

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Being Alongside May - June '12

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

HAPPINESS THROUGH LAUGHTER



Being Alongside presents:

Laughter Workshop

with Laughing John

and Annual General Meeting

Saturday 12th May 10.45am

10.45 am tea

11.30-1pm laughter workshop with LJ

1pm lunch provided

2pm BA AGM all welcome to stay

3pm Open sharing (Please bring news, poetry)

4pm Closing reflections and refreshments

Venue: St Paul's Church Centre

5 Rossmore Rd London NW1 6NJ



Baker Street/Marylebone

Call Mark Dadds: 02033 972497

Everyone welcome!

www.pastoral.org.uk



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 to 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)*

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

In This Issue

Helplines	2
<i>Front Page:</i> <i>with Pam Freeman</i>	4
<i>New Training for Befrienders:</i> <i>David Roe</i>	6
<i>Song: Worra Life!</i> <i>Lee Evans</i>	7
Poem: Tainted Temple <i>Lee Evans</i>	8
<i>News & Olds AGM & Reprise:</i>	9
<i>York Course: Spiritual Ground of Wellbeing</i>	10
<i>Getting in Trim</i>	11
<i>Poem: Life - A Description</i>	12
<i>Honeyed Tongues</i>	13
<i>Christianity and Mental Health</i> <i>John Wetherell</i>	14
<i>Book Review: From the Heart</i>	15
<i>One Journey Starts, One Ends</i> <i>Tony 'Tiger' Green</i>	16
<i>Be Positive! and Can You Help?</i>	17
<i>Two Hour Presentations Up North</i>	18
<i>The Who & What of Being Alongside</i>	19

Annual General Meeting.

I formally announce the date of the annual AGM of *Being Alongside* / apcmh as the 12th May 2012 at St Paul's Church Rossmore Road London NW1 6NJ.

We start at 10.45 with refreshments and end about 4pm.

All are invited to attend. Please contact Mark Dadds (02033 972 497, then option 1) for any information, or if you would like to send apologies.

Stephan Ball
Chairperson.

We seem to have a bit of a political issue - not by design; it just resulted from the offerings.... However, if politics is the science of organising society, then *Being Alongside* must be interested...

Front Page

with
Pam Freeman

I've always been a political animal.

By that I mean I follow political debate on the news both by reading and listening to current affairs. I am not happy with certain things at present such as cuts in benefits, closures of day centres less funding for charities and massive charge increase for those using day care facilities.

A friend of mine living in the Midlands paid £12 a session to send her husband, suffering with dementia, for a day at the local centre giving him more activities, and her much needed respite. But now she has to pay £61 a day for the same amenities, as the Council has substantially reduced its grant.

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

A friend's son has appealed against loss of benefits as a recent assessment said that he was capable of full time work. As he suffers from depression and diabetes, the chances of him being able to hold down a full time job are not high. He has appealed; meanwhile his condition has worsened due to the stress and anxiety.

Someone I knew who works for a charity providing social outlets in the community for people with learning difficulties has just heard that no funding will be given due to Council cuts. The charity can survive for another year - but what then?

All this makes for depressing reading but I feel that we must pay tribute to those who give their time and energy to help the disadvantaged in the local community. I live near a college and every day carers take very disabled, vulnerable people out in wheelchairs to the shops and further afield. It is not easy for these young people struggling to get people on and off buses, but they do, never giving the impression that it is a chore.

Carers too, take groups with learning difficulties who live locally in 'group houses' out to cafes and shops using public transport. Recently, one young man resisted leaving the bus and it required patience from all those involved to give him the time and space to gain the confidence to move.

On holiday recently we visited a sheep farm where, in the grounds, was a group with learning difficulties with their carers sharing a picnic prior to entry into the farm. As they were about to enter, one of the group gave his carer a hug in appreciation of the outing.

Now I'm sure those in the community working with disadvantaged groups are paid very little and are possibly volunteers. This is what *Being Alongside* is all about. We can all look about us in our communities and note the selfless way many are acting to help others.

The numbers of those suffering with dementia are increasing as people live longer and I fully support the work that Acorn Christian Healing Foundation are doing to raise awareness and give training to carers.

As an organisation, we cannot do everything by any means but as individuals at least, we can do something to help those in our community who need help and support.

Pam Freeman

National Committee Member

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

BA/apcmh Merton:
***New Training Course for
Volunteer Befrienders***

The next free training course offered by BA / apcmh Merton for those wishing to volunteer as a befriender will be held on Wednesday 4 July, 7.30 pm (3 hours) and on Saturday 7 July (6 hours), lunch provided. The venue is a short walk (10 minutes) from central Wimbledon (served by Rail and Underground) and is on a bus route. There is free parking within 10 minutes walking distance. The course will be run by experienced befrienders and by workers in the mental health care services. It will cover all aspects of befriending persons with mental health problems who live in the community.

We welcome adult volunteers of all ages, backgrounds, races and cultures. No relevant experience is required, providing they are caring and committed persons, and are ready to give of themselves in friendship. The time spent in befriending is up to the volunteer. We help persons who need our befriending service who live not only in the London Borough of Merton (Wimbledon, Morden, St. Helier, Mitcham, Motspur Park, etc.), but in neighbouring districts such as Sutton, Cheam, Carshalton, Worcester Park, Cheam, New Malden, Roehampton, Southfields, Tooting, Streatham, Norbury and Thornton Heath. Volunteers are sought who live within, or in easy travelling distance of, these areas.

We welcome referrals from qualified persons in the care services of adults who need a befriender of the same gender. There is a simple procedure to make a referral.

If anybody wishes to find out more, or knows somebody who might be interested, they should contact David Roe (Chairman, BA / apcmh Merton) – Tel. 020 8542 9637, or email davidroe24@yahoo.co.uk

We are moving forward with a new Befriending Coordinator – Nadia Naidoo, who like all our management team is a volunteer and a befriender. With the help of her husband Neville we now have our own web-site for the first time – visit www.apcmhmerton.org.

David Roe,

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Song / Poem: Worra Life

Worra Life was recorded by Beatles tribute band *Hole in the Pocket* and was played on the *Today* programme as part of a documentary. I gave an interview about the poverty being experienced by myself and many in Skelmersdale. The song went down very well in pubs & clubs in Merseyside and West Lancs and always got people dancing.

Wid a bottle off yer man
An a sarnie in me 'and,
I'm just sittin' on de future & de past.
Drinkin' tears, drinkin' fears,
Drinkin' over many years,
Drinkin' down to de bottom
of de glass

Chorus:

*Worra life... Worra life...
Worra heartache, worra strife,
Worra life worra life da we live.*

Count de cost of wot we've lost
Weigh de pain in all our gain,
it's unfair t'say it's not unfair.
Give not take, take don't break,
Keep de peace for heavens sake,
Ours is not to question but t'bear.

Don't complain smile in pain
everyone must play de game,
Life means copin' wid
dat little bit more.
Lost yer file, Sarky smile,
Got no benefit for a while,
Cant borrow money cos everybody's
poor.

Its gettin' worse must be a curse
Cos our money's really scarce,
Lecky meters better fed
dan all de kids.
Oo can say da we don't pray
It's only faith gets us through de day,
Tear sore eyes & 'eavy worn out lids.

Got no job, Got no chance,
'Oles in me socks & baggy pants,
Dodgin debts left right & centre
by de score.
Give us a break for Jesus sake
A suffering Christ is all we make
We've add enough & we cant take
anymore.

Moaning scroungers on a fiddle
Judged by toffs who always diddle
Oo was it to cast de first stone?
Oo is lost, oo is found,
Oo disqualifies de round,
Almighty God an only him alone.

*Worra life... Worra life...
Worra heartache, worra strife,
Worra life worra life da we live. LE ©*

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Poem: Tainted Temple

Lee, the author, writes:

As a female to male trans-sexual I underwent therapy and hormone treatment towards a sex change over a period of years. However, when I received healing off the drugs I became convinced it was a sin (for me at least) to go through with my operations. So I gave my trans-sexuality over to Jesus and didn't complete my treatment. Obviously it brought its own pain some of which is expressed in the following prayer / poem.

Heave my soul 'neath hurt & sorrow
Heave my soul with untold pain,
Believe in all but not tomorrow,
Nor self, nor greed, nor too much gain.

Yet still and more my woes and weeping
Relentless in their sobbing tell
Of my broken heart which in endless sleeping
Was hushed by a world of personal hell.

And so with every tortured sinew,
Choking on my grief, still pray,
That as my jury, who in scorn continue,
More merciful will be my Master on Judgement Day.

Till then my tired, tainted, temple,
That holds the chapel of my heart,
Where stands a golden tabernacle
Therein the presence of my living God

Will trudge and trust and oft will stumble
In heed of callings from afar
To serve my Lord, whilst trying to be humble,
With thanks for my blessings as many as the stars.

Lee Evans (c)

Lee is a new contributor. She is not the easiest of reads - for different reasons - but she is very real. Be moved and impressed - perhaps 'enjoy' doesn't quite fit..!

In case you didn't see the front cover...! Or p4...!

AGM: May 12 at St Paul's

10.45 am	Tea
11.30	Laughter workshop led by Laughing John
1-2pm	Lunch (provided)
2-3pm	AGM and finish with time for creative sharing and brief worship.

Reprise

(Was in last issue, but worth repeating...)

Tips for Carers - & us all

- 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.

*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.*

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Course: The Spiritual Ground of Wellbeing

Tues 22 May, 9.15 - 5

York St John University, Lord Mayors Walk, York YO31 7EX

£85 inc Lunch

More details / booking: 020 7278 2070

This Seminar brings together schools of contemporary psychology and religious traditions to see how meditation aids the healing process.

The new UK NHS mental health policy emphasises the importance of prevention, early intervention and developing practices that, like meditation, support well-being. The Seminar creates a forum for clarifying the role that spiritual practice, (in particular meditation) can play. The approach is geared towards the practical ways open to a stressful, fast-paced, pluralist society for relieving suffering and promoting happiness.

The presentations and workshops will be facilitated by leading teachers of meditation, experienced mental health practitioners and those who have personal knowledge of using mental health and recovery services. An open discussion will follow.

Chaired by: PETER GILBERT,
Keynote Speaker: LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB

Laurence Freeman will explore how meditation in the mental health field addresses this important cultural question of our time. Fr Laurence Freeman, OSB is Director of The World Community for Christian Meditation. He is an author, international speaker, retreat leader and meditation teacher. He sees the contemplative as the essential characteristic of all spirituality.

Being Alongside May - June, 2012
Getting In Trim?

In this issue we have included a flier giving you the opportunity to financially contribute to *Being Alongside*. These are tough times; many are feeling the pinch and we need to be alongside for them, so if you can find the resources to make a donation (which can be gift aided), or join, or make a subscription, that would be much appreciated. Every little helps, as the supermarket jingle says.

We all know that not only are supporting grants and benefits being cut or withdrawn altogether, (see Pam's Front Page article on p 4), but also that costs are rising. Naturally enough, most of us feel cautious, and less willing and able to spend as freely as before. Accordingly to compromise between cutting costs and 'maintaining service', the National Committee has decided to cut the number of Newsletter editions from 6 a year to 4. This will reduce printing and mailing costs; with new postal rates, a year's worth of BA costs £3 to send out to each separate address, and of course there are printing costs on top.

This is intended to safeguard resources for initiatives such as the sponsorship of Acorn Christian Listening Foundation who are developing a course for carers for those suffering from dementia.

The last bi-monthly edition will be the September issue; the new regime begins with a December (Winter) issue, to be followed in March (Spring), June (Summer) and September (Autumn). More anon, but we thought you would appreciate the 'early warning'!

Editor

St Marylebone Mental Health Support Group
meets on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month.

Welcoming Cuppa at 10.30am

Meeting begins 11am & ends about 12.30

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Poem: Life A Description

Life hits you in the face
You are a part of the human race.
The cat underneath the wall
Knows how to fall.

However you might philosophise
You always end with your demise;
The hard objects circumcise life
You are a study with a knife;
The weather is bleak and cold,
The rhythms are an antique gold.

Are you really reading this
My poetry or a kiss
Reality mixed with my dreams
A combination which seems
To carry you to the next thought
Fingering imagine's high court;

Where does that find me
What words, what sophistry
You think what I think
O all this spread-wing ink.

These things must be from somewhere
Life and love are a brief affair.

Would the author / submitter please get in touch that this piece might
be properly credited..!

Thanks, Editor.

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Honeyed Tongues...

The contributor, (name & address supplied), suffers with Depression which has hindered their employment record. It might appear to clash with Howard's piece on p17, yet chime in with Pam's on p4

The more I think about it, the more I feel there is something wrong with the teachings of the positive thought brigade, especially when this stuff is being fed to the unemployed. My life has not lacked its successes. In fact it is my belief that I have achieved more than many who have a lifetime of employment behind them, and every success I have had has been due to negative thoughts.

It is these negative thoughts coming from negative situations in which I have found myself, which have generated positive thoughts involving a desire for political or social change and the campaigns I have pursued. My visualisation has not been seeing the positive aspects of a bad situation (ever tried looking for them when you are in one?) but instead I visualise the way things ought to be, which is what decides my course of action.

My way of thinking may indeed be holding me back in the job market but it has come from years of bad life experiences which I will not have negated and devalued by the happy thought brigade in 'Stepford Wife' fashion. If I am unemployable the fault lies in the job market and the lack of jobs (due largely to the over-inflated payoffs to bosses and shareholders), and not in me or the way I think. I am willing to work for a fair day's pay and I would like the authorities to put up or shut up, and to stop harassing the unemployed, and turning the taxpayer against us, leaving them blinded to how much of their money has and is being wasted in creating and maintaining this very situation. Benefit fraudsters are a minority of claimants and there are better ways of dealing with them. Can the same be said for tax avoiders as a percentage of taxpayers?

J'

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 July. Material to the editor by 20 June, but asap is always more helpful & inclusion of submissions more likely.

Christianity & Mental Health.

It seems absurd to me that *Being Alongside* should be the small affair it is (both the magazine and the organisation). Quite absurd — but unsurprising perhaps, given the world we will live in. In some alternative reality at the back of my mind, *everyone* recognises the importance of Christianity, the importance of mental health, and above all, the importance of finding ways of relating the one to the other. This *everyone* simply doesn't exist however. It's a fiction in my brain. A famous hate figure once said *there's no such thing as society*, and, though I understand how this pronouncement enraged people, I also think dear Mrs Thatcher happened to be right in a sense. What matters is that I be clear about what I think, not what *everyone* thinks, about Christianity and mental health.

When I attend Catholic Mass, I am drawn into a world which, while not exactly *insane*, is nevertheless quite outside and beyond rational sanity. Admittedly there are other sorts of sanity than the rational. But I am not sure even whether in terms of emotion, the events of Mass belong to any sort of normal 'healthy' world. The very word *sacrifice*, - so key to the Mass and to Christianity in general, - connotes a world of primitive emotional logic of harrowing, cruel, impossible choices of pain. Personally I find, without fail, that I experience relief and homecoming every single time I witness (and participate in) this crazy performance of the priest.

I do not believe the true home of the human spirit rests in a 'sane' place at all, but somewhere so far beyond the opposites of sanity and insanity that it takes pure theatre and the enactment of evil to get me anywhere near an intimation of that place.

I do realise the probable difficulty for readers of this magazine when they find me describing traditional Christian liturgy as *the enactment of evil*. I am sorry for any offended sensibilities. Perhaps I am too impressionable. I stood through the whole of the Passion According to St Mark on Palm Sunday just gone, and found it.... well, oppressive. No wonder the Easter story ends well. It needs to.

John Wetherell April 2012

Book Review

From The Heart: Mental Health

by Edna Hunneysett

£10 published by Chipmunka, 0208 133 9512,
www.chipmunkapublishing.com. Available from author on 01642 818332.

Stories are important. In a real sense we only know who we are because of the stories that we tell about one another, and the stories that are told about us by others. When we want to communicate who we are, we tell story about ourselves. When we try to describe other people, we tell stories about them. Stories provide the fabric that shapes who we are and how we see the world.

But what stories do we tell about mental illness? The sad truth is that the stories we choose to tell about mental illness are often tragic, bizarre, frightening and sometimes quite dehumanising. Very often they are untrue. Normally when someone tells a story that is untrue about us, we simply tell a counter story that corrects the untruth. But if we have a diagnosis of mental illness, people are less likely to listen to our counter-story. So we end up defined by other people's stories which is a very risky place to be.

Edna Hunneysett wants to change that. She wants us to hear stories of people with mental illness so that we might be changed. She has gathered stories about mental illness that emerge from experience: they enlighten, challenge and move us; change the way we see mental illness and perhaps the way we see all of our lives.

If we listen carefully to the stories and the poems in this book we will hear new voices; and we will be enabled to tell their stories well. This book will make a difference.

Rev. Professor John Swinton

Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care

King's College University of Aberdeen

(Slightly altered for space)

One Journey Starts, One Ends

Tony regularly attends the Barnabas sharing / refreshment / activities Group at St Paul's Rossmore Road which meets Mondays 2pm - 5pm. It also meets on Wednesday mornings 10am -12pm after which there is an opportunity to share in the culinary delights of the cooking group. Tony has also more recently been jointly instrumental in the coming together of a new 'Torch' Christian worship / sharing fellowship. This is a gathering mainly for people with sight impairment, although many who attend have full vision. The 'Torch' group meets on the 3rd Sunday of the month from 2pm - 4pm, also at Rossmore Road Church Centre. Tony has experienced some major changes in his life recently and would like to share them:

I lived in a flat with my mum from 1972 until 2010 when she became ill with dementia and was eventually placed in care, since which time I have lived alone. It was difficult to cope with caring for my mum as we lived in a second floor maisonette and I am also visually impaired (without sight). In addition to this, the bills had become excessive and so it became necessary to search for alternative accommodation.

My new beginning starts today and I'm exited about the prospect of moving to Penfold Street which is sheltered housing accommodation which promises support for people with various sorts of disability. Staff are on call 24 hours a day which will hopefully allow me to feel safer and engage with the daily ongoing activities provided there.

I am really looking forward to this new change in my life and would like to thank all my friends especially Theresa, Sean, Carol and Graham for their support towards helping me come to terms with the prospect of change and all that is involved with the move. I did have many initial fears and was afraid that I would not meet the conditions and criteria of the community and was fearful of adapting to new ways and perhaps having to adhere to new regulations, would I meet their expectations? Would it all become too much for me? However, I am ready to move in two days time and I am really pleased to be leaving behind some sadder memories.

More news later!

Tony Tiger Green.

All are welcome to join / help out at the Barnabas / Torch Fellowship

Be Positive!

I recently had a great idea and after many months of trying to convince the staff at Mind in London to start a new group, it has now become a reality.

Our first meeting was on April 4 and we plan to meet every Wednesday. We call ourselves *The Positive Group* and share with each other only the positive things in our lives. It is extremely sad that we take too much for granted: we have somewhere to live and enough money to feed ourselves - I am sure you can think of many other things. We can be too negative and we need to focus on the more positive. Why not start a *Positive Group* yourself?

Howard Isenberg

Can You Help?

I received this email the afternoon before going to print, so is pasted in haste, but readers might have a story to tell about their experience with churches...

My name is Tracey White and I am a year 3 mental health student in Plymouth.

I am doing my dissertation on collaborative working partnerships between the Churches and mental health services, and wondered if you could help with any experiences you might have had - good or otherwise?

Many thanks.

Tracey is a Christian, is training to be a MH Nurse, has been a sufferer and is 'passionate about all three angles'.

If you have anything you think Tracey can use in her dissertation, get it to the Editor in a sealed envelope marked 'Tracey' and I'll forward it on. Or you can email her:

tracey.s.white@students.plymouth.ac.uk

Being Alongside May - June, 2012

Mental Health: 2 Hour Presentations

*organised by Celebrating Family Project, Middlesbrough.
contact: caro@ccrcharity.org.uk*

Tuesday 24 April 7pm-9pm Our Lady of Lourdes, Swanland Road,
Hessle, East Yorks HU13 0LY

Saturday 19th May 10am -12noon at English Martyrs Church (small
hall), Dalton Terrace, York YO24 4DA

Wednesday 23 May 7pm-9pm Sneaton Castle, Whitby YO21 3QN

Tuesday 29th May Ss Leonard and Mary (Church Hall), Church Hill,
Malton North Yorkshire YO17 7EJ

Tuesday 12 June 7pm-9pm St Bernadette's, Nunthorpe,
Middlesbrough TS7 0EB

to include:

- 1) Looking at the new resource/tool kit ***Welcome me as I am*** designed to help increase awareness and understand the needs of people who experience mental distress or mental ill health
- 2) Reflect on positive mental health as well as mental ill-health
- 3) Consider some background and advice for use in parishes
- 4) Reflect on recovery and mental health - the journey of hope
- 5) Understand and address the needs of caregivers, and how a parish can support them
- 6) Taking the agenda forward - action planning and the next steps towards developing complementary forms of ministry for both spiritual and pastoral support :-

Open to anyone interested.

Edna Hunneysett



The Who & What of Being Alongside

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'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 is primarily concerned to promote and encourage "being alongside" people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

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All submissions welcomed by the Editor.

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