

# *The Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health*

## *NEWSLETTER*

*July 2001*

### THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

***"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God".  
Micah 6:8 NIV***

These words have been impressed on my mind over the last few weeks. Firstly a committee member reminded me of this verse, saying that he felt it was an important guideline for APCMH in its work and ministry. The same verse was referred to in a radio programme and again in a book I was reading. And earlier this week it was included in the readings at a "Service of Commissioning of Southwark Pastoral Auxiliaries" at Southwark Cathedral at which one of our committee, Mary Hillier, was being commissioned. The words are not only a guide for pastoral auxiliaries but remind me that it is attitudes and approach rather than achievements that concern the Lord. How and why we act is more significant than what we do. It is the journey that is important. The destination is less so.

The "Service of Commissioning" was a wonderful occasion. I found a single seat right at the back but with a clear, though distant, view of Mary. I felt very much part of something special. During the sharing of the peace, though I was alone, I was greeted and accepted as part of the body of Christ. But, in particular, I was encouraged and inspired by hearing the story of SPAs (as they are known) and sharing in part of the journeys of the new SPAs and Joanna Cox, the retiring co-ordinator of training. Joanna is about to take up a new job at Church House with responsibilities for developing lay ministry "for everyone". What an exciting challenge! I went to the service to support Mary but came away feeling that I was the one who had been supported and given new hope.

My own experience is that we all learn from each other. There is so much to be gained from an exchange of personal experiences and views. This is very much the approach of this newsletter. We want a variety of people to tell their stories and express their opinions. We also hope that the web-site, once it is in its final form, might provide a similar forum. And we are now considering possible "gatherings of people" where we can learn from each other. Such "gatherings" could be in the form of services, such as the service at Southwark Cathedral, conferences, seminars, forums or groups. But whatever the format, the aim would be to give hope, encouragement and insight in respect of the mental health and spiritual needs of ourselves and others.

The national committee of APCMH has set out its aims and objectives. But, while holding firmly to those aims, we should not lose sight of the role itself which, at least at present, we see as that of "encourager". In that role we should act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. We need patience to watch in hope for the Lord to fulfill His work using our association as He wills. For our God does hear us.

Finally thank you for your support of APCMH. We have been very encouraged by the response to the request for membership renewals. This is most welcome not only as it provides our main source of income but also as a sign of positive support for the association. Thank you.

***"But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour: my God will hear me." Micah 7:7 NIV***

***John Vallat***

# THE VORTEX

Life, like a lazy river, serene and peaceful, dappled sunshine shimmers on the surface.  
The waters lap against the bank, lilies dozing, holding their heads up to the sun.  
Secure we believe we are, however false it may be, the vortex hides – ready.  
Slyly the vortex works, catching the unwary, slowly but securely spinning.  
At first, the pace is slow, easy to escape, you think, but alas – wrong.  
Still we do not recognise our danger, our sleep pattern is erratic.  
So, so easily tired, patience wears thinner and thinner – lost.  
Stress comes knocking at our door, piling on the pressure.  
The energy for enthusiasm is so much harder to find.  
The vortex flexes its muscles, smiles quietly, circles.  
Fatigue permeates every effort, just let me sleep.  
How am I to stay motivated? Who, who cares?  
Endlessly twisting, coiling, rotating down.  
Self-esteem is on the decline, what next?  
Fatigue swells, emotions become raw.  
All centrifugal force expelling me.  
Self-confidence can not take it.  
Decision making all awry.  
The vortex's smile grows.  
All nerves strung taut.  
Withdraw! Withdraw!  
Irritation supreme.  
Self control gone.  
Panic whirling.  
Axis of worry.  
Pain eddies.  
Revolve.  
Gyrate.  
Under.  
Spiral.  
Sinks  
down,  
drops,  
dives,  
falls  
down  
on  
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on  
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**Jean Wearn Wallace**



# THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Not all Christian writers see darkness as a negative image. St John of the Cross, in the 16th century uses the sensual Song of Songs, from the Old Testament, as his model of the soul's journey towards union with God. This ancient love song, describing the meeting by night of a young girl and her lover, is reworked by John into a love poem of the soul searching for its lover, God himself.

'Dark Night' is his commentary on this poem. In it he says that the soul must pass through two nights if it is to reach perfection, a night of our senses, the purifying of our desires, and a night of our spirit, which we initiate, but as we deepen our contemplation and offering of ourselves to God, we become passive, whilst God furthers his work in us. This journey of the soul is a threefold night. Firstly, because it starves our senses, and the desires of this world. Secondly, because Faith is the only road, our understanding is in darkness. Finally, the end of the road is God, who in this life is darkness to us.

Upon a gloomy night,  
With all my cares to loving ardours flushed,  
(O venture of delight!)  
With nobody in sight  
I went abroad when all my house was hushed.

Upon that lucky night  
In secrecy, inscrutable to sight,  
I went without discerning  
And with no other light  
Except for that which in my heart was burning.

It lit and led me through  
More certain than the light of noonday clear  
To where One waited near  
Whose presence well I knew,  
There where no other presence might appear.

Oh night that was my guide!  
Oh darkness dearer than the morning's pride,  
Oh night that joined the lover  
To the beloved bride  
Transfiguring them each into the other.

*Submitted by The Rev Andrew Wilson*

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## CHRIST BESIDE ME

The light in the dark.  
The presence in our loneliness.  
The strength in our weakness  
The guide in our lostness.  
He is ready to carry  
not only our burdens,  
but us if need be.  
He IS the mission  
that we take to others.



# SPIRITUALITY and PSYCHOTHERAPY

## *Wrestling with life's bigger questions.*

(An extract from THE JOURNAL of Addiction and Mental Health – Canada)

Many Canadian doctors and therapists agree that people with mental health or addiction problems routinely wrestle with questions about the meaning of life, and the nature of suffering. They wonder about good and evil, guilt and forgiveness, where we come from, and where we go when we die. Because of the nature of these questions some therapists believe that tapping into clients' spiritual lives can offer a powerful tool for processing their traumatic experiences. And possibly, for speeding up healing.

"We answer these questions in a variety of ways, through story and myth and belief systems that teach and enculturate us. Our belief systems provide symbols and rituals, which strengthen us to face our life journeys." And they fortify the part of us we call spirit or soul, says Maureen Soukoreff, manager of spiritual and religious care at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

Research studies have demonstrated that people who have a well-developed spiritual life can draw on that strength for healing. The presence of spiritual and religious caregivers in a health care facility shortens bed stay and brings spiritual comfort to people suffering illness or isolation, Soukoreff says.

The multi-faith spiritual and religious services at the CAMH are made up of Christian, Jewish and Muslim staff, that offer counselling and support to staff, clients and family members from a variety of spiritual groups. The staff assist especially at births, comings-of-age, marriages and deaths, "and when trauma has created abrupt change in a person's sense of security," says Soukoreff. "At such a time, remembering ones religious and cultural tradition can lead to acceptance of the trials that surround human life." In a country as diverse as Canada, it can be a real challenge to properly address spiritual issues. Different cultures and religions may each use a unique vocabulary. While spirituality as we understand it transcends ideology and ritual, it is also expressed through religion, culture and philosophy.

CAMH psychiatrist Dr Sarah Danial says she's found issues surrounding spirituality to be relevant in about a third of her patients. "Sometimes it may come indirectly," says Danial, citing the example of a young woman who was curious about Danial's use of the hijab, a scarf sometimes worn by Muslim women. As it turned out, the client had issues herself with expectations related to her own Catholic upbringing. "I don't force the issue of spirituality onto clients," says Danial. "But a lot of times people have issues about their own meaning on earth; why they have illness, or why they are having marital problems."

Increasingly, Dr Danial says she is called upon to treat fellow Muslims, who feel she will better understand issues related to the religion. "I can think of a case in which there could be a lot of misunderstanding. Muslims believe there are angels around you, watching you and recording your actions. If you don't accept that, you are not accepting one of the basic tenets of the religion. Now if I am a client, and I tell you that there are angels beside me, you may think I'm psychotic. You may misdiagnose my condition if you don't appreciate the religious context."

The potential for this kind of misunderstanding is not unique to Muslims. Rhonda Roffey, patient advocacy co-ordinator for the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, recalls working on the front lines with homeless youth. Too often, she says, the spiritual visions and voices of aboriginals are misdiagnosed as schizophrenia. "I used to tell my aboriginal clients, 'Don't tell them that you hear anything or see anything.'" "I would say, 'It makes perfect sense to me and I know what you're talking about, but just don't mention it.'"

That said, Dianne McKay, the Friendship Centre's alcohol and drug program developer and trainer, says spirituality is so essential to native culture, it is almost impossible to proceed without addressing it. "When it comes to healing, we look at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. Those areas are not divided..."

Despite the need, Danial says spirituality is too often not addressed by therapists. "When we go through training to do psychiatric assessments there are few people who say we should always ask about religion. But it's part of an overall assessment that is usually overlooked in the rush of getting medical and psychiatric symptoms." Also, some may worry that a person's spirituality is off-limits because they come from a different religion. While observance can be helpful to a therapist, Danial says the therapist can still offer appropriate spiritual guidance and be of a different persuasion. "Ultimately," says Danial, "I really think the question is not about what religion a person subscribes to. It is 'How does their view of God or a higher power relate to their current problem.'"

**By Cindy McGlynn**



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR .....

I am a typical middle-aged woman (whatever that may be!) now working as a part-time chaplain at my local hospital. I enjoy this very much – both for the fellowship it gives me, and for the opportunity to minister and to express my own faith. I am also a schizophrenic – or so I am told. I think the truth of the matter is that I was once schizophrenic and that I have gradually recovered my health – but the medical profession is still loath to admit that full recovery from this type of illness is possible. Whatever – I have been medication-free for thirty years, with out relapse; during which time I have raised a family and pursued various other interests.

I became ill in my late teens and was admitted to my local psychiatric hospital – a vast Victorian institution – in 1966. Once diagnosed I was left to rot for the next five years. I routinely received electric-convulsive ‘therapy’ and insulin-shock, together with vast amounts of oral, intra-muscular and intravenous medication. My life was in ruins – my career but a forgotten dream, friends gradually faded away, engagement broken off, family visited infrequently and became ashamed of me.

One day, I was sitting in the hospital grounds – beneath a favourite tree – totally overcome by the misery all around me. I became lost in my thoughts – and then was aware of a face appearing before me. I was unsure if it was that of a man or a woman – but, it was the most gentle and beautiful face that I have ever ‘seen’ in my life. It gave me great comfort, and I returned to the ward feeling able to cope. I ‘saw’ the face again on two subsequent occasions – and it always left me feeling filled with a sense of peace, hope and renewed strength. On the third occasion I went and lay down on my bed – and felt quite certain that I had seen the face of Christ. I realised that I had only to allow Christ to come into my life and that He could save me and rescue me from a seemingly hopeless situation.

Within a month I had left the hospital – without the blessing of the authorities, it must be said – and I found a bed-sit in the nearby town. It was a struggle to get back on my feet, but, throughout this time, I was sustained by the knowledge that there was a presence beside me that was supporting me and guiding me. I was able to rest at the end of the day, knowing that Christ would help me through the next day. Mercifully, this ‘presence’ has remained a constant throughout my life, and I now feel that I want to share my very real knowledge of Christ with others.

**Christine Andrew**

After suffering episodes of severe depression myself over the past forty years and being hospitalised three times, I became very much aware of the needs of sufferers when they were discharged from hospital. For many there is no support at all. So four years ago I formed a weekly self-help depression group in our Methodist Church building for members of the community. During this time over two hundred people have either contacted me or joined the group. We have up to thirty people coming each week. We look on our group as a family and it provides a caring, non-judgmental environment where each person is loved and valued.

These are lovely people whose lives have been damaged or broken through no fault of their own. What a joy it is to see lives being changed just by being there for them and listening. This work is demanding and exhausting but both my husband, who is now an Acorn tutor and trained counsellor, and myself, find the work very rewarding. God’s love is powerful.

Listening to others is one of the most valuable gifts we can offer to others and we pray that more Christian people will become involved in this kind of work.

**Marion Dixon**

“The spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me because the Lord has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.” Isaiah 61.



# THE SCHOOL OF REST

By Linda Anderson

I needed rest – physical and spiritual. And I knew that God's Word could teach me where to find both. I was familiar with Hebrews 3: 14-4: 11, where the writer told me of God's rest from creation. Sabbath, he called it. The penman promised rest and said to rest in the work Jesus had done. I turned in my thinking to Jesus' picture of the vine and the branches in John 15. Could that be a form of rest? Had a grapevine ever "tried hard" to bear fruit? Do we have to try hard to be like Him? No, we rest in Him, commune with Him, draw our life from Him. These thoughts I carried with me as I visited the peaceful shore of Lake Superior.

## DAY ONE

"Come aside by yourself to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:3). Within two days I was sitting on a golden ribbon of beach watching tiny shafts of sun dance a silent ballet across the lake.

My heart had barely stopped pounding. My head was still full of the noise of busier places and not in sync with quietness around me.

A chicken simmered in a pot in the little cabin. I began to unlock myself towards God and to lean towards Him expectantly....waiting...eager. "Teach me, Lord, about rest." I prayed, dangling a bare foot over the dock. Class was about to begin.

## DAY TWO

"....and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

I awoke to a silence that shouted... A silence that had rocked me in its bosom during the night and had begun to restore me.

I was still rushing inside. "I will give you rest." Hmmm. My version went something like this. "Come to Christ for salvation, and afterwards get to work."

Rest. It was a delicious, unfamiliar word, and I rolled it around my tongue. But how?

Again I thought of John 15. Abiding in Christ...resting in Christ. Jesus paints a word picture of branches (us) drawing all their nourishment from the vine (Him). I tried on some other words. I wanted to understand fully this concept of abiding. Remain in. Draw on. Rest in. There was an umbilical tie between resting in Christ and bearing sweet fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace and all the others. Just as I had to make work of getting away from this time of physical rest, so I must consciously seek the rest Jesus gives. "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest." (Hebrews 4:11)

Jesus said the one "work" that God required of us is this: "...believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:29) Was my very **best** work to abide in Christ? If fruit springs naturally out of abiding then I had stumbled onto an astounding truth: Abiding in Christ was **the** most important "work" I could every do in my Christian life!

I jumped up, pulled my son's red sweatshirt over my head, and headed towards the walking path. It wound endlessly through a magical forest of dappled green. That great, green silence of the August woods was my shadow. It was okay to rest! God said I needed it. And he showed me that I could see in my physical rest a picture of my life in Christ. I sensed that relaxing all of what I did into that precious vine was the core secret of a fruit-filled life. It was a lot like surrendering my body to the bed at night. The more totally I relaxed, the more I would be **energized** by rest. I frankly couldn't make myself live a holy life at all. **But He could.**



## **DAY TWO** continued .....

Summer moved in warm circles of perfumed air. The Teacher had been clear and plain today. He had reminded me of His words and had stirred them in my heart. God and I were tabernacled in His woods and I was hearing His heartbeat ..... Would I respond to the loving call to rest – to abide? The next move was mine.

## **DAY THREE**

The silence woke me once more. I sipped my coffee and stepped back into Old Testament times to visit the Israelites. I saw that God blueprinted a lifestyle for them that included appointed and regular times for physical and spiritual rest. One day out of every seven. One week out of every seven. One year out of every seven. One year out of every fifty. The people stopped. The land rested. And both were **renewed and rested**. God certainly knew we mortals always need regular reminders of **His** ownership and **our** mortality.

Today I would rest my soul into the presence of God. I scuffed along the crystal shore of Lake Superior in quiet awe. The surreal beauty of white cloud and diamond water brought a holy hush.

And it was the end of my third day of school.

## **DAY FOUR**

"For my yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)

Whose yoke was I wearing? Christ said He would give me rest. People gave me "yokes". Christ said His yoke was easy. People's yokes were hard. Christ said His burden was light. People's burdens were heavy.

I wanted to yank off my man-made yokes of performance and let Christ place His feather-light one around my neck. I wanted, from now on, to be energized by abiding, not stressed out trying to bear fruit apart from the vine.

The School of Rest was over for this day. "I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you upright." (Leviticus 26:13).

*Linda Anderson is a freelance writer who has written two books: " **LOVE ADDS THE CHOCOLATE**" and " **SLICES OF LIFE**", both published by Baker Book Home, Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49505.*

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## **From Pam Freeman.....**

In May, I attended the Merton Group AGM where, as always, the atmosphere was very warm and friendly. It was heartening to hear that there are 27 befrienders caring for their befriendees and how highly thought of the local group is by the local Trust and Chaplaincy team. This has all come about through the enthusiasm and dedication of a small group of workers who are unpaid but not unsung. The National Committee wish to salute you all for the wonderful work you are doing.

At the end of the meeting we had the privilege of hearing Dr Andrew Kent, a very user friendly psychiatrist and good friend of APCMH in Merton, talk to us about the power of friendship. One phrase stuck in my mind – "Social relationships are very important – the more friends we have the less ill people are." I have thought about the words ever since, and realise the truth they hold. This was reinforced in Part 3 of a production by Stephen Poliokeff on BBC2 this week, called "Perfect Strangers".

Continued .....



Continuing ..... "Perfect Strangers,"

One of the main story strands was about a family comprising an aunt with two nephews and a niece. One of the nephews began to exhibit bizarre and socially embarrassing behaviour in late teens and gradually the aunt and his brother and sister withdrew as they found his behaviour very hard to handle. He became more and more isolated – finally ending up on a railway line where he died. The guilt that the family had was very painful for viewers to watch and Becky said that never a day went past when she didn't think of her brother and how she had rejected him.

Jim Cotter, at his recent day at St Paul's, Rossmore Roade, spoke about a friend who had supported him by phoning the same time every week for a year never knowing what reaction he might get, but being sure that his loyalty would be of some help.

Being alongside is at the very heart of our work in APCMH. If anyone reading this newsletter has any stories of friendship that they'd like to share we'd love to hear from you.

**Pam Freeman**

**Please Note, the Forest Hill Branch has changed its meeting day and venue as follows:  
St Saviour's Church Hall, Brockley Rise every Wednesday as of 25th April**

***Please remember .....***

## **The Annual General Meeting**

**on Saturday, 3 October**

**at St Paul's Church, Rossmore Road 10.00am – 4.00pm.**

*More details to be announced in the next Newsletter.*

### ***Advance Notice:***

**APCMH** invite you to drop in for tea and a chat on any of the following Monday afternoons between 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm.

**24 September,**

**29 October**

**26 November.**

Venue : St Paul's Church Centre,  
Rossmore Road, 5 minutes walk from Marylebone Station.

***Phone Pam Freeman 020 8647 3678 if you require more details.***

### **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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