

Being Alongside

the Bi-Monthly magazine of *Being Alongside* / apcmh



March - April 2012



Wendy, Maggie, Mary and Delia: see p 8.



Spring is Nearly Here - Hooray!
Wide, blue skies, fresh air,
sunlight & flowers usually help...
Enjoy!

Help is at Hand

Samaritans:	08457 909090
(national number which will put you through to your nearest branch)	
Saneline: (6 - 11pm each night)	08457 678000
Rethink Advisory Service:	08454 560455
Young Minds Parents' Helpline:	08088 025544
(9.30 - 4 weekdays, free from mobiles and landlines)	
Carers in the Community:	01642 818332
(led by Edna Hunneysett. This is her home number)	
MIND: (Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm)	08457 660163
Maytree: (24 / 7 + answerphone)	020 7263 7070

The Barnabas *Drop - In Sessions*

*'Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas
(which means Son of Encouragement)' ...Acts 4:36*

St. Paul's Community Project in partnership with BA / apcmh

Mondays 2pm - 5pm

Plus various activities: Table tennis, dominoes, scrabble, art / craft,
poetry reading, tea / sandwiches / cakes and chat.

Wednesday 10am - 12pm

A more reflective discussion time with tea and biscuits, an opportunity to all
share concerns or to receive one-to-one support (by appointment).

Free. All Welcome.

Venue: St Paul's Church Centre, 3 Rossmore Rd, NW1
(5 mins walk from Marylebone Station; buses 139 & 189 stop outside)

call: Sister Theresa: 020 7724 8517

When he arrived & saw the wonderful things God was doing, he was filled with excitement & joy, and encouraged the believers to stay close to The Lord whatever the cost. Barnabas was a kindly person, full of the Holy Spirit & strong in faith. As a result large numbers of people were added to the Lord.

(Acts 11:19-24)

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Front Page

with

Sister Theresa Pountney

Fruits of the Barnabas Group

It is good in these winter days of February to think back to the lovely months of September / October when we experienced the fruit of those Autumn Days. (See back cover).

We can also look forward to the loveliness of the spring season that is to come. (See front cover). As I write this article I am reminded of the 'fruit' of our local Barnabas Group which meets every Monday and Wednesday at St. Paul's Church.

Throughout the years different individual members have contributed much energy and help to others. Some of this energy has stayed within the group as we seek to come alongside one another valuing and realising each other's **Uniqueness**.

As a group we have given to the Church and Community through Jumble Sales, Coffee Mornings and preparation of the tables for some of the other groups. In more recent years we have two members with visual impairment, and the group as a whole has reached out to them, playing Dominoes, trips to the Park, and just offering to come alongside them, being a Barnabas to them as in John Chapter 15 Verse 16:

"You did not choose me, I chose you and I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that would last"

This verse speaks of the fruit that develops in our lives. We have seen this in our individual lives, but also in the life of the group as we started to think of starting a monthly Torch Group for the Visually Impaired. You may have heard of the work of Torch for those who are Visually Impaired, their Book Lending Library, and their Fellowship Groups throughout the Country.

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Our Volunteers for the Torch Group are mainly ex-volunteers / present volunteers of the Barnabas Group. Some of our members also assist. Galatians Chapter 5 Verses 20-22 tells us the ***Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long Suffering.***

Week by week we hope to bring these gifts as we strengthen one another despite our own problems, needs, and those living with mental health issues.

I wonder if you realise what you can also do either as a group or individual to produce fruit of something new in your Community, Church, or Family.

Sister Theresa Pountney

Food Glorious Food!

Healing does involve our hearts, our minds, our souls, our spirit, but there is also no doubt that how we feel physically has a large part to play.

The national press published a little while ago a list of the Top Most Healthy food and drink products which are good for us and which were said to "rejuvenate" our bodies.

One can be too cynical and I set out to try them. The evidence, as far as I and MY particular body are concerned, is that, yes, they are effective. So, I counsel you to try:

- + No. 1 health food: **Green Tea** - yes, an acquired taste, but you *can* get used to it. I buy Clipper Green Tea and take it with or without lemon. Available from most supermarkets.
- + **Natural Set Yogurt**: good for helping you "go" well!
- + **Water** from the tap. [None of us drink enough of it; now I always have a bottle with me]
- + **Chocolate**: dark - *not* milk -
- + **Red wine** with your meal: a good pick-me up!

David Sims

Ed: red wine and chocolate!? Sounds too good...

From the Chair

For those of you who have been following what *Being Alongside* has been doing in recent years you will be aware that from being an organisation with little income and resources we have been blessed with some money from generous legacies (one in particular) and donations. The national committee has been discerning how best to make use of these gifts in a way that honours their spirit wisely and in a way which we hope will produce lasting results. We reflected on what was the core of much of our past work of running drop in and support groups, activities, workshops and befriending courses. We thought that what people experiencing mental distress (and those around them) particularly appreciated was being valued, heard and supported through *Being Alongside* in its many shapes and forms, i.e. befriending (and why our name is so relevant!). That led us to explore this further in a workshop with Richard Allen at our AGM day a couple of years ago. However, subsequent response was limited so our hope of taking this further and perhaps organising something nationally has so far not materialised.

We then reflected further that underpinning a lot of this was in the way we listen to and hear one another. We began to think about linking in with other groups and organisations. Some people had connections with Acorn, a Christian organisation training people in the art and skills of listening. So we then began a journey of exploring together what we could offer one another to the benefit of a wider group of people. Acorn had been thinking of broadening out from working with churches and faith groups to being present in other settings such as GP Practices, hospital emergency departments and prisons. They were also trialling a course in listening skills for people with dementia and one for their carers. We felt we would like to support this endeavour and early responses (from the course) seem to be encouraging. We also hope this will lead to further collaboration, perhaps with a more mental health or relationship focus. It seems a real opportunity to work with others who essentially share similar values whilst also ensuring that what we do is open to those of faith and none. We are encouraged and excited by such collaboration, so far in its early days – once again as I've said before: 'watch this space!' (& see p8).

I would like to encourage as many of you as can to come to our AGM (at St Paul's Church in Marylebone (London) on May 12) and take part in a laughter workshop which will be run by one of our committee –

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Suzanne Heneghan. We all know the value of laughter with that often quoted phrase: 'laughter is the best medicine'. Come and find out if you agree! There will also be refreshments, a time to share creative items, and to relax and meet others.

After four years as Chair of *Being Alongside* I felt it was time to make way for someone else. I have felt very privileged in this role and grateful for the support of all those on the Committee and I hope to write more on this for the next newsletter. The Committee have been reflecting on the role and qualities needed as Chairperson and also on finding someone suitable. We have been fortunate that someone known to one of the committee members and who was the minister at her church (where she also ran an associated group) was willing to consider this. His name is (Revd) Jonathan Dean, now retired. The committee have met with him and are happy to put his name forward to take on the role of Chairperson at the AGM. Yet another reason to come to the AGM – to meet him!

I look forward to seeing some of you in May. In the meantime may spring bring its blessings and Eastertide the joy of renewed life.

Stephan Ball

Chairperson, *Being Alongside*

The Power of Love

At the shops with my Mum, who suffers from dementia which makes speaking a challenge, we noticed an elderly gentleman keeping guard over several bags. He was stooped and looked weary – body and soul.

As I mentally sympathised, Mum acted! Without a word, she let go of my hand, walked over to the gentleman, placed her hand gently on his shoulder, looked into his face and said calmly and genuinely: "I love you."

I couldn't resist turning to watch his reaction. He didn't reply verbally but immediately straightened up and smiled; his weariness had been dissipated and it appeared as if, for him, life suddenly felt worth living again!

Much has been written about the power of love and here I witnessed its truth. I was challenged: if, in spite of her own difficulties, my Mum could make a difference to someone, in future, rather than just have sympathetic thoughts, I should **do** something - even if it's as simple as giving a smile.

Amanda Powell

Listen with Acorn?

On Saturday 28 January Sr Theresa and I attended a morning presentation by Acorn Christian Listening Foundation. The theme was listening to those caring for sufferers of dementia. There were about 30 people gathered at St Peter's, The Delce, Rochester, a clean, modest sized church whose building includes a Community Centre.

The leaders were Maggie Curtis (South East Staff Member for Acorn), Mary O'Brien (from the Alzheimer's Society) and Delia Jermain (coming from a Social Work background with an Alzheimers focus) who were assisted by a trained Acorn tutor, Wendy Swatridge. (*ed: See photo on front cover*). In a brisk, but never rushed manner, they took us through a programme of informing, role play and skills practice aided and abetted by the ubiquitous PowerPoint data projection and handouts. The material was pitched at just the right level and I am sure everyone's feedback form reflected a high degree of satisfaction.

Dementia, a particular and specialist area of mental health, is apparently on the increase. It can manifest in several guises and each of its components can be elements of other conditions e.g.: diabetes, so a specialist's diagnosis is necessary. There is no cure, but a sophisticated and well managed drugs routine can slow down the conditions progress.

The morning was focused on the frustrations, relentless commitment, losses, challenges, fatigue and isolation - not of the sufferer, but of the carer, who could do with all the help they can get.

Christian Listening is the jewel in the crown of the Acorn organisation who understand that as people unburden they feel better. Just listening sounds simplistic, it has a quite a clear rationale but it is not easy for everyone to do. When we are stuck, something has to shift. If the problematic situation will not shift, then, if there is to be some level of relief, the way we perceive it needs to shift. For this to happen, we need to understand our feelings and concerns which may be objectively practical and personally emotional. Being listened to can mean that we hear ourselves for the first time and are given the chance to put things into perspective, or at least help us bark up the right tree.

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Sometimes the gentle reflecting back of what we have said by our Listener will help us hear ourselves. Because we feel safely held by our Listener, not challenged, interrupted or otherwise feel ourselves to be interrogated as well-meaning friends so easily manage, it may be that we have the space and opportunity to say what we really feel. As we put our thoughts into words it may be that we get a handle on what is happening for us and in us.

In the role play and discussion we encountered what carers have to contend with and the superhuman effort required to continue the commitment and support even the relationship. The sufferer is often a loved one whose deep and distressing 'senior moments' have eroded relationship, personality, identity and quality of life to breaking point. Despite the harrowing nature of the condition under discussion, there was quite a degree of humour throughout the morning.

Course Writers Delia, Mary and Maggie, can be very pleased with this new project, the first of Acorn's offerings of a possible new category of listening courses concerned with mental health issues. Rev'd Dr Russ Parker, Acorn's Director, was in attendance; I am sure he was pleased with this initiative which deserves a right royal hearing.

Steve Press

Tips for carers (& us all really!):

- Live one day at a time look for the small positives.
- Relieve tension by relaxing eg: music, long soak, massage.
- Express yourself through eg: writing, painting, decorating.
- Exercise will lift spirits: walk, dance, aerobics, swim, bike, yoga.
- Get out more: keep up your social life.
- Stay connected with a faith group.
- Find a befriending / sitting service to give respite.
- Check out the experts: Admiral nurses, Alzheimer's Society, Counsel and Care, some GP's & social workers.

Visit web site for Acorn's list of helpful addresses of organisations - includes some of the above.

See p10 for resources relating to dementia.

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Alzheimer's Society National
Helpline 0845 300 0336
Mon-Fri 8:30 to 18:30
www.alzheimers.org.uk

Information, referrals, listening ear
covering all forms of dementia. Fact
sheets & publications.

Carers UK: 080 8808 777
info@carersuk.org, www.carersuk.org

Information for carers

Dementia UK & Admiral Nurses
0845 257 9406
www.dementiauk.org

Specialist nurses, skilled with all aspects
of dementia. Offer free practical &
emotional support to dementia carers.

Age UK (was Age Concern & Help
the Aged) 0800 00 9966
<http://www.ageuk.org.uk>

Provide information & fact sheets on
all aspects of healthcare, finding a
Residential home, Wills etc

Crossroads
0845 450 0350

Offer carers opportunity to have a regular break
from their caring responsibilities

Vitalise 0845345 1970

Organises special holidays for people with
dementia & carers

Care Quality Commission
03000 61 61 61
www.cqc.org.uk/

Gov't run organisation providing information on
Care Homes nationwide. Advice & checklists to
choose & pay for care: Permanent or Respite.

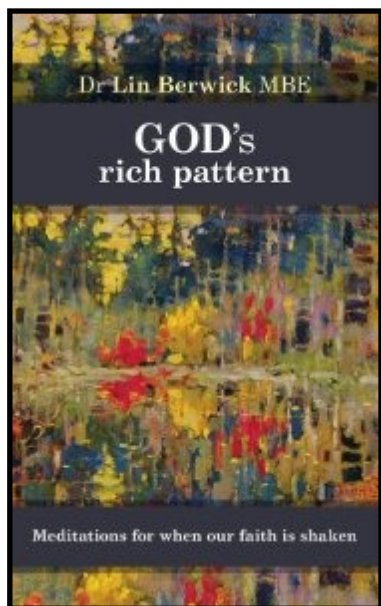
Directory for local authorities.
www.nursing-home-directory.co.uk
0800 137669

Directory of residential and nursing care
homes & other support services. Information
about care and care provision in older age.

Counsel and Care
0845 300 7585
Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm
www.counselandcare.org

Provide advice and info for older people,
relatives and carers so they get support,
whether in own home, hospital or in
residential care.

Book Review:



God's Rich Pattern

Dr Lin Berwick MBE

SPCK: Feb 2012

isbn13: 978-0281067091

cover price: £9.99

Which sort of hero do you need? The near super human one who overcomes each challenge? Or the one who keeps getting knocked back? If the former, and you need their inspiration to work the transforming magic, then read this book.

Largely biographical, each roller-coasting chapter rises with joy and falls with angst in equal proportions: the joy from progress in making it better for someone, somewhere; the angst resulting from frustration at Lin's disabilities and

encounters with insensitive officialdom. True to her pastoral drive, each chapter ends with A Thought and A Prayer.

You will read of Lin's magnificent triumph over the most appalling difficulties: cerebral palsy which denied mobility, detached retina and glaucoma which culminated in the removal of both eyes, coping with bullying at school, complex operations on hamstrings and back, a near death experience, jilted by a fiancé, two redundancies, being widowed. Enough? Little wonder she made *This Is Your Life* in her twenties.

Despite the above, Lin was able to maintain a practical compassion, expressing itself in running a club for the young with disabilities, sexual counselling for the disabled, many consultancy roles, all zenithed by the creation of The Lin Berwick Trust which builds - from scratch - state of the art, fully equipped holiday homes for those with severe disabilities. The first was *Berwick Cottage* near Norwich. *Denis Duncan House* near

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Edinburgh followed, and in the pipeline is *Ralph Boyce House* to be near Looe in Cornwall. (see: www.thelinberwicktrust.org.uk).

We could mention the secure childhood she received in East London although relationships strained later, the telephonist job in the city bank giving access to many helpful people, the sabbatical from work which began her journey to qualified Counsellor status, the hospital radio which introduced Lin to broadcasting and thence to BBC personalities Sue MacGregor and Dr Wendy Greengross, flying in *Concorde*, gaining a Diploma in homoeopathic medicine, the joy of Harvey the Spaniel and playing the flute at grade V level. Perhaps there are few able-bodied who have lived so fully..

Awesome and inspiring as Lin's chronicle is, her story becomes excruciatingly compelling - rather than being intriguing and worthy - when her husband, and supreme love of her life Ralph, is diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. It is a harrowing shared journey of his non-co-operation, mood swings and decline; her sense of guilt and helplessness, long distance visiting, loss of faith and pleas to not wake in the morning. And the reader is left sensing that Lin's desolation is not over; like the original ending to Mark's gospel, the final lines give no certain indication as to where it goes from here...

Which sort of hero do you need? The near super human one who seems to win every time? Or the one who keeps getting knocked back? If the latter, and you need their inspiration to work the transforming magic, then read this book.

Lin has written two others: *Undefeated* (Epworth 1980), and *Inner Vision* (Arthur James 1990).

Steve Press

Thank you for all your contributions - they are absolutely essential!
No offerings - no newsletter! Simple! See p19 for 'How to' send material.

Next *BA* due out 1 May. Material to the editor by 20 April, but asap is always more helpful & inclusion of submissions more likely.

Reflections of an Ageing Depressive

'L' is new to BA / apcmh yet readily agreed to say a little of her story. She is politically animated, campaigning for fairer deals for the marginalised and and writes poetry.

Having lived with depression since the age of sixteen, and being someone who does not agree with taking prescribed medication to make me 'normal', I have had to find alternative ways of dealing with it. I eventually discovered that the major factors in my depression are time and sense of achievement, the two are closely linked. A lesser issue can be finding myself in a situation over which I have no control.

To combat the first, I totally ignore the very existence of time. I don't live by the clock, except on those occasions when I have to, avoiding all routine wherever possible, and for the sense of achievement I have sought alternatives.

Writing has been very therapeutic over the years, and has provided much insight, though nowadays I prefer to hide in my pc games, my alternative reality in which I can achieve.

I binned the Valium back in 1979, packed three carrier bags and got on a train. My depression went out the window; as soon as I boarded the train the dark cloud lifted. I lived rough for a short time, but far preferred feeling alive in testing conditions to feeling dead in comfortable ones. I thought, when prescribed Valium, that it was given to banish the blues, not to turn me into a zombie, as it did.

'L'

Name and address supplied

May we appreciate the unique dignity of every person and the individual contribution they make to the world.

May we promote their well being serving each other in a spirit of generosity.

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Professional Association of Community Healthcare Chaplaincy

This is to inform you of the emergence of the Professional Association of Community Healthcare Chaplaincy, PACHC.

It reflects over a decade's experience of working with chaplaincy in primary healthcare. From that experience has emerged a document produced this year which makes the case for community healthcare chaplaincy. We have attached the executive summary. It is designed to be accessible to the healthcare profession and to the faith community. If you would like to see more kindly respond by email.

PACHC will be hosting two conferences in 2012. Again if you would like to know more do make contact.

We have very limited resources but have sensed the time is right to write up our experience, and see if it has value for others who are interested in healing and wholeness and the impact that primary healthcare chaplaincy might make in that arena. To evidence our experience we are in the process of running an independent review of our experience of chaplaincy.

We look forward to hearing from you should this initial work be of interest.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Martin

Development Team Co-ordinator
Professional Association of Community Healthcare Chaplains
07525 006042

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Olympian Link?

The Olympics are nearly on us. Do you recall another Olympics memorable for its anthem *Chariots of Fire* by Jon Vangelis? These words of another of his songs, seem to celebrate the doggedness of a climb back from the abyss, with the help of a friend: *Being Alongside* is being honoured again...Google You Tube for *I'll Find My Way Home* to see it performed and hear the catchy tune.

*You ask me where to begin
Am I so lost in my sin
You ask me where did I fall
I'll say I can't tell you when
But if my spirit is lost
How will I find what is near
Don't question I'm not alone
Somehow I'll find my way home*

*My sun shall rise in the east
So shall my heart be at peace
And if you're asking me when
I'll say it starts at the end
You know your will to be free
Is matched with love secretly
And talk will alter your prayer
Somehow you'll find you are there.*

*Your friend is close by your side
And speaks in far ancient tongue
A season's wish will come true
All seasons begin with you
One world we all come from
One world we melt into one
Just hold my hand and we're there
Somehow we're going somewhere.*

The Man Who Was Stuck

Suzanne Heneghan who gave us our Front Page last issue offered this (abridged) sermon to include, but space constrained... So here it is now:

The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas describes her take on the 'Paralysed man' and the following sermon which I have abridged; best describes to me this universal human predicament.

This 2010 sermon by The Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas describes the story of man who has been ill for 38 years and is lying by the pool on his mat, a thin mattress that the poor used for bedding. The story doesn't say how long he has been there, waiting to get into the water, but it does say that he has been there "a long time" (**John 5:6.**)

Suzanne Heneghan

What do you think this man is going through, as he lies paralyzed for so long beside the pool? As I imagine it, he experiences himself as completely helpless. The waters that can heal him are close by, but he can't reach them. The thing that can heal him -- and he badly needs healing -- is way over there, separate from him, at some distance away, and he can't move. He can't reach it. He can't get there. He is cut off from the source of healing, and utterly paralyzed. What's more, he is cut off from the people around him, too, as he competes with the crowd to be the first to get into the pool when the waters bubble up. Who knows what he is feeling, but I imagine anxiety, frustration, desperation, even despair -- all those painful, negative feelings that are stirred up when we feel helpless, vulnerable, and alone.

Now of course we can take the story literally, as a story about physical illness, but in John's Gospel every story has an imaginative or symbolic dimension as well, so let's think for a moment about paralysis in a wider sense. When have you felt paralyzed? We can feel paralyzed by grief, paralyzed by doubt or indecision, paralyzed by anxiety. Like that man beside the Beth-zatha pool, we can feel completely immobilized. Like him, we can feel alone in the crowd, utterly bereft of inner or outer resources, with no one to help. Do I really want to be made well? Well, yes and no. Some part of me likes to play the role of innocent victim, to blame the other

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person for wounding or offending me, or for keeping me stuck. Some part of me likes to complain and to look for excuses, to note the ways my parents have done me wrong, my spouse has let me down, I deserve better, it's not my fault. Why me? I could have been fully alive and well -- but then such-and-such bad thing happened and so here I am, stuck forever on the very edge of healing, with healing so close, but never quite making the move and so on...

How did the miracle take place? No one can explain a miracle. But as I imagine it, the man did the work that he needed to do. He clarified his muddy, murky motives. He became conscious of his excuses and half-hearted commitments, and recognized at last that he had been hiding behind passivity and self-pity. As Jesus gazed on him with those piercing, loving eyes that saw and knew and loved the sick man through and through, the man was able to name and confess the ways that he had been holding himself back. I think that in a flash of insight and inner healing, he was able to turn to Jesus and to give his consent, to say yes, it is life that I want, fullness of life, love with life, to give myself in love to each moment without holding back. The Gospel does not record that conversation, but I imagine it happening at a non-verbal level, by gesture and glance, as the sick man looked up at Jesus and said, without words, "Yes, I do want to be made well."

"Stand up," Jesus said, "and walk."

And so he did. And so do we.

You will notice that the man did not need to climb into the Beth-zatha pool in order to be healed. The healing spring was not outside him, but inside him, just as it is inside us. As Jesus told the woman at the well in the chapter right before this one (**John 4:1-26**), Jesus gives us water that will become in us a "spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (**John 4:14**).

Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

Thank you for all your contributions - they are absolutely essential!
No offerings - no newsletter! Simples! See p19 for 'How to' send material.

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Urgent versus Important

I wanted more balance between the 'urgent' and the 'important'. So instead of dashing out to post 'urgent' letters and back again, I walked through the woods to enjoy the dappled sunlight through the trees, the autumn tints and to hear the birds sing. After doing some 'urgent' washing, I delighted in the warm sun while hanging it out and I stopped to watch fish in the pond. I did manage some 'urgent' jobs, yet spent most of the time watching birds on the lawn, reading and reflecting on what was really 'urgent', and how I could best enjoy the beauty of the Indian Summer.

Reflecting on my strategy, I am amazed that I still did the 'urgent' jobs, yet also had time to read, reflect, to observe and enjoy my surroundings. It was as though time was elastic and stretched to include the 'important' as well as the 'urgent'.

submitted by David Sims

Poem

Phil's life had many ups and downs through which music and poetry were a great love, support and inspiration. He blesses us in one of his poems:

*I wish you peace, when the cold winds blow,
warmed by the fire glow,*

*I wish you comfort in the lonely times,
Arms to hold you when you ache inside,*

*I wish you hope when things are going bad,
Kind words when times are sad,
I wish you shelter from the raging wind,
Cooling waters at fevers' end,*

*I wish you peace, when times are hard,
a light to guide you through the dark,
And when storms are high and dreams are low,
I wish you the strength to let love grow.*

Phil (Píp) Whittle



The Who & What of Being Alongside

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www.beingalongside.org.uk

'Being Alongside' is the operational name for the 'Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health', (apcmh), a Christian based, voluntary association of individual members and affiliated groups who recognise the importance of spiritual values and support in mental health. It has a network of supporters throughout the United Kingdom and it welcomes and encourages people whatever their own faith or belief system. Governed by its National Committee, BA / apcmh s primarily concerned to promote and encourage "being alongside" people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

UK Registered Charity: 1081642

UK Registered Company: 3957730

All submissions welcomed by the Editor.

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Views in *Being Alongside* are not necessarily those of the organisation.

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Fruit in Abundance:
Planned *your* next crop
yet?

