

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2006

This month's Front Page contribution

Celebrating Solomon Brown as Chairman of Forest Hill Branch

As Deputy Mayor of Lewisham, Solomon recalls the events surrounding the death of Princess Diana when he was required to perform many of the Mayoral duties during the Mayor's absence. He speaks proudly of his meetings with the Duke of Kent and Princess Alexandra. Whilst in his role as Deputy Mayor he was invited to a function at the Forest Hill branch and his experience then, meant that he was never to look back. He made such an impression on the members that he was requested to return and very soon was asked to become Chairman. Although never really suffering from mental health distress, he has been moved by the dedication and commitment of the volunteers there – so much so that he has remained ever since.

Solomon regularly attends the APCMH National Committee Meetings and contributes so much by his sheer presence alone. He exudes so much compassion and understanding, talking proudly of the achievements of Forest Hill and its Wednesday drop-in group, whose evenings are attended regularly, some by people who travel long distances. Thank you Solomon for all you do to motivate and inspire us. At the age of 83 we might expect you to take it easy but we know how much you love your work with us and how you would miss the dedication to your task.

Almost Twenty Years in Forest Hill

The Forest Hill Branch of APCMH began with a meeting in St Peter's Church, Lordship Lane in May 1987. There were ten people at the meeting and we had a long discussion of alternative models for the branch and how we might research what other people do. By the end of the meeting a group of us had decided to jump in at the deep end and see what happened. As a result we found premises next to Forest Hill station and opened our Drop-In centre for the first time on May 19th 1987.

Our objective was to run a Drop-In providing support for people with mental health problems and for their carers as well as helping to raise awareness of mental health issues in our area. Carers do contact us from time to time though not usually on a regular basis. We have raised the awareness of mental health issues by giving talks to local organisations. However, most of our effort has been giving support directly to people with mental health problems. Our Drop-In centre has been open weekly since we first started, except for a short spell when shortage of volunteers meant we could not open quite so often. We reckon that we have been open for over 900 sessions.

We have moved premises a time or two and are now open every Wednesday at St Saviour's Church Hall, Brockley Rise between 7.00 and 9.00 pm. We really are a "Drop-In" and any one, user or volunteer, is welcome.

From the start we advertised ourselves in local churches, doctor's surgeries and libraries and this, plus word of mouth, is how we continue to promote ourselves. Our first user arrived within five minutes of opening the doors and became a regular for over ten years before she moved out of the area. The number of users built up steadily and we now average fifteen each week that means that over the years we have had around 15,000 visits. Most of our clients are regulars and some continue to come for many years, usually until they move out of the area or their circumstances change. One of our current regulars has been coming almost every week for twelve years while another, who moved away, still comes most weeks from Kilburn.

Apart from the Drop-In we have outings in the summer. Most years we have a day out in central London or a trip on the river to Greenwich. We have had a visit to Ramsgate and weekends away at Hengrave Hall in Suffolk.

Drop in any Wednesday or call Solomon Brown on 020 8291 6462 or Gail or myself on 020 8670 5822

Nick Cotton, founder member

**Further extracts from the September meeting of,
THE NATIONAL SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH FORUM.
continued from the January issue.**

PRESENTERS: Chairman Martin Aaron; Imam Shahid Hussain; Dr Ahmed Al Dubayan, Director General of the Mosque; The Venerable Arthur Dawes, Archdeacon of Lincoln; Barney Leith, NSA of the Baha'is of the UK.

Arthur described how one question in a questionnaire for staff at the Central Mosque in Regent's Park could lead to misunderstandings, if responded to as being 'true'. The statement was that 'spirit possession in a Muslim patient is a reliable indicator of mental illness – true or false? The answer is, of course, false. He identified three misunderstandings about his own faith community – the Christian religion; and perhaps in the discussion that follows others may want to identify misunderstandings about their belief systems.

The first is the claim to the uniqueness of Jesus and the reliance upon the text. *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me"*. This is claimed often as a core text to identify Jesus as the only means of salvation. A more careful reading indicates that the words chosen are *"No one comes to the Father except by me"*. This suggests to me that the uniqueness of the Christian faith is not salvation through Jesus alone but that Christians believe in a close relationship with God as Father and this is what is offered in the person of Jesus.

A second misunderstanding is that Christians worship Christ. Christ is one part of a three-fold Godhead and Christians worship a god who creates, reconciles and sanctifies. In other words, the Christian god is much more than the person of Jesus because it incorporates the Fatherhood and the Spirit of God.

Lastly, misunderstandings about mental health easily arise especially when mental illness is thought to be promoted by demon possession. This, I believe, raises the whole question of how we understand and locate evil but that is really the subject of another talk.

The role model for me in the Christian faith who speaks to mental health is the man Legion. Today we would describe him as suffering from a psychotic illness and we find a description of the meeting between Jesus and Legion in Chapter 5 of St Mark's Gospel. In summary the lessons from Legion are:

Jesus showed no fear, approached the man, held a conversation with him, He then healed him. He used the moment as an opportunity to educate those around him about the need to restore people with mental health problems to peace of mind and their original community. When Legion asked if he could join Jesus, the answer was "no", and Jesus encouraged him to return to the very community, which had rejected him in the first place – the first example of community care.

Dr Tenaz Eunace – Health Advisor to the Mosque

Dr Eunace then gave a brief talk during which he highlighted the utmost importance of health in Islam: it is seen as the greatest blessing. Muslims are instructed to take steps that are conducive to preservation of good health. The Holy Qu'ran shows Muslims how to live a healthy life, including avoiding alcohol and smoking; having a healthy diet and prayer five times a day is good for breathing, circulation, joints and has a positive effect on mental health. God has bestowed us our bodies for a limited time and will hold us to account for how we look after them.

Barney Leith The Baha'i Faith Secretary for External Affairs, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK

Barney began by explaining that the Baha'i Faith is a religion born in the modern age. Baha'is follow the teachings of Baha'u'llah (meaning "The Glory of God") whom Baha'is recognise as a "Manifestation" of God. Baha'u'llah born in Persia in the 19th century, taught that all the great faiths come from one Divine Source – what we call God – and that humankind's great spiritual adventure has been guided throughout history by prophets, teachers, Manifestations of God, such as Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, and Baha'u'llah Himself.

Baha'u'llah refers to these great prophets as Divine Physicians. Of course, Baha'is recognise that there is a great diversity of religious expression, and that is only to be expected, given the different times and places in which the faiths have originated. Baha'u'llah commands his followers to associate with the people of all faiths in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. Thus, inter-faith work is very important for Baha'is and is regarded as an essential way of dealing with religious conflict.

Spirituality in Bahai' understanding, is rooted in our relationship to God. That relationship is expressed in worship and action and leads us to knowledge of our True Self and to lead a virtuous life. The virtuous life is above all a life of service to our fellow human beings. The Bahai' scriptures say: *Service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.*

The Bahai' Faith places great emphasis on the importance of the family as the foundation of society and on building welcoming and nurturing communities.

Discussion followed but unfortunately, space dictates that we must now end these fascinating excerpts.

Ros Mackenna – Eternally at home in Christ

Ros died in January after a sustained battle with lung cancer. I cannot speak of the suffering that she and her husband Chris and family endured throughout those final few years. The memories that I do recall of her far outweigh the bitterness of the circumstances.

Ros possessed an unquenchable love of Jesus and an inner joy and devotion to God, resulting from the complete assurance and trust in his unchanging and healing love. Although never resigned to the illness and ever hopeful of a cure, she seemed to be rather more accepting that God's higher purpose moving within the healing process would win the day, though the battle raged on inside.

Ros oozed with joy, reflecting a deep faith, which she longed to share with others, and she did so with such vigour that it became almost impossible not to believe. Her scriptural aids were always transferable practical solutions to problems that would arise during the course of our fellowship.

Having a genuine appreciation for life, she was thankful for every small gift. I recall one day, her having discovered a cardboard box which was just suitable to rest an aloe vera plant upon but to Ros, it was more than a mere box, it was an answer to prayer, heaven and earth were eclipsed and she rejoiced as though it had been made of pure gold. She would dance with the Lord as though he were present in person and one couldn't help but wonder at that secret place to which she was transported. But I loved to be with her, because she dared to express those elements of her nature that others might wish to conceal and I was overawed by the uninhibited expression of her devotion to God.

Ros was a great comfort to me at a time when anxiety and fear still dominated my life to some extent. I recognised something within Ros that protected her from negative emotions and this drew me in, Ros's Bible fellowship became an opportunity where all our joys and woes were perfectly interwoven into the fabric of God's word and accompanied with coffee and prayerfulness. Having said all this we disagreed at times and were never without lively debate and Ros was not afraid to state her case. However, when returning to Jesus, the conflict was mostly always resolved.

I sensed that much of Ros's inner turmoil was expressed through her poetry and those who knew her would recognise the essence of her spontaneous nature depicted within her writings which often touched on those murkier areas where often there lurked an underlying message. Often her tone is dogmatic but she leaves the reader to reach his own conclusions, often wholly compassionate and yet somehow deeply regretful as though the joy she had in Christ and the sadnesses she herself experienced were set apart, once comparing butterflies to that freedom in God after the earthbound caterpillar bit.

Since Ros died, I have felt perplexed. With so much faith present why was she not physically cured as part of the healing process? The Revd Dr Tom Smail – The Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral, spoke recently at the healing service at St Marylebone on this very theme and what he said has enabled me to rethink. We say within the Creed '... protect us from all anxiety'. Is it not rather then, the **power** and **fear** of illness with the potential to destroy our faith that is the real nature of illness and requires the deeper healing? Must a physical manifestation or cure always be a requisite for complete healing? Ros was someone whose body and soul were set on Jesus, having the power to disarm the opposition, bind the enemy and loosen the grip of fear. Through Ros I have come to recognise a God who sets us free. One who delivers us as we pray and become more fully conscious of our identity in Him.

Last week was World Book Day. 'Spread the Word' was the message and I think Ros might have said: 'I think you'd love to read: Steve Chalke's book 'The Lost Message Of Jesus'

Suzanne Heneghan (APCMH National Chairman 2006)

SCHIZOPHRENIA IS NO LONGER SEEN AS A GENETICALLY PREDETERMINED DISEASE

TALKING TO THE DEMONS

Mike Harris left Cambridge, for university in Scotland filled with the natural enthusiasm for starting an independent life. But he couldn't handle all the partying and drugs on campus. After a year he had moved back with his parents. A few years later he tried again, but once again he had to leave. Harris (not his real name) was plagued by voices and "static in my head" and went for long periods without sleep or food. "At one point I thought I could save the world by not eating or washing. I had very unrealistic beliefs," he says. Harris was hospitalised several times and underwent inpatient psychiatric treatment, but what finally brought him back from the brink of schizophrenia was an intensive combination of group, individual and family psychotherapy, and help with social skills. At the Young People's Service, a psychiatric clinic in Cambridge, patients shop, cook and eat together, and help each other to negotiate their phobias.

Not long ago schizophrenia was considered an incurable, lifelong disease caused by an unlucky combination of genes. Sufferers were condemned to a lifetime on drugs. Now scientists are beginning to uncover evidence that schizophrenia is heavily influenced by environmental factors. Their research has huge implications for treatment. Doctors now believe that therapy and social work are the preferred method of treatment for most sufferers. "Patients really must have therapy in order to improve," says University of Newcastle psychiatrist Dr Douglas Turkington. "Medication alone will not do it."

A study published last month in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, the most definitive look at schizophrenia to date, argues that trauma or childhood abuse is a factor in the development of the disease. While schizophrenia is the product of a complex interplay between a host of environmental risks," says Dr Mary Clarke, a psychiatric researcher at Ireland's Royal College of Surgeons. A review of 46 studies of schizophrenics by Auckland University psychologist John Read found that 59 percent of male inpatients and 69 percent of females had experienced childhood physical or sexual abuse. In a separate study, which included physical neglect and physical or emotional abuse, the level rose to 85 percent of males and 100 percent of women. Says Read: "We have around the world millions of people with a diagnosis that masks the true social causes, and therefore prevents people from getting help which would be more effective and humane."

The cumulative impact of this research has swayed opinion in the profession's highest echelons. At American Psychiatric Society's annual conference in August, the organisation's president, Steven S Sharfstein, noted that anti psychotic medicines now generate \$6.5 billion in sales a year and registered concern that mental disorders are being over medicated.

Responding to early signs of schizophrenia the findings suggest, could save patients from a lifetime dependency on debilitating drugs. Indeed, suffering a breakdown – often characterised by disorganised thinking, delusions and hallucinations – in your late teens or early 20s could be seen as an opportunity to intervene with therapy to mitigate the disease. "If worked through properly, it could become a breakthrough." Says psychiatrist, Dr Shankarnarayan Srinath, who initially referred Harris to the Cambridge therapists. "If people are helped at that stage, they will begin to make meaning of their suffering. If they don't have help to work it through, it's likely they will become a chronic, lifelong psychiatric patient."

The findings don't rule out a significant genetic contribution to schizophrenia. Scientists believe that chains of hundreds of genes combine incrementally to create a predisposition to the disease. "But genes can't function without the environment," says Dr David Taylor, medical director at London's Tavistock and Portman Clinics. Harris, for instance, claims he was already prone to depression. But the results of the therapy confirm that environmental factors play a bigger role.

Few genes have been identified as having any direct effect on mental health. "Twenty years ago [schizophrenia researchers] were saying once we have the genome sorted out we can all go home – it's going to turn out to be two or three genes that contribute to it." Dr E Fuller Torrey, psychiatrist, author of "Beasts of the Earth; Animals, Humans, Disease" says, "It's not quite clear that's not the case."

The shift in thinking conflicts directly with priorities in public health services. The British Medical Association says a third of the country's mental health teams plan cutbacks, including dismantling specialist clinics in Oxfordshire and Cumbria, as well as the Young People's Service in Cambridge. The Department of Health says that intervention teams, including psychiatric nurses and social workers will fill the gap. A recent survey of guidelines for treating schizophrenia around the world published in The British Journal of Psychiatry found that all countries give drug recommendations, but advice on psychosocial interventions remains scant. "I just cannot overstate the importance of this kind of treatment," says Harris, now 35, with a girlfriend and a career in teaching. "It gave me the tools to live my life." Schizophrenia usually strikes just as a young person is on the threshold of living on his own. A renewed focus on psychotherapeutic and social treatments may help more of them cross that line.

By Tara Pepper HEALTH

Referred to the mental health team,
Hey, Lydia's kinda nice
Seems helpful and considerate,
She begins to break the ice,
The time has come to spill the beans,
Only I say too much you see.

Cope by yourself my girl
You'll be just fine
You've come through all of this my dear
I'm sure you'll be just fine

Shipped off to the CATT team,
So it's time to start again,
Turn up at my home each day,
Ask you things already noted.

Got them convinced now,
Got dressed by midday and tidied up the house.
They smelt the chicken cooking,
And I acted perfectly alright.

Be careful what you say,
They'll play all sorts of tricks,
Try to work out which label you have,
Will scar your records for life,

Happy that I'm normal,
Refer me back to the beginning,
As I wave goodbye to them
I wonder how it would have been,
If only they'd referred me for counselling from
the start,
No strings attached,
Why do I need that label to get their help?

Not here to flex their counselling skills,
No time to talk things through,
Just question after question,
And I know where they're headed,
Fed up with those assessments,
The doc thinks she knows for a moment,
But I led her right away.

Mandy Lelliot

SHOPPING FOR LOVE

SOMEONE told me not so long ago that I should attempt to find God "in the pots and pans." As someone who has never been well known for her love of housework, in particular cooking, I thought this would be rather a difficult job. However, I did manage to find Him in my shopping list, which is perhaps coming a little close to that aim....

LINES ON PREPARING FOR MORRISONS

Put love on your shopping list,
Amongst the organic vegetables,
Fresh bread and free-range eggs.
Love, golden-yoked and soft-risen,
Fresh and crispy.

Put love on your shopping list
Spread it around.
Like soft, malleable butter,
Enriched with all that is best and beautiful.

Put love on your shopping list,
Amongst the luscious mangoes and shiny aubergines,
The healthy, wholemeal flour
And the slimming, fruity drinks.

Love first and last on your shopping list
Watch it – feel it – spill over
Purest liquid gold.

Julia Giles.

The Wheel of Life – Good News about Ageing

Good News, What Good News?

I'm not old. I wouldn't be seen dead with older people, especially folk in care. No! No, I'm going to enjoy life while I still can; travel, holidays, tennis, golf, rambling, gardening, music, painting, lifelong learning. I've always wanted to study ancient Greek!

But who is old? There is one inescapable fact in life. The death rate is 100% no matter when it occurs. Humankind, as with all biological animals and plants, is subject to a finite biological life cycle.

Picture life as a wheel. Each of us is on a journey. Each life represents one turn of the wheel. During our lifetime the wheel of life completes one revolution, from the day we are born to the day we die. From dust, to dust as the wheel revolves. Our wheels may be of a different size and construction. They may revolve at different speeds and cover different distances on the ground, depending on their diameter. As we embark on our journey, however, through childhood, adolescence, adulthood and onward to maturity, we may each reach our zenith at different ages. At no stage of our journey does age really matter. One person may be mature in their teens or early adulthood, whereas others may not reach the height of their capabilities until their sixties, seventies, or even eighties. Ageing itself is a natural process culminating in the fulfilment of life.

We need to accept reality and be encouraged that as Christians we are confident of an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, which is being kept in heaven for us. It does not really matter whether we are still "economically productive" as long as we still have the capacity to give. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Have you noticed that people who lack a purpose in life seem to grow old quickly, while others with a real gift or passion seem to live to a ripe old age? It was Thora Hird who said, "You don't stop doing things because you are old. You grow old because you stop doing things." What really matters is who we are, not what we do. We are children of the living God, adopted into His family through Jesus Christ His Son, and until the wheel completes its full cycle, each of us has something precious to share, both with our peers and with our children and grandchildren.

Have you ever wondered how Caleb was able to say, "Now then, just as the Lord promised he has kept me alive for forty-five years, since the time he said this to Moses? So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I am just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day"? Or why the 6th Commandment says, "Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you". We are meant to grow old, but not to be fearful.

What we need in our country today are people of all ages, and especially those contemplating retirement or of retirement age, with a heart for honouring the elderly. This is exciting work that will bring refreshment to your soul and prosperity.

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***Count your blessings instead of your crosses.***  
***Count your gains instead of your losses.***  
***Count your joys instead of your woes.***  
***Count your friends instead of your foes.***  
***Count your laughs instead of your tears.***  
***Count your full years instead of your lean.***  
***Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.***  
***Count your health instead of your wealth.***  
***And count on God instead of yourself.***

ANON



## THE 'MISSING LINK'

Now that Darwin's theory of evolution' has been discounted by many leading scientists, and the once vaunted 'Piltdown skull' exposed as a schoolboy hoax, thinking men are renewing their search for a sense of meaning and purpose to life.

Some of us may be old enough to remember Professor C.E.M. Joad, of Brains Trust fame on the radio, before the advent of TV. His last book entitled "The Recovery of Belief", tells how, as head of Philosophy at the University of London, he had found only the Bible to give a satisfactory explanation of that intrinsic evil in man, which cannot be accounted for in terms of economic hardship or psychological maladjustment.

My own researches into the complexities of the human mind (following a lifetime in the psychiatric profession, and with both hands on and management experience in all known types and degrees of severity of mental illness, and psychological maladjustment) has long convinced me that it is in the realm of "personality" alone, that God is found. As Christ said in Luke 17: 221 and bids us to "Learn of Him" (Matthew 11:20)

It is then up to us to choose whether He was just a wandering religious teacher, or whether He was and is what He claimed to be, "God incarnate" or "God revealed in a way that man can understand."

For he is the perfect "Communicator" to all who will take the trouble to both read the record of His life, death and resurrection with an open mind, and pray for grace to apply them as what I call "Mental Health Training."

For many years, I have proved, not only to my own mind, but have been able to help many others to re-adjust their disordered minds by way of a genuine Christian commitment with its implications of fellowship and help from a devoted therapeutic community (as found in some, but not all, churches).

It is in this direction alone that those who have come under my care have made, often slow, yet certain steps in the direction of improvement towards recovery. This is not to be unrealistic, I am fully aware of those who are afflicted with the deep-seated psychotic conditions of serious genetically based schizophrenia and alzheimer's disease, where insight (self awareness) is very diminished, or appears to be absent altogether and calls for such understanding compassion from dedicated carers.

Yet even these may respond to those loving Christlike influences from those who live the kind of life which Jesus set before us as a "Life giving" example. Rather than some churchgoers today who seem to think that the correct performance of some ritual, the tasteful rendition of some style of music, or to be considered socially respectable is all that is needed as a passport to heave. Perhaps such folk had best read Matthew 25.

**Ken Bunting RMN (Retd.)**

Author of the book "Ignoring the Divine Psychiatrist" available free from him at 103 Devonshire Drive, Mickleover, Derby. DE3 9HE  
New Life Publishing PO Box 777 Notts. NG11 6ZZ

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR**

***So much interest has been shown in the poems that appear from time to time in the Newsletter that the National Committee of APCMH has decided to publish a modest book of poems.***

***Many of the poems will be those that have appeared over the years in the Newsletter, but we are also seeking new or unpublished poems from our readers. All established, and budding, poets are invited to submit for publication, poems for inclusion in the new book. Please send them, or even better email them if you can, to my addresses, which appear on the back page. Readers, let us know of your favourite poem.***





The Association For Pastoral Care In Mental Health AGM

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

# The Importance Of Listening

*Are we really hearing when we are listening to others?*

**Speaker: Mrs Pat Dale - Acorn Christian Healing Foundation**

**10am Coffee and Welcome**

**10.30 Listening Workshop**  
*Acorn - Pat Dale*

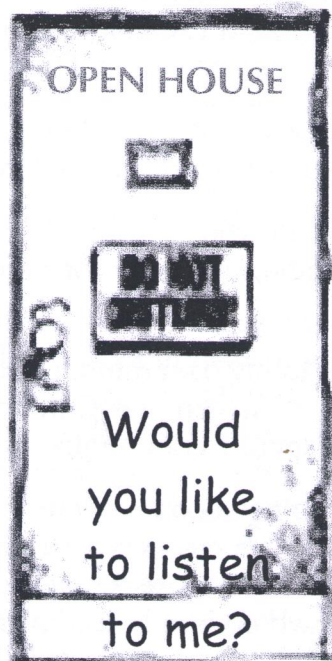
**1pm Lunch - provided**

**2pm AGM**

**2.30 Open Forum\***

**3.45 Closing Reflections**

**4pm Tea**



**\*Open Forum:**  
Musical offerings  
Poetry, news, events

**To Register:**  
leave a message with  
your name & material  
**020 7383 0167**

**£10 and £2 unwaged, including lunch**

**To book call Pam Freeman: 020 8647 3678 or Suzanne Heneghan: 020 7383 0167**

Cheques can be made payable to APCMH and sent directly to  
Pam Freeman at 16 Beechwood Court West St Lane Carshalton Surrey SM5 2PZ

**Venue: St Paul's Church Centre, 3 Rossmore Road, London NW1**  
**Nearest tube: Marylebone or Baker Street**

## 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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