

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2002

This month's FRONT PAGE CONTRIBUTION

CELEBRATING THE VOICES AROUND US

"Once upon a time there was a great silence in the land of mental health, religion and spirituality; but now the voices are making themselves heard"

This quotation from a book by John Foskett, summing up the message that Julia Head wants to get across in her latest edition of the Bishop John Robinson Fellowship Newsletter, is apt. In the early 80s, people like John at the Maudsley and our own founders, Jane & Austin Lindon, were lone voices in a wilderness in terms of understanding the basic human and spiritual needs of people with mental health problems. But now there is an enormous amount going on, and it is good to recognise and celebrate it. I will mention just a few:

At the Mental Health Foundation, Vicky Nicholls has responsibility for highlighting the religious and spiritual beliefs of survivors, and she now has a huge base of contacts, many of whom do not have any connection with any traditional communities. She is creating opportunities for their voices to be heard, and a recent project in Somerset has identified ways in which faith communities can make themselves more accessible in terms of being alongside people with more severe mental health needs.

Lynne Friedli, at MENTALITY, is working to ensure that the health promotion agenda within the new National Service Framework, will be genuinely inclusive in terms of meeting the needs of the whole person.

Mike Took is a champion for "spirituality" within the National Schizophrenia Fellowship.

Andrew Wilson, the community mental health chaplain in Croydon and a long-term supporter/adviser for our Croydon Branch, has been pioneering Creative Spirituality Groups as part of the therapeutic process within the multi-disciplinary team.

Edna Hunneysett, an energetic and inspiring carer from Middlesbrough, whose daughter suffered with severe mental illness as a teenager, has written a book which highlights the vital importance of mutual support groups, initiated by lay people, rather than waiting for clerical leadership.

Stephen Sykes' wonderful video – "With a Little Help from My Friends" continues to create new interest from within pastoral settings.

Jenny Robinson maintains the "Fellowship of Hope" as a network of prayer and support.

All these names and activities might seem to imply that APCMH is no longer so special. But on the contrary, what we do in being alongside people is a sign that, at the end of the day, our vision – that Faith Communities should be places where people belong, where needs are recognised and met, and where people are encouraged to come together and to challenge, enlighten and enrich the community – a real statement that the Presence of God is here. All these other voices are making this vision better understood at different levels and within a variety of professional and pastoral contexts. May all the voices complement each other.

Jeremy Boutwood *National Committee*

We are very sorry to have to report that this article was the last contribution from Jeremy before his untimely death on 29 September. On behalf of all our readers we send our condolences to his wife Lynette and her family. Tributes will appear in the next edition.

VALUE WAITING?

My life over the last few years has been full of activity ...Recently I have been brought up short by people whose time frame is quite different from my own. One of these people is a friend who is receiving treatment for cancer. Another is a friend with mental health difficulties whose illness is so constraining that it is impossible for her to do the ordinary things of life in a normal time frame. Both these people are going through enforced times of waiting. Last week I joined the Christian community at Taize in France, who emphasise the importance of silent waiting in prayer during which time we listen and wait for God.

I began to think about our society today with its emphasis on the importance of activity, of being busy, of using our lives profitably and of those whose vacation seems to be bound up in waiting for one reason or another. We have come to value the one state more than the other, yet both are equally important.

Most of us have times in our lives when we are bound by and have to wait on the activity of others. Maybe through illness, accident, disability or old age – either our own or because we are caring for someone in that situation. Often it can feel a time of frustration, of lack of value or dignity perhaps, and often there is a feeling of disempowerment.

I wondered where these feelings come from. I realised that many of us have come to expect that life should only be full of positives. We expect that doctors will cure us when we are ill. We do not expect to have to wait for a needed operation. We expect that the sun will shine while we are on holiday and curse the rain. We expect to be satisfied as soon as we are hungry and for others to make us feel happy again when we are sad. We work towards making these positives reality and are angry and resentful when they do not.

Through those who wait on the activity of others care, love and compassion may be born. At Taize on Friday night many people were drawn to the cross to pray and to lay down their burdens. With almost indecent haste, people hurried to take a turn around it, each intent on their own need at that moment. It was only when two disabled people struggled to the cross to pray that others could forego their own needs and desires, and make room for the other. Thus were the seeds of real community born.

Those who wait become our teachers and have so much to offer us. They teach us the art of patience and humility. They remind us that we each have an intrinsic value before God, irrespective of our activity. They remind us of our mortality; that life is to be lived each moment for itself. They help us to remember that our bodies and minds need looking after. They tell us that there is no joy without knowing sadness, no sense of well-being without knowing pain, no forgiveness and reconciliation without brokenness and that it can be in the times of silent waiting that it is possible for God to draw close to us and us to Him.

Jesus' life is described in the Gospels as being full of activity. He was healing, teaching, praying, looking, seeing, speaking, hearing and much more. In the Garden of Gethsemane everything changes when he is handed over to the guards. He enters his time of passion, of being on the receiving end of other people's actions and activity. He waits passively for man's response to God's offer of unconditional love and forgiveness. He knows and shares those two aspects of life with us, and in our waiting we experience too something of God's waiting for us to respond to Him.

"Christ Jesus, in days of darkness as well as in those bathed in light, you knock at our door and you wait for our response." (Prayer by Brother Roger of Taize)

MARY HILLIER

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### Editor's Note

On page 1 of our last issue the Front Page Contribution was attributed to Mary Hillier. It was in fact contributed by Sue Albery, Croydon's APCMH Development Officer. Our sincere apologies to both of them for this error. We trust we will have earned their forgiveness by publishing, correctly attributed, contributions from each of them in this issue.



## **GRASS ROOTS MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION IN CROYDON**

Originally published in the April 2002 edition of "Mental Health Promotion"

It is fashionable to link community regeneration with notions of social inclusion and therefore with positive mental health. Behind the buzz words lies the reality that if as human beings we feel we belong with others, that we make a contribution to the well being of others that matter to them and we can call on others when we need them, we feel better about ourselves and are more able to cope with the ups and downs of life.

If we live in such an environment not only will our physical needs be met but we will be able to find ways to satisfy our spiritual needs, we will be more completely human.

The Association for Pastoral Care in mental health in Croydon (APCMH) tries to translate these ideas into reality every week in their Drop-In Clubs. These clubs provide a haven for anybody living with or recovering from enduring mental health problems with a safe, welcoming, undemanding environment where support is given but where they are valued for the contribution they give to the support of others. As well as informal mutual support people are actively encouraged to make the transition, if and when they wish to, from drop-in member to volunteer with the certain knowledge that they can still draw on support themselves if necessary. When the Drop-in works at its best it is a mutually supportive community. It is one thing to create a microcosm of a supportive community at certain times each week within a recognised mental health setting, it is another to take these same ideas out to the wider community. 'Time banks', based on the ideas of Edgar Cahn in his book 'No More Throw Away People' could offer this opportunity. The New Economics Foundation promotes 'Time banks' in the UK.

In Croydon, APCMH as a voluntary Mental Health organisation, and members of staff in statutory day services have been working to find ways to translate the Time bank into a reality for Croydon people and especially people who use mental health services. We have been given support from Zoe Reed from the Developing Organisation and Community department of South London and Maudsley Trust, Sarah Burns from Time banks UK and Karina Koch the development worker for Time banks in the local trust. We are now developing links with Croydon Council's Social Enterprise Group. Together we want to create a real sense of community in Croydon, that will be :

- A place where mental health service users are accepted as equal contributors to their community.
- A system that builds communities from the bottom up and follows the agenda of the people who live in the community.
- Where equality is a practical reality.
- Where the activities build relationships and strengthen informal support mechanisms.
- Where mental health promotion happens naturally.

**Sue Albery**

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Find out more !

*Contact APCMH Croydon,
where we not only provide the Drop-Ins but also work to promote opportunities for creativity*

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Time Banks UK www.timebanks.co.uk
New Economics Foundation www.neweconomics.org*

PASTORAL CARE IN A HOSPITAL SETTING

..... what *is* Pastoral care in a hospital Setting?

A Chaplain can have many job descriptions – mine includes something like the following :

"You will be responsible for ensuring the provision of pastoral, spiritual and religious needs of patients and staff."

Pastoral Care

There is no easy definition, although it is something to do with 'looking after a person you have some formal responsibility for' (unlike a friend). The word pastoral is related to 'shepherd and sheep', which sound very politically incorrect in these days of client, service user etc. However incorrect it sounds, it reflects the truth that we have a certain responsibility for patients as people, as we do for our colleagues, especially if we have a management responsibility. Our job is not limited to certain actions, but includes that hard to define thing called 'care'.

In hospitals, the vast majority of pastoral care is not carried out by chaplains but by nursing staff, irrespective of grade. This said, different levels of authority mean that pastoral care is as carried out differently. For example, everyone can show such care by sitting alongside someone when they are anxious or distressed and simply listening without judgement. If we have a greater level of responsibility for the care of a patient however, pastoral care may involve some further action on our part. This is why the pastoral care role of the primary nurse is distinctive. All disciplines have a role in such care, chaplains, consultants, psychologists, OTs etc, although each has a different amount of contact time and different levels of overall responsibility. What makes the primary nurse special is that they have the greatest 'balance' of time and responsibility. However frustrated you may be about not having enough quality time to carry out this role, you are still the main person with both time and authority regarding patient care.

A ward manager is in a similar situation with staff on the ward. There are many whose role involve care and responsibility for ward staff, senior management, Occupational Health councillors, personnel chaplains, clinical supervisors etc. But it seems that the main weight of care will always rest with the person nearest to the situation with sufficient time to listen and authority to effect some change.

So, if all staff 'do' pastoral care, and primary nurses and ward managers have a special place in this work, where does that leave the chaplain? (you may well ask). Well, I am clearly not responsible for providing all pastoral care on the ward (I only visit once a week unless called in), but I am responsible for ensuring that it is provided. This means that there are times when I can and should be providing direct support to patients or staff. This is sometimes because it is appropriate. Say, a patient is not connecting with the nursing team, or a staff member is finding it hard to use line management support. Sometimes there is a need for some sort of 'advocacy' role. At other times, I simply add to the overall level of care by 'being there', increasing the range of relationships a patient has, or using the flexibility of my time to respond to personal crises in a way other staff do not always have the privilege of doing. Still, however much direct patient contact I have, a key role remains the support of staff who carry the primary pastoral care role, the primary nurses, ward managers and all staff responsible for patients and staff members as people working or living in a challenging environment (which of course includes everyone!)

So next time they see me wandering about with a relaxed smile on my face, it is perhaps because I don't carry a 'burden' of pastoral care, but share in the privilege of this responsibility with many others.

Dr Simon Harrison – Hospital Chaplain

This article was first published in the March 2002 edition of Langdon Hospital Newssheet (UK)

YFGM (Young Friends General Meeting) and the APCMH

What is YFGM ?

Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM) is part of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and is the corporate body representing Quakers aged between 18 and 30 something, from all over Britain. We meet three times a year for residential weekends, and we are both a corporate, decision making body, and a worshipping community.

What has been happening at YFGM?

Young Friends have become increasingly aware of mental health issues and we are now in a position to undertake some corporate witness to our concern. We recognise that mental ill health and emotional distress affect us all, either because we ourselves are sufferers, or through our involvement with friends, family colleagues or wider society. Many Quakers of all ages suffer from mental health difficulties, and have experienced feelings of isolation due to the 'taboo' nature of this illness. We are keen to find ways of working towards the breaking down of these barriers which perpetuate the view of 'us and them', and which also perpetuate the damaging stereotypes that persist, of those with mental health problems.

In May of this year, YFGM decided that it would be appropriate to undertake some corporate action in the form of a concern, and a working group was appointed to discern ways of taking this forward. The group formulated a statement of intent, which begins:

"As Young Friends, our personal experiences of mental health issues have led us to bring this concern forward. We have recognised the need for more open sharing, better communication and support within our Quaker communities as well as society at large. We aim to share what has been valuable to us, including creative processes, and the sense of valuing people for who they are, which springs from our Quaker Testimony."

The Young Friends Appeal traditionally has two aims – the raising of awareness of the concern, and the raising of money for a suitable project. From the beginning, we were clear that we wanted to find an organisation which would be willing to work in partnership with us as we took these twin aims forward. We were delighted to discover the existence of APCMH, and were pleased to welcome John Vallat to one of our meetings. We had a valuable discussion of our experiences and our aims, and were all left with a strong sense that there was great potential for collaborative working. We would like to work with APCMH to find ways in which we could become involved in taking the Association's work forward in a way that would allow us to support each other.

Where now?

The working group will return to YFGM in early October to discuss with them what we have discovered, and share our feeling that there is potential for a valuable partnership with APCMH. Subject to their agreement, we will discuss possibilities for our involvement, and will attempt to discern three ideas for possible collaborative projects, which we will then bring to APCMH.

Sally Howes

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(What an exciting prospect !..... Ed.)

STAN

Stan was a miner. Though when I knew him
He'd changed his status thirty years before to that of Mental Patient.
Stanley often spoke to me about his special childhood in a nearby town,
Or rather village, Gorsal Village, he would say –
That's where I went to Church, singing on Sundays,
Mornings and evenings, Book of Common Prayer!
He grinned at me. I'll take you back, I said.
He grinned again, pleased at the thought.
I never mentioned it again, although some years passed by
And Stanley never held me to my word.

So when, one Autumn afternoon I stopped the van,
Opened the door and said, Come on, hop in,
I'm taking you to Gorsal like we said, hop in,
I thought he might be startled and say, "No",
But Stan just grinned, and so away we went.

At Gorsal village church our way was blocked
By mourners and a hearse; and when she heard just who we were
And why we'd come, the verger there, seeing the better part of valour,
Bundled us out and sent us on our way –
Politely, Stan just grinned. I've seen the church, he said.

Next we called on Stan's young niece. Hello, she said,
How nice to see you, Uncle, it's been years.
I've made some ginger cake, and this is Debs!
Stan squatted down before the electric fire.
For half-an-hour he stayed, playing with the little girl.
Then, Time to go, he said.
Back in the van and on again.
Now came the hardest part –
I want to see my brother now, Stan said,
The one who's shut me up for all this time, I mean.

I looked at Stanley and he grinned at me.
You know the way, Stan? It's almost thirty years, what if...
He grinned. Go right here, then turn left, then right again.
Left at the bollards, then the left hand road, now down the hill and up.
I couldn't help but think, We must be lost now.

Then Stan said stop. Stop here, it's over there.
I looked around and saw
The kind of place where roads turn in upon themselves,
Moving in circles, so you don't so much arrive
As find yourself there. It's over here, said Stan.

You go, Roger. Tell then who it is. Gritting my teeth I climbed down from the van.
Mr Wilcox? No, you don't know me, I've brought your brother, 'cos he said he'd
Like to see you.
Not a muscle moved. Aye, well, come in, you'd better, but you'd better not be long
I'm just about to have my tea, you know.
He looked at Stan who looked at him and grinned.....

Continued

STAN continued

We got back in the van.
Right-right-left-left and left again.
It's not much further now, hang on we're nearly home.
Thanks Roger, that was great.
We never went again.
And something else – I noticed in the days to come
He wasn't grinning.

*Submitted by Roger Grainger BSc (Therapeutic Counselling) MPhil (Psychology) Ph.D
Chartered Counselling Psychologist (Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society)*

Only Here to Make Up the Numbers

What am I doing here?
Is there any purpose under the sun?
Why do I exist?
Am I here to make up the numbers?

Numbers rule our lives.
Pieces of paper always required
Promises are cheap.
Just me, here, making up the numbers.

Rules, agreements, contracts,
Words tie up the world.
Statistics mould the answers
I am just filing in, making up the numbers

Life is one big lottery
It could be you!! It really could!!
Winners become losers.
Here, just making up the numbers.

Jean Wearn Wallace

Of POETS and POETRY

There is a group called "**Survivors Poetry**" which meets regularly at the Diorama Arts Centre in Osnaberg Street in London NW1. The Diorama Arts Centre is just opposite Portland Place Underground station. They meet on the last Saturday of every month, at 7.30pm for 8pm. As well as regular contributors there are floor spots, during which anyone can read their poetry to the Group. If you live near enough to visit, why not give it a try?

Jean Wallace, who lives in Croydon, has produced a book of her own poetry, entitled "**Through My Valley of Shadows**". It is described as 'poetry to provide comfort and assurance for those enduring mental distress'. In its arts review the **Croydon Advertiser** said Jean's poems "are robust and colourful, fun and fizzy".

The book is available from APCMH (Croydon) on 020 8665 6718.
It costs £4, which includes a donation to APCMH (Croydon).

A Letter to the Editor

I am writing to you regarding the poem "To be a Mental Patient" published in your July 2002 newsletter.

I took this poem along to a poetry group, which I attend at a day treatment centre for people with mental health problems. It was extremely well received and sparked a lively discussion. Like myself, many others in the group could relate to the poem and were able to select a verse they liked the best, and explain their reasons. The issue of labelling was raised on several occasions, which lead to personal accounts being given of how these individuals were affected in their daily lives. Many said they were not seen as a person but as a label, for example an anorexic, a manic-depressive, a schizophrenic. Few people could see beyond the illness to the person inside.

The poem summed up perfectly what it was like to be a mental patient. Each verse was a discussion point in itself. The poem is going to be used again in a problem-solving group, the problem being living with the stigma of being a mental patient. This, as the poem says, affects attempts made to get a job, and also to live a relatively normal life with the constant fear of being "locked up at any time for almost any reason." Laugh and you're manic; cry and you're depressed. Your behaviour is constantly observed, hence the poet's reference to paranoia.

We also found humour in the poem, in particular the verse that talks of everything being 'therapy', whether it is music, art or making a cup of tea! The reference to psychiatrists arriving in their flash cars is so true, especially in the private healthcare sector. My favourite verse was the final one that basically says that you can't laugh, cry, get hurt or be angry. You can't display normal human emotions because you've got a label and such behaviour reinforces that you are a mental patient, even if you recovered twenty years ago.

Thank you for printing such an excellent, thought-provoking poem. A copy should be given to all psychiatrists!

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Shelley.

Thank you Rosemary for your response and encouraging remarks. I do hope that your letter will encourage others to respond to articles in the Newsletter or even to make their own contribution. Ed.

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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