

# NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2004

## ***This Month's Front Page Contribution***

### **TRAVELLING**

I am writing this article during the August holidays and hope that you have all had some sort of break, whether it's been days out or travelling at home or abroad or simply enjoying a well-earned rest. Our Westminster APCMH groups have enjoyed outings to Regent's Park and Kenwood House during the month of August. I have heard from our Church Army Day Centre users that they also enjoyed a wonderful day in Brighton. I went to Crowhurst, near Hastings, in the midst of the Sussex countryside for their Open Day. It was good to hear the main speakers, Adrian and Brigit Plass, who brought us encouragement in following Our Lord amidst the pressures of daily life.

Our Lord knew of the importance of refreshment of body, mind and spirit when he took the disciples to be apart with himself in the midst of their pressurised lives.

I also find the need to have regular short breaks throughout the year. In March I went to the Christian Healing Mission conference in High Leigh and enjoyed being renewed physically as well as spiritually. In April I experienced the fun and fellowship and sea air during the Easter People Conference in Torquay. In May I went with our church to the lovely Derbyshire Dales, walked by the river and enjoyed the friendship and fellowship of friends. In June I travelled to Glasgow for Jesus in the City conference and was able to share with other delegates a little of the work of APCMH, especially in the small groups that met each day. In July I went to Wales, Llangerty, in the Brecon Beacons countryside, and during the retreat I enjoyed, not only the silence and peace of that place, but the playing with clay, while we listened to a meditation. We all travelled on to Sheffield for the Church Army Commissioning of evangelists in training, which was most inspiring and encouraging.

At the end of August I enjoyed a drama course in the quietness of Crowhurst and at the end of October I am looking forward to celebrating "Journey into Shadow" on Holy Island. This is a Celtic retreat that helps us "journey into cold and darkness in order to find our hidden self, and draw upon the riches of the unseen world including angels and saints and the Spirit." We will also be travelling throughout Northumbria and enjoying that lovely county.

As I look back and see the travelling and the events in which I have taken part, it feels a little like Pilgrims Progress. The pilgrim started out facing pressures, but in fellowship with others who were also travelling on the same road.

In our church life and within the life of both national and local groups of APCMH, we too are on a journey, whether as individuals or as members of a group. Part of this journey is when we meet together for discussion, and we speak to one another about what helps and what hinders us in this journey. In the July conference we travelled together through the pain to the rainbow (see last Newsletter). We all have memories of the people we meet on our travels. As a voluntary chaplain in a psychiatric hospital, I have some precious memories when I travel alongside patients I have met during this work. Some of these memories come out of pain, desperation and suffering. Sometimes I am given poems, paintings and occasionally a prayer. The prayer on the following page, from someone who has been desperate, has been passed to me to use in this article.

Continued.....



Continued .....

Lord, your word says You are "the only wise God"  
And I am desperately in need of You at this time.  
I find myself in a situation that humans cannot explain  
And human ability that cannot fix.

Send me the spirit of wisdom to show me how to walk wisely;  
Send me the spirit of revelation  
To help me understand what I cannot figure out.  
For Your understanding alone will get me through this.  
Thank You for remaining faithful to me  
Even though I have been unfaithful to You.  
Thank You for loving me  
Even when I did not love You in return.

Help me walk this road with confidence, with the courage  
That comes from knowing that I am Yours.  
Please Lord, let me cling to those convictions  
And yet still love those who misunderstand me.  
And although it is an uphill climb, take my hand,  
Light my way, help me to walk on, for in the end I know that  
All things will work together for my good and to Your glory.

If you would like to go to some of my favourite places – please write to them for further details

Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre  
The Old Rectory  
Crowhurst  
Battle  
TN33 9AD

Christian Healing Mission  
8 Cambridge Court  
210 Shepherds Bush Road  
Hammersmith  
London  
W6 7NJ

Bible Reading Fellowship  
(Quiet Days and Retreats)  
First Floor  
Elsfield Hall  
15-17 Elsfield Way  
Oxford  
OX 8FG

The Community of Aiden and Hilda  
The Open Gate  
Marygate  
Holy Island  
Berwick-upon-Tweed  
TD15 2SD

**Sr Theresa Pountney**  
Member of the National Committee

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*The Editor's right (or write!) hand editorial assistant- his wife Leona, thinks that these two passages are particularly apposite to the above thoughts*

Sing praises to God, sing praises. **Psalm 47: 6**  
and

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the  
renewing of your mind. **Romans 12 : 2**  
~~~~~



# MENTAL HEALTH AND OLDER PEOPLE

## *From a Department of Health booklet*

One of the greatest success stories of this century has been the extension of life expectancy. During the past few decades the size and age structure of the United Kingdom's population has changed dramatically. One-fifth of the total population is now aged over 60 compared with 7.5 per cent at the beginning of the century. In 1991 there were 7.62million people aged 65 and over in England of whom 765,000 were aged 85 and over.

What this means is that many people can now anticipate a substantial period following retirement in which they can actively pursue leisure activities and hobbies free from the worries of work or children.

Older people can enjoy life and have just as much fun in later years as at any other time. Staying reasonably fit will make it possible to get the maximum enjoyment out of life. One of the bars to enjoying life, however, can be the presence of problems with physical or mental health.

***Mental Illness is treatable*** Just like physical illness; mental illness covers a wide range of symptoms. When older, bereavement, ill health or loneliness can contribute to its development. Mental illness is also similar to physical illness in that a wide range of treatments is available. It is a myth that treatment becomes more difficult as you get older. Modern research and medical experience have confirmed that treatment works regardless of age.

***Depression and Physical Health.*** Certain physical illnesses may trigger unhappiness and frustration. Arthritis is the most common cause of long-standing illness in old age and can be a major cause of sadness and depression. Pain, particularly in the knee, hip, shoulders, neck and back, may make it difficult to carry out ordinary but essential tasks such as shopping, cooking or personal care such as cutting toenails.

Lack of physical activity and being overweight can make arthritis much worse. Although many people who suffer from this condition want to retreat into the safety of their own home, it is far better to join in activities and get stiff joints moving again. People suffering from Parkinson's Disease or heart disease can face similar problems. Again, treatments are available and it is far better to participate in activities rather than avoid them.

Between 11 per cent and 14 per cent of older people suffer from symptoms of depression, although only about one to two per cent are considered to be severely affected. Everybody gets miserable from time to time, that's no surprise, but normally we all find ways of getting over it. When there's a depressive disorder, however, obviously, the first port of call must be the doctor who should be able to make a diagnosis of depression from the symptoms and signs. He or she will then recommend a course of treatment or further sources of help.

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### ***A letter from Nial O'Callaghan***

Having been a user of Mental Health Services/Medications since I was 22-I am now 40-I have found that the best therapy is to keep yourself occupied and not to dwell on your condition. What I do is to cut out stamps from envelopes, given to me in bags from offices through church friends. Once I have done the cutting out of stamps I put these in a collection box at the back of the church to help the Missions. Also I make corded Rosary beads for the Missions. I have made over a thousand so far. I receive the beads, cord, tools etc from a monastery in London via the U S. Instructions are also given for beginners. However, you will have to pay for beads, cord and postage etc by donation. The actual cost of material for each completed rosary is under 10p, so I find this not an obstacle. Our Lord said that those who help Him will be rewarded many times over.

Patience is required at first, but once you've made a few it's enjoyable. Contact details are available from the Editor if anyone is interested.

Thanks,  
Nial



## **Keeping Patient Memories Alive**

Staff, carers and patients on Cherrydown Ward at the Basildon Mental Health Unit have teamed up to embark on an inspired new project that brings treasured memories back to life.

Patient's stories are a scrapbook of a person's life, complete with anecdotes, photos and important events that staff, carers and patients can look back on. 'Normal files are clinical – with these Patient's Stories files, you open it and you see the patient first. They capture the very essence of the person' says Paula Stockwell, a social worker in the community who works in partnership with the Trust.

Much of the work on Patient's Stories has been carried out by Eva Jones, who is studying an access course in mental health studies. Out of 20 service users on the ward, 10 now have a Patient's scrapbook. 'You get closer to the person you actually care for,' she said.

The Patient's Stories have been such a success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of staff, particularly Eva. However, they would not be possible without the input from carers. Carers have entered into the project with as much zeal as staff. 'This is very good – it's excellent.'

Carers develop a real sense of belonging, and feel like an extension of staff, and we have warmed to the idea as it went along, explained Cornelius O'Rourke, also known as Con, a carer and Patient's Stories enthusiast.

The introduction of Patient's Stories on the ward has enhanced patient centred care and has built a rapport between service users, carers and staff. This is instantly obvious when you experience first hand the enthusiasm of staff and carers.

The positive effect of the Patient's Stories was summed up by Eva, 'It is not just about reminiscing. Our patient's quality of life is improving and it's good fun. It is very emotive for stuff. We've all got stories – we're all people at the end of the day.'

**Victoria Coss**

## **GROWING TOGETHER**

### **A Therapeutic Community Garden**

Wintertime can provide many challenges for gardeners with our climate providing grey skies, cold temperatures and copious amounts of rain! There are however, some wonderful plants that come into their own at this time of year. A useful group of plants are the dogwoods and willows that can give a vibrant display of colours. Popular varieties include, *Cornus alba* 'Siberica' with red stems and *Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaviramea' which have lime green stems. These plants are most effective when planted en-masse to give a swathe of colour.

The best thing about many of the plants that flower in the wintertime is that they are often highly fragrant; I believe this is because they need to make greater efforts to attract pollinating insects that are fewer in winter. A shrub, which is very plain at other times of year is *Lonicera fragrantissima*, this shrub is a variety of honey suckle and like its climbing cousin produces wonderful fragrance from small white flowers.

There are also some wonderful trees flowering at this time of year. Snowdrops, of course are a winter favourite, there are a surprising number varying in size, some having markings. A piece about winter planting has to include holly, a seasonal favourite; however, there are a huge number of varieties to choose from. Holly is a very useful plant being evergreen, as any winter-planting scheme should include a good proportion of evergreen shrubs to give structure and a backdrop.

**Written by Maxine Forest for the 'Growing Together' Project**



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

### ***People with mental illness who have enriched our lives***

Abraham Lincoln  
Virginia Woolf  
Michaelangelo  
Beethoven  
Robert Schuman  
Vaslov Nijinsky  
John Keats  
Vincent Van Gough

Ernest Hemingway  
Sylvia Plath  
Winston Churchill  
Vivian Leigh  
Leo Tolstoy  
Michael Faraday  
Tennessee Williams  
Isaac Newton

All these people experienced one of the major mental illnesses

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## **An extract from *Taken Seriously***

### ***The Somerset Spirituality Project (the Mental Health Foundation)***

#### **Chapter 4: Churches: In what ways have churches and faith communities been helpful and unhelpful to service users and survivors?**

During each interview we explored with the interviewee any current or recent experiences they had of churches or other religious organisations or groups, as well as asking about places that were helpful to them from a spiritual or religious perspective. Interviewees reported some sharply contrasting experiences, and were often clear about what can make a difference.

#### **SPECIAL SPIRITUAL PLACES AND BUILDINGS**

People often identify special feelings about spiritual places. In Somerset, Glastonbury is one such place. This small town has spiritual significance for a wide range of people, from traditional Christian believers to those holding pagan beliefs.

One of our interviewees said,

***I have strong and physical 'almost' feelings from places...certain places, special places... going back to ancient times.***

Another talked of ***more of an intense feeling...a strength...that certain places are more...important. And the feeling's stronger in those places.***

#### ***Sanctuary***

Another spoke clearly of the importance of a specific church building to her. She goes to a particular church to 'recharge (her) batteries' and when she needs a sanctuary. She especially needs that place for relief when unwell or distressed. Interestingly, she chooses not to attend a service there, she prefers to be there alone, to sit there, walk around and look, and her response is such that she is moved to give away all her money there.

#### ***Inhibiting***

In contrast some found the buildings and structure of the church uncomfortable and inhibiting, or the church as an organisation unhelpful

***I can't go anymore. I can't attend a church. I can't commit myself to a manmade structure – not at all. You know...I don't think you can find God going to a...building (laughs)***

The experience of our interviewees relates mainly to churches in Somerset. There are buildings in Glastonbury and other non-specifically Christian buildings around the county that are spiritually important to some, but interviewees did not raise these locations. There is a dearth of mosques, synagogues and temples in Somerset. People have to travel to Exeter in Devon, or Bath or Bristol for these.

**Special Offer in Paperchase**

They stand nine inches tall  
Made of fine faux ivory;

Jesus and Moses together  
Each with moving parts.

Declaring their messages;  
The beatitudes and the  
Ten Commandments,

Inscribed on the images'  
backs, just in case you  
needed reminding.

Made in China, for sale in  
the West, by the country  
who hates Christianity.

***Jean Wearn Wallace***

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**Edith Piaf**

Edith Piaf's indomitable spirit, through song,  
lifts one's mood and transcends the soul,

"Je ne regrette rien"  
cuts through all boundaries and reaches hearts.  
The inner spirit, starved of warmth,  
starved of light, stirs again.  
"Je ne regrette rien"

The thaw begins.  
The numbness shifts.  
Light filters through the darkness,  
Breathing life into a cold and aching soul,  
Soothing the emptiness of one's inner being.  
The flame, once extinct, rekindles itself.  
"Je ne regrette rien"

When twilight pulls the curtain down,  
Edith Piaf's inspiration arouses feelings from deep within.  
The heart, lighter now,  
begins to sing again.  
"Je ne regrette rien"

There is less pain now.  
The seed of hope is sown,  
Darkness is no longer my friend.  
The soul is seen again.  
"Je ne regrette rien"

***Diana Klewin***



## **HOPE IN DESPAIR - a reflection**

One night as I stood working on a street corner, I felt as though I lived in hell and I prayed. Well, actually I screamed my rage at God, then prayed. I knew by this time that I was too weak to leave to save myself, so I asked God to send me someone who could help me do it. Unbeknown to me, the Anglican Sisters of the Church had recently moved into a house in my road and within days of my prayer a sister came up to me on the street and said something beautiful to me. A friendship started, but my partner would not allow me to visit their house or the church, so the sisters made friends with him and started regularly to give us food parcels. This was the only reason that he allowed them to talk to me. Then my son's father took the boy away from me to live with his family. I swore to him that I would leave the street and make things right again.

But, seven or eight months later, I was still with my partner and his behaviour became worse. Believing that you have no choice is just as effective as actually having no choice, and I believed he would never let me leave. So I jumped off the roof of a building.

I did not die, but I am disabled for life. While I was in hospital for five and a half months, the nuns gave me some books to read, one of them the psychology of Carl Jung. This book revealed myself to me and I made a commitment to accept responsibility for my life and my actions. The day I left hospital, my partner wheeled me in my wheel chair to a street corner, propped me up on crutches and worked me all night. At dawn my wounds split open and I was rushed back to hospital for two more weeks. When I came home, I enrolled in a one year, part time psychology course (the sisters helped me get a grant) Then I asked them to find me a counsellor who did not charge. They did, and I saw her for nearly four years. Ten months later I handed my thesis in to my tutor – and the next morning I ran away from my partner. I stayed in a high-protection refuge; and the council re-housed me in a new area.

And here I sit, five years on, in my beautiful house with my peaceful life. I've been drug free for five years, celibate for four years, alcohol free for almost two years and six months ago I finally gave up tobacco. My son has grown into a strong and gentle young man of great integrity, and he says all the time that he loves me. I am blessed.

My freedom was made possible through the love of people who never knew me. Through the donated food, my link to God and love was reawakened. Never underestimate the power of your gifts. To love people who do not love themselves is a powerful message.

*From 'A prayer on the street' by Victoria Claire  
published in 'The Tablet'  
Submitted by The Rev Jenny Petersen*

### **Moments With God**

Sometime in the midst of a normal day, doing everyday things, a feeling of complete loss, emptiness, and aloneness can come with the suddenness of a clap of thunder. All the hurts ever experienced flood in overwhelmingly, any rejection is felt again like a sudden blow. It is impossible to know why the feeling of desolation comes, why a life that is happy and satisfying suddenly seems to melt away, and only despair remains. Only when we make the deliberate effort of turning to God and allowing the mind to take hold of the certainties that we know of him will the waves of pain recede and peace and calmness return. The longer we wallow in the sense of despair, the longer our anguish and the more we must grieve the One who loves us and wants to help. To be known as God knows us should be encouragement enough to help us through the darkest hours.

*"Dear Lord, may the knowledge of your love and the promises found in your Word sustain all who go through times of despair. When I am tempted by such moods of darkness help me to turn quickly to you, to find the strength that I need to break free and to go on, secure in the knowledge of your caring."*

**By Georgette Butcher**



*The Association for  
Pastoral Care in Mental Health  
Invites YOU to drop in for Tea and a Chat on  
any of the following MONDAY afternoons  
between 2 pm & 5pm*

*20th September*

*18th October*


*15th November*

*20th December*

*and on Friday 31st December  
we are having a Party*

*Venue: St Paul's Church Centre  
Rossmore Road NW1*

*5 minutes walk from Marylebone Station  
Buses 139 & 189 stop outside*

 *Pam Freeman 020 8647 3678 for more information*  
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**Editors Note:**

*My sincere thank go to all those readers who read my heartfelt plea for material for the newsletter, and sent in articles, poems and other material for future publication. Some of it is in this issue and we can all look forward with a glad heart to reading at least the November and January editions !!*

**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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