

Being Alongside

Autumn 2016

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**Joy at launch of new
Nottingham drop-in**

INSIDE...

THE PEACEMAKER: Jean Vanier's meditations on St. Francis

ALONE TIME: how loneliness and isolation affect mental health
plus news, poetry, listings and our 30th anniversary sermon

Being Alongside Autumn 2016

Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health

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Patrons: Professor Andrew Sims, The Reverend Canon Roger Royle

Being Alongside is the working name for the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health, 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 UK. It welcomes and encourages people whatever their 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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APPEAL FOR SUBMISSIONS

***Being Alongside* magazine needs your news, views and offers of content. Without your contributions, these pages would be empty.**

Even the briefest item can be of interest to other readers, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with the editor by phone, email or post (see above). It doesn't matter if you've never written for publication before. It's the ideas that matter.

We would also like to start a letters page, so if there's something you want to share, please get writing!

Origination by Being Alongside / APCMH

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the organisation

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Cover photo shows Rev Neil Draper, minister of Arnold Methodist Church, with Mayor of Gedling Cllr Sandra Barnes and colleague Cllr Viv McCrossen, at the opening of Arnold's new drop-in (see p4)

All Greek to me



Thank you very much to all who have given feedback about the Summer issue of *Being Alongside* (my first), and to

those who have provided material for this issue. Please keep your comments and contributions coming.

Several people asked about the four words written in an unfamiliar script on the back cover thus:

ἄλλον
Παράκλητον
δώσει
ὑμῖν

I admit, I wanted this to be a bit of a mystery. This time I've added the clue: John 14:16. It's where Jesus tells his disciples that his father "will give you another befriender" (or any of the dozens of other ways in which the word 'parakleton' can be translated. Christians take this as a promise of the Holy Spirit.

I was drawn to this verse by reading a blog post by Vic Van Den Bergh ('Vic the Vicar'), who talks of the call for "relationships which enable us to come alongside just as the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, does with us by revealing, reconciling, inspiring, motivating (and mobilising) and bringing healing."

This seemed to me the *essence* of *Being Alongside* / APCMH.

And then one of the people who had asked me to explain the mystery Greek characters replied with surprise and delight that these were the very words by which she had been converted to faith.

Trevor Parsons

IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS

4

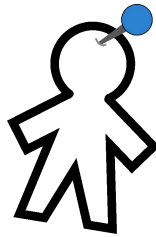
The latest from *Being Alongside*, including the launch of a new drop-in group, and a personal account of our 30th anniversary gathering

ANNIVERSARY SERMON

8

DOWN AT THE WELL

Canon Andrew Wilson reflects on Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman, and what it means for us



FEATURE

11

THE COST OF ISOLATION

David Hobbs discusses how loneliness and isolation in our society affects mental health

JOURNAL

15

ON RETREAT WITH A PEACEMAKER

Jamie Summers recalls Jean Vanier's meditations on St. Francis of Assisi at a peace-themed summer retreat

POETRY

17

TEA IN THE PARK BY JOHN CRAIG
with an introduction by the poet's sister

RETROSPECTIVE

18

THE CRUCIFIXION OF MOTHERS
Reprinted 30 years on: the *cri de coeur* that gave birth to our organisation

NEWS

Joy at launch of new Notts drop-in

PEOPLE in Arnold, a suburb of Nottingham, now have a friendly place to go for information, help and companionship every Friday thanks to a new drop-in organised by Arnold Methodist Church Mental Health Befriending and Support Group.

The drop-in was already running for four weeks before it was officially launched on September 9th by the mayor of Gedling, Councillor Sandra Barnes. To judge by the numbers attending, it clearly meets a need, with around 60 people turning up for each of the first month's sessions.

Sue Clayton, a Being Alongside / APCMH member who has acted as a carer and had experience of depression herself, is co-ordinating the new drop-in. "We have recruited 20 volunteers from our church and other churches," she said. "Some have had professional training, as therapists and nurses. The chair of the local bipolar association is volunteering, as

are several members of the community who have lived and personal experience of mental health issues."

In addition to support from its local NHS trust and local authority, the Arnold drop-in has received an initial grant of £500 from BA / APCMH to help cover setup costs. It is in discussion with our trustees regarding the possibility of further funding and of affiliating to the association.

"We would like to express our enormous thanks for the donation," said Sue. "We have used it to buy games and other equipment for the running of the weekly group."

She added: "We give thanks, praise and glory to the Lord for making his will known to us for establishing this project and providing the people, the means, the finance and the expertise of so many people to enable this to become a reality. We feel privileged as a church community to be given this opportunity in Nottingham."

Councillor Sandra Barnes, Mayor of Gedling, meets drop-in co-ordinator Sue Clayton (right) and other volunteers



Cake & candles for our 30th

BIRTHDAY banners and balloons adorned the library at Southwark Cathedral in celebration of 30 years of Being Alongside / the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health.

From three o'clock there was a gentle gathering of about 40 friends old and new over tea-time sweets and savouries. Pride of place were not one but two birthday cakes (one of which was gluten-free) baked for the occasion, decorated with the charity's logo. The cathedral's Sub-Dean, Michael Rawson, gave a warm speech of welcome.

The charity's chairman, Jamie Summers, spoke of the quality not the quantity of supporters which had remained unchanged over the past 20 years. Marion Marples, a pastoral auxiliary at the cathedral, then announced the launch of her pamphlet *The Journey of Hope*, a guide to help strangers visiting this special place. We were splendidly looked after by the lady from the cathedral's caterers, for whom no request was too small.

The evening healing service in the cathedral that followed at six o'clock drew more than 70 attendees.

The service was led by Canon Gilly Myers, with

Michael Rawson, Canon Andrew Wilson and Cathy Wiles assisting.

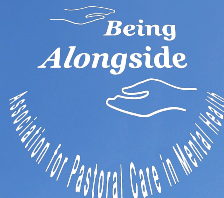
It was a beautifully sensitive and spiritual time of worship and prayer crafted for the occasion. Hymns included *Immortal invisible* and *I, the Lord of sea and sky*. Readings were Psalm 42 and John 4: 7-14.

Andrew Wilson gave a moving and inspiring talk reflecting on the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (*see page 8*). He focused on Jesus' and our own vulnerabilities and needs, and how relationship grows when these are acknowledged and met.

Candles complete any birthday celebration. These played a key visual part, with those attending the service coming forward to light and place a candle as a silent prayer in a central floor-standing candelabra. Many also responded to the invitation to receive prayer and oil anointing for healing, for themselves or for others.

May God's blessing continue to grow the work of and support for Being Alongside / APCMH, and encourage all its volunteers and befrienders—and all those whom they befriend.

Report by Ella Majchrzakowska
(a first-time visitor)



£1000 for Forest Hill branch

OUR LONGEST-RUNNING affiliated branch, Forest Hill in south-east London, is to receive a grant of £1,000 from Being Alongside / APCMH to support its work.

The main activity of the Forest Hill branch is running a drop-in session every Wednesday evening at St. Saviour's Church Hall, Brockley Rise, offering refreshments, chat and a friendly welcome for all. The drop-in

has run weekly since May 1987.

The branch complements its regular drop-in with occasional outings, such as to Hastings, Worth Abbey and Leeds Castle, as well as barbecues in the church grounds. These are greatly appreciated by members.

The grant will go towards paying for these events, as well the costs of training volunteers for the drop-in.

Bishop Stephen Sykes bursary covers cost of new laptop for Scottish student

PURSuing ITS MISSION to support the educational aspirations and careers of those who have experienced serious mental health difficulties, the Bishop Stephen Sykes bursary has provided £400 to a young man studying in Scotland to cover the cost of buying a new laptop—an essential tool for study these days.

BA / APCMH trustees granted the funds after hearing that the applicant was finding it difficult to continue

his studies because his old laptop had broken down and was unusable.

The application was accompanied by letters from the university and a support worker commending the student's tenacity in continuing to pursue his studies despite having had a number of setbacks.

Trustees were pleased to hear this, and sent their good wishes and encouragement along with the bursary's financial support.

Merton & Sutton summer party fun

GOOD WEATHER and a delightful new venue in the form of St Mark's church hall in Wimbledon helped to make Merton & Sutton APCMH's summer party go with a swing this year.

Befrienders and those they befriend turned out in good numbers to enjoy a complimentary buffet and a variety of refreshments, with entertainment in the form of a quiz and raffle.

The group has provided a befriending service for over 25 years now, and there are currently approaching 40 active befriending relationships.

Archive planned

THE TRUSTEES of BA / APCMH have decided to establish an archive of the organisation's historical material, consisting of newsletters, publications, meeting minutes and other records.

An initial approach has been made to the London Metropolitan Archive, which accepts donations of material from suitable groups based in the capital, preserves them, and makes them available for academic researchers and anyone else who is interested.

The aim is to set up the archive by the time of our next annual general meeting (6th May 2017).

Arnold Methodist Church
MENTAL HEALTH

Befriending & Support Group

REFRESHMENTS

SUPPORT

CRAFTS

GAMES

INFORMATION

SIGNPOSTING



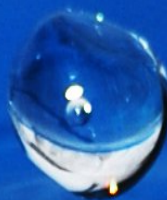
Fridays 11am - 2pm

Arnold Methodist Church, 54 Front Street,
Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 7EL

For more information please contact Sue Clayton on **07514 775514**

Down at the well

At our 30th anniversary service of celebration and healing, **Canon Andrew Wilson** reflected on Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman (John, chapter 4) and what it means for us both individually and in our work together



JESUS SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT HAVE SPOKEN TO THIS WOMAN

who arrived at the well where he was resting! She was an unaccompanied female, and— even worse—a Samaritan, unclean. But he does engage with her very openly. He asks for her help, asks for a drink.

Archbishop William Temple, commenting on the significance of Jesus' request, quotes the experience of a social worker who moved into a flat on his work patch on a tough East London estate. On his first evening there he had to ask a neighbour for a hammer so that he could hang up his pictures. "At once," says Temple, "the relationship was different." No longer a potential client, this neighbour became a friend.

Our work as volunteers and members of APCMH, or simply as fellow women and men who want to care, is at its best when it mirrors the dynamic of this encounter, and Christ's humble acknowledgment of his own needs, gratitude, and the realisation that the woman has something she can do for him.

ANNIVERSARY SERMON

For any relationship to have integrity and health it must be reciprocal, acknowledging the other's gifts and value, and accepting our own neediness. Carl Rogers, the person-centred therapist, is realistic about our own limitations when he writes: "We need the other for our completion."

It isn't easy allowing yourself to be helped! And so we must go about our helping graciously and gently. I treasure a remark of the Jewish spiritual writer, Simone Weil, who said that the only truly moral way to conduct any relationship was with "hesitancy". We meet each other as incomplete but openly, and hesitantly. To answer the other's need for safety

and respect in any encounter will mean taking on board how fearful this might be for them. In the next story in John's Gospel, Jesus asks what at first sight seems a daft question to a paralysed man at the pool in Jerusalem, longing for healing: "Do you want to be well?" Jesus knows that to become whole, to move forward, to grow, involves us in change, stretching, and sometimes that will be painful. That will be as true for APCMH / Being Alongside, as it faces new challenges, and

changing times, as it is personally for each one of us, or for our groups and communities as we reach out to others. We have to be open to the inevitable changes that our meetings with others will bring about, and the far-reaching shifts that have occurred in mental health services and society.

This Samaritan woman has courage. She continues to respond to this stranger, although she recognises that barriers of gender and race and belief are being swiftly dismantled. Although John tells us that she is slow to realise the full meaning of what Jesus is offering her—lasting refreshment, the water of eternal life, the opening out of her immense potential—she is prepared to take the risks of this relationship, even when it lays bare her own vulnerability and mess. Why? Because somehow she begins to sense that despite her anxiety something in this meeting speaks to her very depths. This is perhaps APCMH's unique quality: a Christian foundation formed by families, parents and friends who realised that the pastoral and spiritual needs of their loved ones enduring mental distress were not being met. We give thanks for them, and all who have continued that work until now.

"To answer the other's need for safety and respect in any encounter will mean taking on board how fearful this might be for them"

ANNIVERSARY SERMON

But this vision still calls us to move on. During my time as a chaplain, and now as a trustee of our local association, I have seen any chance of creating real and supportive encounters which promote mental well-being systematically demolished. Speedy discharge; impossibly overstretched staff; individual referrals; short-term interventions; a culture that is ill-at-ease, where the growth of depression and anxiety amongst children and youngsters is alarmingly high, and increasing; have all replaced the social groups, the offer of time and openness and encouragement once on offer. Even hot meals were once provided at day centres, giving people the chance to make friendships and share experiences, seeing others moving forward, inspiring hope.

I met with Nicky this week, someone I first met a few days after beginning work as a chaplain. We have remained friends. Nicky is an incredible survivor of abuse, and of the mental health system, whose life is given over to

"the call to go out and meet and answer the needs of the heart and the spirit is still just as pressing"

painting and music which she uses to raise money for countless charities working to support recovery, the homeless, and people with addiction problems. Her dignity and generosity has taught me more than I could ever express. I asked her what I ought to be saying today. She quietly opened her tablet, and showed me a haunting picture that she had painted after spending several weeks on a ward quite recently. The silhouettes of five women stood

out from a dismal background, all of them in various states of isolation or pain. Her message was clear; the call to go out and meet and answer the needs of the heart and the spirit is still just as pressing.

The task facing us as churches and groups is to create places of ongoing, dependable, respectful encounter. I came across a remark of Pope Francis the other day which puts it in a nutshell. "In this age, lacking in social friendship," he says, "our first priority is the building of community."

My local APCMH 'Spirituality' group on Friday gathered up their thoughts about why they came together to build community, and what mattered to them:

"Welcome, safety, a place where you can be yourself, friends who remember and think about you, and pray for you"

"A place that encourages creativity and well-being"

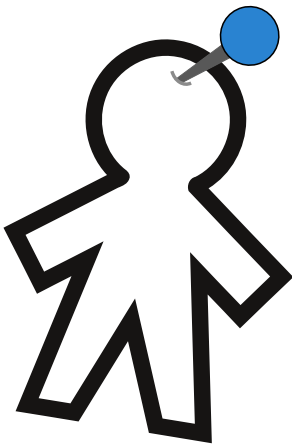
"Coming here keeps me sane"

Simple human things we can do, manageable things, redeeming things, together, and for each other.

Canon Andrew Wilson is a trustee of APCMH Croydon

The cost of isolation

David Hobbs discusses how the prevalence of loneliness and isolation in our society affects mental health



HUMAN CLOSENESS is fundamental to our sense of mental health and general well-being. We have a fundamental need for group life and social relationships. We are very much social beings and if we are deprived of, or choose to shun social contact, this will very often lead to some readily identifiable well-being problems. If these are not addressed by the individual they can, in many cases, lead to diagnosable mental health problems.

Modern city living, often away from an extended family, and the increasingly atomised nature of twenty first century existence means that more and more people are living in isolation. This following quote is from a *Daily Telegraph* article about the 2011 Census:

"The number of 'singletons' living alone has rocketed over the last decade, new figures from the Office for National Statistics have disclosed..."

"...There were 7,067,000 one-person households in the 2011 Census—12.8 per cent of the household population—compared with 6,503,000 million in 2001, an increase of 564,000."

Single-occupancy households are set to continue to increase, which will inevitably lead to increased levels of loneliness and mental health and well-being problems.

Identifying and, indeed, diagnosing mental health problems is never an easy task but common traits associated with loneliness and isolation can include:

- Little interest or pleasure in doing things
- Feeling 'down', depressed or 'hopeless'
- Feeling tired or having little energy
- Poor appetite or, alternatively, eating too much
- Feeling a 'failure'
- Having trouble concentrating or, alternatively, feeling fidgety or restless
- Becoming easily annoyed

FEATURE

- Feeling anxious and 'on edge'
- Feeling nervous and constantly worrying

Many of us may occasionally experience the above problems but those who are lonely and socially isolated will often find it hard to eradicate or distance themselves from these symptoms. There may not be anybody readily available to talk through these problems. However, a more deeply seated issue may be that because of a lack of social contact we retreat 'into ourselves' and become less active, more lethargic and prone to rumination—'going over and over the same old thoughts'.

Typically, some of these thoughts, when ruminating, might be "I can't cope", "I can't be bothered", "What's the point?" or, more poignantly, "I'm no good". These thoughts can be described as *negative automatic thoughts* (NATS). They are particularly impactful to us and can act as our psychological bosses or bullies. We can't shake them off.

These thoughts can have a direct link to our physical and psychological well-being via a linking spiral. The NATS (say, "I can't be bothered") lead to rumination which in turn progresses to physical and emotional outcomes, such as lethargy and sadness. In turn, this will almost inevitably lead to avoiding doing things and, perhaps, avoiding seeing people and attending social occasions. This lack of activity and socialising will almost certainly inevitably lead to more loneliness and isolation.

When we are feeling lonely and isolated we often become less active. This lessening of activity means that the mind is not concentrating on the activity in question. It may wander off into other directions and our thoughts set off into 'blind alleys' where we categorise our thinking processes into set patterns, such as black and white thinking, catastrophising, labelling, emotional reasoning, personalising and over-generalising.

Examples of such thoughts might be "If I don't succeed I must be a failure" (black and white thinking), "I am a loser" (labelling) and "Mike was angry with me because I did something wrong and I offended him" (personalising).

These patterns (or patternicity of thoughts) are not necessarily negative automatic thoughts but may be more properly described as cognitive biases. A cognitive bias can be defined as: "...a systematic pattern of deviation from norm or rationality in judgment, whereby inferences about other people and situations may be drawn in an illogical fashion." (*Wikipedia*)

These biases are much more likely to be reinforced if we spend a great deal of our time on our own, where we inevitably have opportunity to unduly reflect on the current situation in our lives.

Sources of help nationwide

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
www.iapt.nhs.uk

MIND
mind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness
rethink.org

SANE
sane.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation
mentalhealth.org.uk

Isolation leading to diagnosable problems

We can now move on to the interaction between loneliness and isolation and commonly diagnosed mental health problems.

The identification and diagnosis of a mental health problem is a tricky issue and some mental health struggles cannot often be separated from physical health issues such as, for example, long-term physical health problems like asthma, diabetes or arthritis. In addition, low mood might not necessarily lead to a diagnosable mental health disorder. However, it has been widely accepted within the psychological profession that loneliness is often associated with a diagnosed mental health disorder. This is termed a correlation. Whilst correlation does not necessarily mean causation it is not controversial to say that loneliness could be more of a cause, rather than a symptom of commonly recognised mental health issues.

Commonly diagnosed disorders that may result from loneliness and isolation are:

1. **Depression** Loneliness and depression are extremely close bedfellows. If you come across somebody who has no close relationships, then the chances are high that they will feel some kind of emotional distress. There have been recent academic studies that state the presence of loneliness early within a five-year period is an excellent predictor of diagnosable depression, later, within the same period and beyond.

2. **Social Anxiety** Loneliness may also be caused by 'shyness' and lack of social skills. This is termed social anxiety. Some of this anxiety can be fuelled by the NATS mentioned earlier, such as "Nobody likes me". Indeed, you may feel generally 'unworthy' of experiencing a fulfilling relationship. This is highly indicative that loneliness and social anxiety are inextricably intertwined.

3. **Addiction** In 2015, Johann Hari published a book *Chasing the Scream* in which he set out the theory that if people lead lives with full social cohesion, then they are much less likely to become addicted to drugs, including painkillers. The opposite conclusion can also be drawn – those who feel lonely before taking drugs are much more likely to become addicted. Hari states "...so the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It is human connection."

4. **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder** If we lack social contact, then people often turn to material goods to fill a perceived void in their lives. Loneliness may be one of the main factors behind people obsessively collecting or hoarding objects. I think we can all relate to this phenomenon – we seem to instinctively want to hold on to objects that have an emotional value. This may be especially true after bereavement. We feel 'emptiness' in our lives that we try to fill. However, if these feelings persist for an inordinately long period, then our mental health and well-being can suffer.

It seems obvious that it is important to try and integrate lonely people into social networks, and local authority, charity and community organisations are making great strides in helping the more vulnerable and

FEATURE

lonely members of our communities. APCMH (Being Alongside) is a good example of this. We have had some excellent local initiatives along these lines in South-West London recently, including:

- A planned new community and well-being hub on the site of the Wilson Hospital in Mitcham, being developed by the local authority (London Borough of Merton), NHS England, and the NHS Merton CCG (clinical commissioning group).
- Sutton Uplift, a new primary care mental health service launched in summer 2015, which seeks to “promote health and well-being in Sutton” and “offer you a service that may help you feel positive again.”

What help is specifically available to assist in overcoming diagnosable mental health problems associated with loneliness and isolation? The good news is that, both nationally and in Merton and Sutton, there are many charities, voluntary sector, local authority and NHS organisations available to help. Examples are included in the panels accompanying this article.

Conclusion

Loneliness and isolation are becoming an increasingly significant negative factor impacting on health and well-being in the UK. This is probably set to continue and increase over the next few decades. It is important we recognise the problems associated with this trend and build on some of the initiatives mentioned above to mitigate the damage caused to lives from this social phenomenon.

David Hobbs is a committee member of APCMH Merton & Sutton.

This article accompanies a talk being given by David at Colliers Wood Library, Merton, on World Mental Health Day (10th October), at the invitation of the London Borough of Merton Public Health Team. Acknowledgements to Kira Asatryan and to Sutton Uplift for certain background material and research in this article.

Sources of help in Merton & Sutton

Your GP

Your GP is there to help you with any problem related to your mental health as well as physical health

South West London & St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

swlstg-tr.nhs.uk

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Merton

thinkaction.org.uk/get-help/addaction-mental-health-services/miapt/

Merton Complex Depression and Anxiety Service

based at the Wilson Hospital in Mitcham
020 3668 6520

Sutton Uplift (including the IAPT service)

A fully integrated primary care mental health service
suttonuplift.co.uk

APCMH Merton and Sutton (Being Alongside)

Provides a valuable befriending service to local residents. Befriending is a means of reducing the isolation that so often accompanies the experience of mental illness. By building up and maintaining a close relationship, social skills and confidence can be rediscovered and nurtured. Full details at apcmhmerton.org

On retreat with a peacemaker

The celebrated Jean Vanier led a peace-themed retreat this summer. His reflections about Saint Francis of Assisi feature in this excerpt of a journal kept at the retreat by **Jamie Summers**

Thursday June 30th

Jean is perhaps frailer than a year ago, with hearing aid and slightly faltering voice. He has had a bit of difficulty shambling up to the dais but is soon welcoming us in his dulcid [*sic*] diction. English is actually his first language. He is surprised by the United Nations quality of his audience.

His initial talk lasts some 45 minutes, opening with St Francis' beautiful prayer "*Where there is...*" He tells us of Francis the fighter / cavalry officer in the war between Assisi and Perugia—he being chased by the ladies before capture and a year's imprisonment.

Then comes another mysterious and mostly ignored year in Francis' life with an 'illness'. Jean speculates that this was probably a mental illness. He is guided to "mend my church" [...] - a metaphor for his fuller later work with people.

Also in synchronicity is the St. Francis cross, a three-foot version on the wall twixt Jean and me with the words in red cut-out paper underneath 'to be a peacemaker' to which we both gesture with our hands when he first mentions St. Francis. [...]

Jean tells us of St. Francis' further work, in particular with the lepers—the outcasts once the tell-tale white spot appeared on their hands. They then became the lowest of society, revulsed by family and friends. A painful disease indeed, no medications available in those days. No bed, no food, we don't want you. The smell, the pus... They looked after themselves in their own communities before Francis 'came alongside' them, not particularly doing anything special, just being with them, laughing and loving.



JOURNAL

His father was a wealthy linen merchant, importing cloth from France to sell at a good profit in Assisi, and would have liked his son to follow in his footsteps (a familiar familial desire Jean stated) but the son had other callings and was graced by the Holy Spirit.

Francis put aside his armour and his aristocratic ways and sought out the rejects of society; in his day the lepers, ringing their bells to warn of their imminent arrival, were the lowest in society—the bottom of the ladder. To me, these days that mantle has passed to those diagnosed mentally ill.

Jean closed by asking us all to listen to the “inner voice”, to seek “what is right, what is just”, and saying we must be tired and wished us all a good night’s sleep.

Friday July 1st

Jean had appeared a bit tired yesterday evening but this morning is on top form. Reflecting on his words of the previous evening he reiterates the importance of listening to one’s inner voice as St. Francis had listened to his. Somewhat ignored by historians has been his perhaps two years alone with depression after his year in a Perugia prison. Living in failure he found his own poverty helping him to liberate the oppressed, his leper friends.

“Make me a channel of thy peace,” says Jean. He uses the metaphor of a well to describe God’s waters at the bottom but often clogged up with rubbish which we need to clear away. The garbage must go, to reveal the living waters. He quotes Flavius Josephus writing in about the year 100 A.D.

Liberation—it is coming—when will it come? Παράκλητον ἄλλον... “parakletos ... the security of trust”, Jean says.

He tells us more about St. Francis—his second conversion time around the time of the fourth crusade. At Damietta outside Cairo he meets the Sultan who has been slaughtering over a thousand Christians. The Sultan is impressed by this little guy in brown robes and bare feet.

In life there is movement up and there is movement down. The founder of the Franciscans knew this as did his fellow traveller St. Clare who was the daughter of a noble—well bred like Francis. The Assisi (and Gubbio) locals were probably saying: “Francis has lost his head – why all this cavorting with those lepers?”

Jamie Summers is chair of BA / APCMH

In 2015 Jean Vanier was awarded the Templeton Prize to honour his exceptional contribution to affirming life’s breadth of spiritual dimensions. He donated the entire €1.5 million prize to be used to benefit people with intellectual disabilities.

For more information about Jean Vanier see jean-vanier.org
And for information about his global foundation L’Arche, see larche.org



Jean Vanier with
the diarist at Trosly-Breuil

Tea in the Park

An extract from a poem by John Craig

Footfalls rustle round the table legs
 Where the old man sits
 Tightly wrapped in cap and overcoat
 Waiting for winter.
 His weather-beaten face glows naturally
 Like a beacon on a stormy night
 Pointing out the course.
 Behind him, smartly clad in jeans and sweater
 Strolls a girl of oriental stock.
 "Speed on the water's face bearing the lamp of grace"
 A cooing dove chimes in and flies as a leaf falls.
 Footfalls rustle midst the chairs.
 They speak as I look at them.
 The old man eyes me occasionally
 He's just a tramp....

Source: *A Lovely Stroll. The Life and Work of John Craig, Poet and Mystic.*

ISBN 978-0-9552840-3-8. Published in 2012 for family and friends by Enterprise House, Northampton. Copyright Gillian Craig. Email: books341@clara.co.uk

There is a copy of the book in all major national libraries including the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the British Library in London and Cambridge University Library.

Who was John Craig?

John Stewart Craig was a Londoner—a poet and a mystic who had a vision of God. His life revolved around Westminster Abbey where he was a treasured member of the Abbey family. Although totally unworldly and unable to earn a living he yearned to be a great statesman.

Like other poets including William Blake and John Clare he spent many years in mental hospitals having support and treatment. He was encouraged to write during occupational therapy sessions and was well supported by his family.

When he died in January 1990 he was honoured to have a funeral service in King Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey presided over by Dean Michael Mayne.

Gillian Craig (the poet's sister), member of BA / APCMH

The crucifixion of mothers

Thirty years from its first appearance in the *Catholic Herald*, we re-publish, verbatim, a *cri de coeur* written by **Jane Lindon** about her son Adrian, who had been a psychiatric in-patient for two years when she realised that he had not received a single visit from a priest during that time.

The advance publicity engendered by this article was largely instrumental in the success of a series of meetings convened by Jane Lindon and her husband Austin which resulted in the foundation of the Association for the Pastoral Care of the Mentally Ill, as we were initially known.

ADRIAN HAS BEEN MORE CONTENTED within himself these last few weeks. He believes that he is the Pope, and therefore as an ordained priest he can say Mass in his room. He keeps a supply of stale bread in his bedside locker, but, as he says “the wine is in my heart”.

Sometimes he thinks he is Jesus, and occasionally he will write a letter to the Pope or the Cardinal. The other day he used the pay-phone in the corridor to call the Benedictine monks at Quarr, as he wants to join them immediately and become a monk. Adrian is a schizophrenia sufferer, committed to a psychiatric hospital. He has been very ill for four years with severe psychotic episodes, mood changes and deep depression.

At times he is tormented by hostile hallucinations and appears to be “possessed by devils”. But as his mother I can remember the time when our tall, elegant, intelligent and creative son briefly had the world at his feet.

He has always been affectionate and well mannered. Adrian is never out of my thoughts and prayers. As yet there is no cure for Schizophrenia, but I ask you to join me in prayers for all those dedicated people who are researching into the mysterious and dreaded disease.

Statistically speaking, in this country 50,000 Catholics have had, or will have schizophrenia at any given time. Add to this number their deeply distressed and often helpless relatives (Father Kit Cunningham writes about “the crucifixion of mothers”), and sufferers from other mental illness and breakdown, and the enormity and extent of this human suffering becomes apparent.

In my case I experienced one of the most traumatic events of my life when I discovered belatedly that during my son's first two admissions to hospital he had not received one single visit from a priest.

I had wrongly assumed that the Catholic Church in London provided an efficient chaplaincy service to psychiatric hospitals. As a result of further enquiries I discovered that there is no organisation within the church in this country specifically instituted to provide trained priests and helpers in the field of mental illness.

I do not think that it helps the patient if one has to beg a priest to visit him, especially if the priest has no aptitude for this type of delicate mission. Indeed, I have been at the receiving end of some strange comments from them.

For example:

- The Church considers that MIND and other voluntary bodies provide a sufficient service.
- Sometimes the S.V.P. provide an ad hoc service to psychiatric hospitals (though such specific care is not in their constitution).
- Due to our multi-racial society, Catholics could no longer expect the automatic service of a hospital chaplain.
- My deeply felt attitude to the Sacrament of the Sick was construed as "magic".
- Priests untrained in psychotherapy are inclined to lump together patients' sick fantasies and guilt complexes with early religious experiences as a predominant syndrome, and the current religious experience and inquiry is therefore suspect.
- Leave it to doctors and nurses.

I find these comments hurtful, and I regret that my church appears to have opted out, especially when one considers that there are ideologies within Western psychiatry that are both anti-family and atheistic.

Further stress can be experienced when relatives have to come to terms with under-funded, under-staffed, demoralised hospitals, many of which are overcrowded and squalid.

The government has issued draconian directives concerning aftercare in the community, none of which relate in any way to the human condition.

I believe that this state of affairs should be a matter of concern for our bishops; but I also think that there is scope for interdenominational action. (For instance the Quakers have pioneered reform in this area for 200 years).

I have been privileged and consoled to meet Christians who are quietly and unassumingly visiting and befriending these poorest of the poor—but many more are needed.

Originally published as a 'viewpoint' in the Catholic Herald in September 1986, this article was subsequently reprinted in our own newsletter in September 1990 on the occasion of the association's fourth birthday.

DROP-INS

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EP

Bus: 134, Tube: Tottenham Court Road. Tel 020 7240 0544

Email: church@bloomsbury.org.uk Web: www.bloomsbury.org.uk

Weekday drop-in

Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm

Tea, coffee and biscuits

Saint Marylebone Parish Church

17 Marylebone Rd, London NW1 5LT

Buses: 18, 27, 30, 205, 453, Tube: Baker St, Regents Park

Open Door Café

2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, 2.30pm-4pm

Afternoon tea, short talks, fellowship and conversation. All are welcome.

Contact Jackie Kesses: 020 7935 7315 / jackie.kesses@googlemail.com

Meeting with Coffee

1st and 3rd Fridays in the month, 11am-12.30pm

020 7935 5066 / healing@stmarylebone.org

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

2nd and 4th Fridays of each month, 2.30pm-4pm

Coffee, tea and sandwiches

Emmanuel Room, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London

SW1P 3JS (Entrance is via the rear of the building in

Matthew Parker Street).

Buses: 11, 24, 148, 211

Tube: St James's Park, Westminster

More info: Deacon Kina on 020 7654 3871



HELP AT HAND

SANE

0300 304 7000

Every night 6pm - 11pm

Emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers.

Rethink Advice and Information Service

0300 5000 927

Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm

Practical help on issues such as the Mental Health Act, community care, welfare benefits, debt, criminal justice and carers' rights. They also offer general help on living with mental illness, medication, care and treatment.

YoungMinds Parents Helpline

0808 802 5544 (free from mobiles & landlines)

Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm

Confidential support, including information and advice, for those worried about the emotional problems, behaviour or mental health of a child or young person up to the age of 25.

Pastoral Care for Carers

01642 865 668 Offered by Margaret through the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

MIND Infoline

0300 123 3393

Mon-Fri 9am-6pm (except bank holidays)

Information on a range of topics including types of mental health problems, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments, and advocacy.

MIND Legal Line

0300 466 6463

Mon-Fri 9am-6pm (except bank holidays)

Legal information and advice covering: mental health, mental capacity, community care, human rights and discrimination/equality.

Samaritans

116 123 (free from both landlines and mobiles)

Talk to Samaritans any time you like, in your own way, and off the record – about whatever's getting to you.

DROP-INS

The Barnabas Drop-In Sessions

at St Paul's Church Centre
5 Rossmore Rd, London NW1 6NJ
(Five mins walk from Marylebone Station;
buses 139 & 189 stop outside).
Tel: 020 7724 8517

Every Monday, 2pm-5pm

Drop in for tea and chat, plus various activities: table tennis, dominoes, scrabble, art / craft, poetry reading.

First Wednesday of each month 10.30am-noon

Coffee morning and chat. This session is a more reflective discussion time. An opportunity to share concerns with the group or to receive one-to-one support (by appointment). All welcome.



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**+ ST. PAUL'S +
CHURCH CENTRE**

Forest Hill Drop-In

Every Wednesday, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Tea, coffee, snacks and chat.
at St Saviour's Church Hall,
Brockley Rise, London SE23 1JN
(junction with Herschell Road)



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Know of a drop-in session or other service we should be listing? Please let the editor know!

DROP-INS

Croydon APCMH drop-ins apcmhcroydon.co.uk

Affiliated to BA / APCMH

The Bridge

Every Sunday 12.30pm-2.30pm at St Mildred's, Addiscombe

A friendly place to visit on a Sunday afternoon for a chat and refreshments.

Women's Group

Every Tuesday 12pm-2pm at St Mildred's, Addiscombe

Come along and enjoy an informal chat and enjoy a light lunch.

(St Mildred's Community Centre is in Bingham Road, Addiscombe, CR0 7EB.

Nearest tram stop: Addiscombe. Buses 130, 367 and 289)

The Open Door

Every Friday 7pm-9 pm at Norbury Methodist Church, 2a Pollards Hill North, London SW16 4NL

A place to make friends, enjoy an informal chat or play a game such as chess or Scrabble. Buses: The 109 bus from Croydon stops just before Pollards Hill North at Ederline Avenue. Trains: Norbury train station is a 10 minute walk.

The Rainbow

Every Monday 7pm-9 pm at South Croydon Centre, Ledbury Road, CR0 1EP

This is our busiest club and a great place to meet and make friends, enjoy an informal chat or maybe even join in a game of cards, Scrabble or chess.

Buses 60, 166, 312 407 and 466 all stop on South End Road a few minutes walk away. Bus number 468 also stops nearby on Warham Road.

BISHOP STEPHEN SYKES MEMORIAL BURSARY

The Bishop Stephen Sykes Memorial Bursary exists to support people who have experienced mental health difficulties and are undertaking further and higher education. Grants of up to £1000 are available.

Application Criteria:

1. The applicant must provide evidence of in-patient psychiatric care and/or outpatient history. We intend to prioritise those with more severe mental health difficulties. However, all applicants will be considered on merit.
2. Applicants should be aged between 25 and 55.
3. The chosen course must hold the status of national accreditation at a nationally accredited college or university and a place must have been obtained prior to application. The course of study may be vocational or academic.

Application forms may be obtained from: mcollins16@sky.com
or by post from:

Marlene Collins, Company Secretary, BA / APCMH
c/o 29 Braxfield Road, London SE4 2AW

*Will you consider renewing your membership,
or joining us for the first time?*

Membership Form Being Alongside / APCMH

Registered E & W charity: 1081642
UK limited liability company: 3957730

Please complete this form and return to:

BA / APCMH Membership Secretary,
c/o St Paul's Centre, 5 Rossmore Road, London NW1 6NJ

Title & Name:

Address:

..... **Postcode:**

Tel Day: **Eve:** **Mob:**

Please tick the membership category you'd like:

Standard £12 ☐

Concession £5 ☐

Group (5 copies) £25 ☐

Donation to funds - please write amount in:

Total (please make cheques out to 'APCMH'):

Gift Aid Declaration (for tax payers)

☐ By ticking this box, I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and would like BA / APCMH to treat this, and all future payments, as a Gift Aid Donation. (In any tax year you must pay an amount of income or capital gains tax of at least equal to the amount of tax that we reclaim on your payment—currently 25p for every £1 you give.)

Thank you!



1986



Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health

2016

ἄλλον
Παράκλητον
δώσει
ὑμῖν

John 14:16