. We really appreciate your support. Thank you.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
Matthew 6:33 NIV

John Vallat

HOPE AND RECOVERY

In her article "*The 'you'll nevers' ...*" in the January/February issue of "Open Mind" (the journal of MIND) Rachel Perkins, a professional mental health worker and a user of services, describes the "doom-laden prophesies of professionals that so many service users/survivors have experienced. Their reason for telling people that they will never have a job, get better, run a home, have a family, stop taking medication etc Rachel argues against this negativity and says, "Hope is central to recovery. Those of us who have been faced with the challenge of recover – rebuilding our lives with mental health problems – know the importance of recover – rebuilding our lives with mental health problems – know the importance of having someone who believes in us when we have difficulty believing in ourselves."

Hope is one of the core values of our Association – (see the tree in our leaflet). Most of us have faced times when we felt hopeless or had no hope in or for ourselves. If mental health professionals also view us as a hopeless case (to help us be realistic) we can begin to see ourselves as simply the illness we have. The resulting de-motivation can make this a self-fulfilling prophecy. At these times it can be impossible to hold on to hope, but often we find that someone else has been holding on to it for us. As people of faith it is central to our lives and it is a corporate as well as an individual thing. We are part of a community of faith and as such we are called on to have hope for ourselves and for others, and when we are not able to find that for ourselves, to trust that others will be holding that for us still.

We have an expectation, because we believe that God is involved in all that we do, that each human life has a value and worth of its own. Because each person is valuable to God they are also valuable to us and we have an understanding that each person has something unique to offer in his/her journey through this world and beyond.

There are many people who are living meaningful lives whilst continuing to experience difficulties with their mental health, and many who have or are finding through this Association that whilst there are many problems, (both for those who hold out hope, as well as those who feel they have none), the experience can bring a new dimension and a new perspective to life (and particularly their spiritual life).

But there must be hope – the expectation that through struggle and through suffering, in spite of and because of it, our lives are still valuable and meaningful for ourselves, to other people and to God. Jim Cotter talks about the importance of the person who kept on visiting. He couldn't remember what had been said or done, but that regular and continuing presence was a sign of hope.

Lord, we pray that you will help us to continue hoping. To have an expectation of our own ability to lead meaningful lives and to have that expectation of others that we meet. We pray for those who feel they have no hope, for those who have been told "You'll never..." Help us to hold on to the hope that with the right expectations and support the "you'll nevers...." Will be turned into the "I cans...." We thank you for those who went on hoping for us when we could not find that in ourselves. We pray that you will work through us to be a source of blessing and of hope to others.

Mary Hillier.

A DAY WITH JIM COLTER

APCMH had a very successful day at St Paul's, Rossmore Road, led by Jim Colter. Over 60 people signed to come and we met a lot of new friends. Jim led the day in his own inimitable way talking very personally about his own experiences of depression. He was challenging and provocative, giving the participants plenty of opportunity to discuss the issues and ask Jim questions about various issues.

The day ended with a eucharist that many felt was very meaningful and appropriate for the occasion. I think this prayer of intercession is a good way to express the mood of the day.

Pam Freeman

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION *That we may be healed – Adapted from a litany by Therese Vanier*

That oppressed people and those who oppress them
may free each other....

That those who are handicapped and those who think
they are not may help each other...

That those who need someone to listen may touch the
hearts or those who are too busy...

That the homeless may bring joy to those who open
their doors reluctantly...

That the lonely may heal those who think they are
self-sufficient

That seekers for truth may give to those who are
satisfied that they have found it....

That the dying who do not want to die may be
comforted by those who find it hard to live...

That the unloved may be allowed to unlock the
hearts of those who cannot love...

That prisoners may find true freedom and liberate
others from fear

That those who sleep on the streets may share
their gentleness with those who cannot under-
stand them...

That the hungry may tear the veil from the eyes
of those who do not hunger after justice...

That those who live without hope may cleanse
the hearts of those who are afraid to live...

That the weak may confound the strong and
save them....

That those who inflict hurt may be bound by
law and transformed by true and firm
compassion...

That the cries of the violated may be absorbed
by the prayers of the pain-bearers...

That those who are violent may be
overwhelmed by those who are totally
vulnerable...

That we may be healed

~~~~~ **ELIJAH'S SOLUTION**

Recently there was a TV programme about the lives of two young people who suffered from depression. They and their councillors seemed to refer only to the mental aspect of their problems attempting to address their past life experiences and environment.

In a article for the Schizophrenia Digest January 2000, Dr Paul Garfinkle, Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto is quoted as predicting that the future of psychiatry will have a renewed focus on holistic care of the person rather than the treatment of the illness.

This approach is illustrated clearly in the Old Testament of the Bible where we have a story of the prophet, Elijah. Frightened and depressed he fled to the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree. There he asked that he might die as he "had had enough". But as he slept an angel touched him and said, "Rise and eat." His food was provided. He arose and ate.

Again he lay down and the second time the angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat because the journey is too great for you." He ate and drank and went in strength 40 days and night to a cave in the mountains. Here he talked with God about what was troubling his spirit. He found his answer then as God spoke in the quiet and peace. He was enabled to go on living because the energy previously used up in trying to resolve his inner conflict was now freed to allow him to act.

So, when you feel like giving up try Elijah's solution: REST, RISE and EAT, talk with your God. He always listens, directs in the best way for us and enables us to go on.

B. Joan Scott, Aberdeenshire

STAYING SANE - By Dr Raj Persaud

Dr Persaud says that just as by working on keeping physically fit it is possible to keep mentally fit and achieve a life style by which we may never need a psychiatrist.

He tells us how to achieve this. Each chapter has a short questionnaire by which you can test how you are mentally. He doesn't go much on counselling because it is an unregulated profession, whose usefulness has not been scientifically proved. People probably do better in poorer countries where they rely on themselves and friends and family. (No records to come and haunt you!) Many people given the time will solve or come to terms with their problems anyway.

He gives advice about achieving it yourself. Learn to control and reduce negative moods (we all have them at times) and enhance positive ones. Keep busy, socialise and have meaningful work. Expect to succeed but be realistic about your aspirations. Don't be a pushy parent.

Stress causes actual damage to the brain, so deal with problems at once. You can do little about the past, but it is never too late to change. If you can't change the world, or manage your environment then change yourself.

He emphasises the importance of maintaining physical health by good diet and exercise. He talks about the research done by Dr Lineas Pauling, for which he received a Nobel Prize, on the importance of vitamins and minerals. A deficiency of these affects the brain before it affects the body. Dr Persaud always tests his patients for vitamin deficiency of iron. He found 52% of women and 18% of men had this deficiency. I have not the exact figures but as I remember, one of the things revealed by the research carried out at the Peckham Health Centre in the late thirties and forties produced similar figures. Nothing changes. He agrees with Dr Pauling that the RDA is a minimum and many of us need more, particularly if we are ill. In the case of mental illness particularly, Dr Pauling recommends Vitamins B and C in very large doses. Dieting is very damaging to mental health and doesn't work, all you need is a sensible target and exercise. He says that to have a religious belief is good for our mental health, although some people who have a religious belief do sometimes have mental problems, but there is a lower rate amongst those who are religious. Though cults are dangerous because they are inward looking, the main religions all offer a power beyond ourselves. Self-management gives hope, cultivates good relationships and reduces ego in favour of the community. Prayer and meditation reduce tension.

Finally, he believes promoting positive mental health a more powerful way of alleviating poor mental health than preventative treatments. Your sanity is of long-term benefit, not only to yourself but also a resource for others. Positive mental health works. The book give you some skills – use them.

Submitted by Evelyn Sumpton, Catford

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### **An extract taken from Lauren Slater's book "Spasm".**

Lauren, an American Jew, now a practising psychologist, describes her experiences both of epilepsy and mental health problems, inextricably entwined in a fascinating story, which walks a tightrope between truth and lies, to tell her story. I particularly like her image of the two kinds of darkness.

"I, Jewish by blood, have always preferred churches, because a seizure in a synagogue means disruption and embarrassment, whereas a seizure in church is party of the holy atmosphere. Churches are places for the two tongued and the fainters, for broken bodies. Christ himself had his body broken, his back snapped on the board of the cross, little nails driven right through his lifelines. He died up there, stinking and bloody, and tell me this: where in a synagogue can you find such a sight, a synagogue all clean and quiet, smelling of bleach and law?

Continued .....



## "SPASM" Continued .....

The first church I ever went to was before my epilepsy, when I was only seven years old. I went with a Catholic friend of mine, and when the music began many doors in me opened, and my blood pressure rose, and I rose too, hitched a little higher towards grace.

The second church I ever went to was at the falling school (for children with epilepsy) and this church was intricate and magical, drops of gold on sceptre tops, saints walking in all the windows.

The third church I ever went to was ..... When I was in the darkness. There are two kinds of darkness, the first so full of breath you know you are close to God. The second, is the darkness of distance, of plugged-up tunnels and exhaust. In this you are far from God, and it was into this I fell.....

## CHOICE OF SILENCE

5 a.m. Wake up – the silence of the day has begun.

The birds are singing, it's dawn.

Get up, use the bathroom, creep into the kitchen for tea and toast or cereal.

Wash, dress, get ready for the day ahead – it's a new beginning.

Leave in car or bus or train – now the noise begins, radios, chatter, music, all set the mood for the day, taking part, or not, as we choose.

Alive – we live. We hear or choose not to, but thank heavens for those that listen and hear what we say. In the silence of the day.

**Margaret Baylis**

*Margaret Baylis was a volunteer in the Croydon group. Sadly, Margaret died unexpectedly of a heart attack in March at the age of 64. She had Schizophrenia but was feeling really well in herself. There are many who will miss her kindness and generosity, especially the younger people. She was a friend to many and she said that in APCMH she felt as if she had come home.*

*Margaret had a copy of this poem for many years – does anyone know where it comes from or who wrote it?*

There's no telling how your plans will shape –  
Wrought on the anvil of the angry years –  
From life's hard hammer blows there's no escape.  
You have to take what comes, come joy or tears.  
For this be thankful. Let the thunder roll.  
Don't hide afraid behind a matchbox wall – Life  
as it's lived can break or make the soul – but  
Love's guardian arm encircles you and all.

## Two poems by Kenneth Craddock

### RAIN

It's raining – huh, again

It rains so often these days

And when it rains the paths to the stream in the hollow flood and there is water everywhere

It hangs on the big trees on the opposite of the hollow and they  
look shiny, black and gaunt against the green and brown of the earth.

The horses on the brow of the hill

looked soaked to their poor skins and their grey hooves look shiny.

*Continued .....*

The grey sky looks down on the earth and pours more rain down onto an already sodden world.  
Dogs run for shelter, again sodden to the skin under the hair.  
People out in the rain pull up their collars and clamp down their hats to avoid the same fate as their pets.  
Boys and girls press noses against damp windows and wish the rain would go away so they could go out to play.

When it rains on an Easter Sunday it fills me with depression.  
Rain and water and a sodden world pull at my spirit to bring down an awful dark depression.  
It seems to hold my spirit in a grip of grey dampness and thus I could almost say I will never be happy again.  
But will pass away in the grip of this terrible dark dampness.

But almost immediately there comes from within me a hope and certainness of spirit that this is but a rainy day and tomorrow there will be a day of sunshine,  
And hope will spring as in the weather, so in my spirit again.

### **WHAT ARE YOU?**

What are you?  
Are you my sun to warm me  
and give me life?  
Are you my star to tell my fortune  
and guide me?  
Will you warm me with your flesh?  
Will you guide me truly –  
through my life?

When I look at you will you smile  
and be glad to see me?  
When I need your thoughts  
will you give them to me  
and be gentle?  
What are you?

You and your kind ways  
Are my support  
You are my oak tree  
You are my gently brown leaves to enfold me  
You are my green grass to lay me down  
You are my bright spring flowers to amuse me and brighten my world  
You are my orchestra when I want to dance  
You are my song when there is no music  
You are my bank when money can no longer purchase what I want.

All these things you are to me.  
So pray God stay close to me and stay just what you are.

*Kenneth suffered with Schizophrenia and died in 1994 aged 53. After his death amongst his personal possessions his family came across several poems reflecting his feelings at various times in his life. His brother, Robert, would like to share them with others.  
If anyone would like a full set please send me £1.00 to cover the cost of photo-copying and postage, and I will send them to you.*

**Pam Freeman**



## **"BEING ALONGSIDE" *The A.G.M. & Members Day***

At the APCMH National AGM and Members' Day on Saturday, 4 November, 2000, John Foskett led us in an exploration of what it means to "Be Alongside". He suggested that by finding out more about where we are, we can learn more about how to truly be alongside others. John helped us to be more in touch with ourselves and with each other in the context of the day and the place. He encouraged us to be more aware of the things that help us to stay alongside other people but also to be aware of the times when we need space and to be apart. Both are important.

In groups we explored some aspects of our childhoods. Childhood can be a source of important insights into the ways we are able to be alongside others in the present. In a culture that did not value them, we thought about Jesus' emphasis on children and why they might have been so unique and important to Him. We also thought about children's rich experiences of spirituality, often related in the context of relationships, and gained some fascinating insights from research carried out by David Hay and Rebecca Nye and collected in a book "The Spirit of the Child". It was clear that from an early age children found it difficult to talk about spiritual things and thought that people would think them "funny" or "mad".

John talked about the difficulty of talking about spiritual experiences in the context of our mental health problems. Although they are often rich experiences they can be devalued and we learn not to talk about them.

John thought about three different areas or themes that were important in the recovery of people who had experienced mental distress. The first was a non-judgemental, non-medical or therapeutic person, who keeps returning or stays with the person. Presence is all-important. The second was the importance of being able to help others in a similar situation, which helps to give the experience meaning and purpose. The third was the creative opportunities of poetry, creative writing and other mediums can bring. All are ways of coming more closely into relationship with others and ourselves.

APCMH encourages spaces, times to be with other another, to talk without the usual pressure of timetables and expectations. Once again, in small groups we were encouraged to share more about the spiritual importance and significance of our own mental health problems. In this space and time many felt they were able to relate at a deeper level, to talk about their spirituality and feel safe, and that it is part of the "good news" to communicate these things to each other.

John left us all with much to think and reflect about – about ourselves and others – where we are now and where we have come from, and the links between our mental health and our spirituality. He gave us opportunities to be alongside each other in ways that are not always possible in our everyday lives, and also times to be apart, helping us to experience, consider and reflect on the value and importance of both for us personally.

Thank you John, for an amazing day!

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STOP PRESS !

2001 AGM – 3 November at St Paul's, Rossmore Road, N.W.1. More details later.

After Easter a drop-in will possibly be opened at Rossmore Road on alternate Mondays, 2.00 to 4.00 pm. Details will be sent to London members and anyone else who would like them.

Pam Freeman

BOOK REVIEWS

CARERS IN THE COMMUNITY ; "Why have you forsaken me?" by Edna Hunneysett.

to be published in April by APS Publishing, The Old School, Tollard Royal, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 5PW Tel.01725 516246

Price : £12.95 ISBN : 0 9537234 7 X. Can be ordered now through book shops and direct from the publisher and hopefully, on line in April. More information on <http://www.apspublishing.co.uk/books/carers.htm>

Book endorsement

What does it mean to care and be cared for? This is the theological and practical question that lies at the heart of this book. In wrestling her way towards an answer, Edna Hunneysett provides us with an invaluable and deeply moving insight into what it means to care for a person with a severe mental illness, and the sometimes intolerable strains that such a task places on families and carers. The book provides us with fresh challenges and insights that should enable us all to care a bit more deeply and to understand the inner world of carer and cared for a bit more compassionately. In telling the story of her experiences as a carer, Edna insightfully highlights the inadequacies of the church's response to both carers and cared for, and lays down some vital challenges which call the church to take very seriously its ministry to people with mental health problems and their families. This is more than a book about mental illness. It is about being human and enabling others to remain human even in the midst of the most formidable storms. Everyone who has an interest in caring for people with mental illness, and ensuring that carers are cared for, should take seriously the insights and challenges presented in this book.

Dr John Swinton

Edna is a great friend and colleague of APCMH

ASYLUM by Roger Grainger.

Price: £6.99 (postage paid) or £30 for 5 copies from : Roger Grainger, 7 Park Grove, Horbury, Wakefield, WF4 6EE.

INTRODUCTION by the Earl of Longford

Asylum is a description of a psychiatric hospital of the kind that we would now consider old-fashioned. Until recently there were very many such hospitals in Great Britain. For a short time, more than forty years ago, Roger Grainger was a patient in 'a place like that'. Since becoming an Anglican priest, he has worked mainly in such hospitals. Asylum is the result. In prose and free verse, he lets the hospital speak for itself, describing how it was when he arrived there twenty-five years ago – when the institution still bore the marks of its custodial past – and how it was in the years before it finally closed, quite a different kind of place. The book reflects the love Roger Grainger has for Western Meade (the name has been changed) and the love which, against all the odds, he himself found there. It is a privilege to be allowed to write an introduction to this moving book. I do so with admiration and best wishes for its success.

Gentlemen only

This is the oldest part of the hospital. Ssh, go quietly,
It's half past one, and there's no-one around. The residents are having their afternoon nap.
The atmosphere is heavy with pipe tobacco and floor polish.

Here

The vaulted corridors meet to make a circle round the central column, the spindle-tree of the hospital.

Although the space is open it still feels shut in –

We're several yards from the nearest window. Meanwhile, the faint noise of snoring

Enters from the sitting room. Here, in arm chairs ranged along the walls,

A dozen old men have taken shelter and are now fast asleep,

There legs reaching outwards to each other in a gesture of mutual support and affirmation.

The corridor is like a tunnel, leading to the central space,

The world's navel, institutional omphalos,

This is just the sitting room, halfway between station waiting room and a London club.

It's the kind of thing you could see anywhere.

Come on, we'll find some fresh air. We don't want them to wake up

And see us look down on them

THE ASSOCIATION FOR PASTORAL CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH

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

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