

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2005

This months Front Page article

AS HIGH AS THE CLOUDS

During my time as a volunteer chaplain in my local psychiatric hospital I have often given out a little booklet entitled, "As High as the Clouds" by Pat Wray. This booklet speaks of the experiences of someone who has found the faithfulness of God in the midst of their difficulties and challenges.

In this article I want to reflect on "changes" and how we cope and move forward together into the challenge that such changes present. Changes are like stepping-stones in a stream, some are steady and strong, and others wobble when we tread on them. So what are the stepping-stones in our lives? Bereavements, illness (mental and physical) moving house, changing jobs, separation, divorce, friends or family moving away, maybe our own support structure changing, loss, rejection, trauma and our own diagnosis.

This reminds me of a holiday I spent in the Yorkshire Dales and of a stream with stepping-stones from one side to the other. Not being a brave soul I was filled with misgivings and despair as I found the stones wobbly and insecure. It was with relief that I trod on a steady one. In our lives the wobbly stones are often seen as the illnesses, the cares and concerns, the worries, the burdens we carry if we hope to change our situation, we need to launch out and look for the steadier stone ahead.

In my own situation I will be celebrating 40 years of commissioning in Church Army ministry, on Saturday 29 July 2006, but before this I hope (God willing) to visit 40 churches and cathedrals in the British Isles, as a sponsored event for Church Army and my local church of St Paul – more details later. Some of these places have had a special significance in my own life and spiritual journey whilst in others I have worked, worshipped or simply visited. In some of the places I have received support and structure in the midst of chaos, loss and hurt, in order to achieve renewal. On the lighter side, they will also link into my hobbies of bird watching, history and travel.

You may wonder why I am willing to spend time, money and energy on such a trip. It is because I want to express my sincere thanks to God for 40 years of ministry as a Church Army Evangelist, to draw attention to Church Army ministry (mainly a lay ministry) within the Church of England, and to encourage others to consider joining this organisation. Also, I hope to visit other churches, some of which will be converted into Community Centres, similar to St Paul's Rossmore Road, Marylebone.

So, as I go forward into 40 years of commissioning, I, too, may be treading on wobbly stones but I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is my solid rock. As I join in the worship of the 40 churches and cathedrals, I also hope to bring others from the insecurity of a wobbly stone and onto the firm foundation that is Jesus Christ.

May I finish with Pat Wray's poem and also the prayer of St Patrick, which I will take with me as I journey on my pilgrimage?

Continued.....

How high is God's faithfulness?
High as the clouds.
There's nothing to fear 'neath the sky.
No child of the Father meets trouble alone
With such a Companion by.

How deep is God's faithfulness?
Deep as the sea.
That's deeper than you'll every go.
When life's surging sorrows
Close over your head
Compassion will cradle below. *(Pat Wray)*

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ under me, Christ over me,
Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me.
Christ in lying down, Christ in sitting, Christ in rising up.
Christ in the heart of every person who may think of me!
Christ in the mouth of every one who may speak of me!
Christ in every eye which may look on me!
Christ in every ear, which may hear me. *(St Patrick's Breastplate)*

Sister Theresa Pountney CA, MBE (National Committee)

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***A Letter to the Editor***

**Dear John**

My problem is a mental illness that followed a Caesarean operation. It consists of "Highs" and "Lows" – and, at times, one thinks "Why me?" We all have our Cross to bear, but this is such a silent and unmentionable illness still. When I was quite young I turned to my husband's (Catholic) religion, when desperate for children, and, as you know, when one becomes "over the moon" with religion your own cannot stand it – and when I became ill, my husband blamed that onto religion, and threatened to divorce me if I went back to church. Hence I drifted away from it all for about 16 years – until the day he died. Then I felt quite bitter that my children were not brought up in the Faith. It is a lonely road I have travelled, but in my more conscious moments thank God for bringing me back to Him. I was in hospital recently and was welcomed back at my church, but still feel there are some who will ostracise me. My friend, who used to write daily, has had problems, so if there is anyone out there who likes writing letters, I should be very glad.

PS Today would have been our 56th wedding anniversary (I did get a Priest to my husband before he died, so I guess he went in the right direction!) It is written, "The unbelieving husband is saved by the believing wife". I hope so!

*Irene Stubbs 30 June 2005*

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Travel Insurance Campaign

I used to be able to get travel insurance, which covers everything except pre-existing medical conditions like Mental Health issues and High Blood Pressure. Now one company is declining me because of my Mental Health issues. This could happen with all insurance companies if we don't campaign.

On 8th October I am attending a meeting of 'Voices Forum' at Lupus Street London SW1 near Victoria Coach Station, with a view to starting a campaign against Travel Insurance companies who won't insure people with Mental Health Support needs. If anyone wants to support the campaign please email me at ianmacd2003@yahoo.co.uk or phone me on 020 8552 1489. The louder our 'voice' is, the better!

Ian Macdonald

"STRESS IN THE CITY" POLL REVEALS: STAFF SUFFERING IN SILENCE

A new poll has been conducted by "Together: Working for Wellbeing", the new name for the organisation formerly known as 'Maca'.

The poll, of workers in the capital, published today by leading mental health charity "Together", reveals the climate of fear and inadequate resources that prevent employees discussing and dealing with being stressed in the workplace.

The "Together" poll reveals that half of all employees think stress in the workplace is a "serious problem", with one in five saying it is on the increase. Almost half believe that their career will suffer if they admit to their employers feeling any stress at work.

Announcing the findings Together's Chief Executive, Gil Hitchon, said:

"These findings demonstrate that not only is stress in the workplace a serious problem, but there is still a powerful stigma attached to admitting being stressed at work. Far too many workers are suffering in silence and feel they have nowhere to go for support."

One in four workers revealed that they are aware of a colleague whose mental well-being and career has suffered as a result of stress in the workplace.

Over half of employees feel that their employer does not fully recognise the extent of workplace stress and does not have adequate procedures in place to manage stress-related problems. A majority said that there was a need for other organisations to work with employers to provide specialist support.

Gill Hitchon added:

"Maintaining a genuine work-life balance is increasingly difficult. Employees, as well as employers, do not feel they get the support they need to cope with stress, and as a result stress related problems too frequently build into more serious mental health conditions."

"Employers have responsibilities to employees as well as their shareholders. We should all do more to help tackle this social problem. This includes forming partnerships to provide a level of specialist support that meets the demand and recognises the scale of the problem."

'Together: Working for Wellbeing' is the new name for the mental health charity 'Maca' (Mental After Care Association). The organisation is changing its name and mission to reflect changing times and changing demands.

Martin Ball

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## **A TOUGH TIME**

I had the toughest time of my life. First, I got angina pectoris and then arteriosclerosis. Just as I was recovering from these, I got tuberculosis, double pneumonia and phthisis. Then they gave me hypodermics.

Appendicitis was followed by tonsillectomy. These gave way to aphasia and hypertrophic cirrhosis. I completely lost my memory for a while. I know I had diabetes and acute ingestion, besides gastritis, rheumatism, lumbago and neuritis. I don't know how I pulled through it. It was the hardest spelling test I've ever had !

***Submitted by 'Ray'***



# **SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH INTERFAITH FORUM**

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2005

## ***'You who are younger must accept the authority of the elders' 1 Peter 5:5***

It is too large a task to endeavour to convey all the riches of this event without diffusing certain aspects, or diminishing the experience, so I shall approach it in a twofold manner concentrating here on the morning session. In the next newsletter I will report on the afternoon session, which although still focusing upon the same theme of "Promoting Mental Health and Well-being in Later Life", is in the context of faith communities and spirituality. I'm having difficulties already; I can't find the category 'old age' anywhere in my Bible concordance. Having searched through three separate ones, the nearest I can find is 'Euthanasia' and 'Disrespect (For elders)' - It all seems a bit gloomy. I am attempting to find an encouraging Bible reference to set me on the right footing and now I find myself contemplating upon how the nature of man as a prisoner of his fears must disregard his later years by omitting 'later life' from the concordance. But I did discover under 'Euthanasia' (Isaiah 65:20). Finally! - I have found the categories 'Old' and 'Elders' in my 1926 'Helps to the Study of the Bible', which in itself says something about the wisdom associated with age!

I find it reassuring to think that God does in fact give the oldest prophets the most valuable and challenging tasks of all to complete, which begs the question - does our generation, in its treatment of elders, reflect the nature of God? Do we recognise God's Wisdom communicated in the manner in which he selects the most unlikely of candidates to perform the most difficult tasks? Perhaps if we struggle to pinpoint specific references which reflect God's approach to the challenges of later life its because the mystery is being unveiled in the very nature and essence of His Wisdom, interwoven in such a manner that we may subtly relate to the trials which later life brings with it.

A warm welcome was given by Dr Martin Stringer, Head of the Department of Theology, who was joined by the Forum Chairman, Martin Aaron, who in turn introduced Dr Andrew McCullough - Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation and Gerry Burke (Age of importance of belonging and being valued and being alongside people in the deepest parts of their lives, to help to make for a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. On the darker side, he spoke of the stigmas and misconceptions associated with both mental illness and old age and the dual discrimination, which results. Dementia or Alzheimer's as most of us might assume is not the greatest cause of distress amongst elders but depression.

Michelle Lee (Mental Health Foundation/Age Concern) shared with the forum on the ongoing work in progress of a three year enquiry and circulated a report entitled "Things to do, Places to Go" which provides a reflection of the needs of individuals and organisations in response to information gathered from questionnaires given to 882 individuals between the ages of 50 and 90 and to various organisations, specifically designed to ascertain the needs of those in later life, inviting both good and bad responses and those participating were asked to give recommendations for positive changes, from personal, societal and governmental perspectives.

The aim of the enquiry is:

- To raise awareness
- Empower older people
- Create an evidence base
- Influence policy and planning
- To improve services and serve as a good model of partnership and UK-wide working.

Here are a few points that I have extracted from the report:

Upon being asked to define mental health well-being, most people described it as 'Dementia' closely followed by healthy mind/body and then happiness. One organisation responded thus: 'it is often associated with the physical decline of the central nervous system - Alzheimer's disease.



From individuals:

I worry about the secularisation of our nation, the growth of selfishness and greed  
And liberalisation of the law. .

GPs and nurses that tell us 'it's because you're old' – what do you expect at your age?

The importance of friends and family interests and outings.

Faith in God.

The need to have an active and valued role in one extended family that appreciates you.

Having a good sense of humour: Don't wear beige!

And who more befitting to compete the morning than Stephen Townsend MBE – Member of The Board of Enquiry – who recommends that in later life we should learn to "Stand up, speak up and be heard!"

The Spirituality and Interfaith Forum meetings are generally held in central London.

For more information call 0208 371 5888.

***Suzanne Heneghan Chairman of APCMH 2005***

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Voice Mail

We have learnt to live with voice mail as a necessary part of modern life.
But have you wondered "What if God decided to install voice mail?"

Imagine praying and hearing this:

"Please select one of the following options:

Press 1 for Requests

Press 2 for Thanksgiving

Press 3 for Complaints

Press 4 for all other enquiries"

What if God used the familiar excuse: "I'm sorry, all of our angels are busy helping other sinners right now. However your prayer is important to us and will be answered in the order it was received, so please stay on the line."

Or can you imagine getting these kinds of responses as you call God in Prayer?

"If you would like to speak to Gabriel, press 1, for Michael, press 2. For a directory of other angels press 3. If you would like to speak to King David sign a psalm while you hold then press 4. To find out if a loved one has been assigned to Heaven press 5 and enter their social security number, then press the pound key. If you get a negative response try area code 666.

For reservations in "My Father's House" Please enter J O H N followed by 3-16.

For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the Earth or where Noah's ark is, please wait until you arrive here. Our computers show that you have already prayed once today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow. The office is closed for the weekend to observe a religious holiday. Please pray again Monday after 9.30am. If you need emergency assistance when this office is closed, please contact your local pastor."

Thank god he doesn't have a voice mail and he listens when we pray!

Betty Law

POETRY REFLECTING LIFE'S JOURNEY

(An extract from Sue Holt's Website)

Hi, my name is Sue; I am 37 married to Dave, mother to a 14-year-old son.

I am a poet who was diagnosed as have manic depression. I began writing poems in 2000. I have been successful to have had a book of poems published by chipmunkapublishing it is called "Poems of Survival", and recently a second collection of poems "Depression ate my Soul" released as an 'ebook', also by chipmunkapublishing.

I became a Christian in 1997 following the desperation of my life crumbling before my very eyes, due to being mentally ill. My conversion to Christ has been an easy one, ranging from total disbelief to evangelising to all I met. My behaviour further added to people's beliefs that my faith was purely religious delusion. I will be the first to admit that my faith was intensified by mania; however, I think it was inappropriate to dismiss it altogether.

Most of my work surrounds the conflict of my faith in Christ and the attitudes of those around me and their impact upon me. Delving into areas surrounding my abusive childhood and living daily with manic depression make no excuse for the intensity of my words, as I know that they liberated me. As for those among you who may not be religious in any way, I can safely say that I was not either. As far as I was concerned God was not in my life when I needed Him most, and on many occasions I hurled abuse in His direction and asked, why?

I have come to the conclusion that faith is very much like mental distress and is unique to that one individual. When I discussed my faith or my distress with those around me, I realised they were telling me of their experience which they concluded was right as it was all they knew.

Through my writing I have been able to voice this confusion within my mind. Am I mentally ill? Is my faith real? Are my experiences real? I began to realise the answer to all these questions is "Yes". I tried many times to dismiss my illness, my faith and my experiences but realised I needed to accept all in their own right, to reach a balance by which I can move forward.

If you want to use any info on this site please feel free. However, please mention this website and that it is my work. You can use my full name Sue Holt as I think this goes some way to breaking down some of the stigma surrounding mental distress. If you do sue it and find it helpful, I would welcome feedback from you, either in the guest book or at pud44uk@yahoo.co.uk. Why not pop back from time to time. May God bless you all.

Dreaming Huge Dream

I believe I never dreamt
The unworthy incapable
Imagining life without hope
One day, I dreamt of beauty and love
And was told
No such existed
At ten at night
I was worthy enough to realise that
If beauty and love did exist
Surely they would be there
Day and night
Today I dream of hope
For myself and others
Huge dreams
worthy of me
Dreaming of love and beauty
Co-existing whatever the time of day.

Experiences of a Carer

I remember well when I was concerned for my relative, who seemed to be troubled. I did not know how to help. I was bewildered and perplexed. Do I take the initiative or wait for my relative to realise that something was not right. What was bothering my relative so much? Eventually, sadly, my relative became very ill. I had tried to seek advice, but nobody was really listening. Hooray! At last my relative asked for some help. I confided with someone and they kindly put me on the right track. I made enquiries. At last some information. Visits were made. Unfortunately, these people did not listen properly to my relative. I tried to get information and guidance to no avail. I needed advice. Then sadly things came to a head, which resulted in a hospital admission. While sad and worried I hoped for some relief of the suffering for my relative. Then on discharge I was keen to know the right things to do. I felt the need for information about the illness and how I could help where necessary with rehabilitation. It saddened me greatly that I was not helped sufficiently, in respect of what to do, to be able to help my relative on the right path to helping them to get help themselves.

My husband was at a loss too and felt sad. We both searched and searched in our minds and conversations as to where we had gone wrong in order to seek answers and understand the causes. We wanted someone to show us the way – the right way. That did not seem to be forthcoming and was frustrating and upsetting for us. We tried hard to find someone to inform us properly and help our relative as to what the cause was and ways to combat and relieve their suffering. I decided then that if I wanted to know things then it was up to me to find out.

Our relative told us about an organisation. It was here through a dear couple that I started to learn things. They gave people hope and information and offered kindly as well as practical help in a loving and sensitive way to each member of the group. With the friendship and useful information from this couple and the organisation they represented, I was enthused to become more involved. They had great insight, intuition as well as the ability to give each member the information they required at the right time.

It was at one of the organisation's conferences that I found out about APCMH. I had been looking so long for a group that had a faith orientation and therefore felt doubly blessed. I soon learnt that Carers experience many of the same things and that information was very important.

Things are much better. It has been a long path. However, what I have learnt is that one must never give up hope. One must remain strong and resolute and believe in recovery. One learns the things that matter and what to accept. Together we have journeyed along this path learning all the time.

We have helped each other to understand as well as become less attached in certain respect, and therefore stronger, and in others better informed and hopeful. We have laughed and had fun. It has been a long road but some things learnt would not have happened without having gone through these various experiences. So building with faith and hope has been paramount along this road.

There are still things to overcome, but we go forth with faith. It is a joy to me that my relative has come so far and their faith remained intact. The bonus is newfound skills in self-management and thus confidence with added abilities. Hopefully I am more understanding through knowledge from information.

While I am getting older and less able physically it is often the other way round now, with my relative helping me instead – a natural reversal. We enjoy helping each other, where and when we can, and give thanks for that. What joy – we are truly blessed. The greatest gift God can give is a child. *Thank you Lord.*

(The Contributor wishes to remain anonymous)

EFFECTIVE LISTENING FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

A Course in 4 Sessions in September 2005

Wednesday 21st ; Thursday 22nd ; Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th
7.00pm to 9.45 each evening

At Salisbury Methodist Church, St Edmond Street

This is a basic skills course, taught over four sessions, to further your own personal development. It offers ways of ***Listening to God*** that may be new to you.

It gives a perspective on ***Listening to Yourself*** that you may not have considered before. It teaches a way of ***Listening to Others*** that is startling in it's simplicity and amazing in it's effectiveness, furthering courtesy, understanding and healing

I firmly believe that it is a must for everyone at the right time, and if it is the right time for you, you will be most welcome to join us.

We are able to accept your enrolment now, by completing the slip below or by contacting us personally

Julia Walters, 353 Devizes Road, Salisbury SP2 9JN

Or Phone 01722 320015 or email: walters@tinyworld.co.uk

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Please Enrol Me On The SEPTEMBER 2005 Course

**"EFFECTIVE LISTENING FOR EVERYDAY LIFE"**

I understand that there is a £28.00 Acorn Course Fee.

Cheques should be made payable, in advance where possible, To "Salisbury Methodist Church" please with "Acorn Course" written on the reverse. Where you are able, a donation towards church expenses, in the region of £4.00 maybe, would be gratefully received, separately. Further details will be posted to you prior to the course.

NAME .....

TITLE .....

ADDRESS.....

POST CODE .....  ..... EMAIL .....

Your usual place of worship if applicable .....

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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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