

*Spring...
Hoping Eternal*

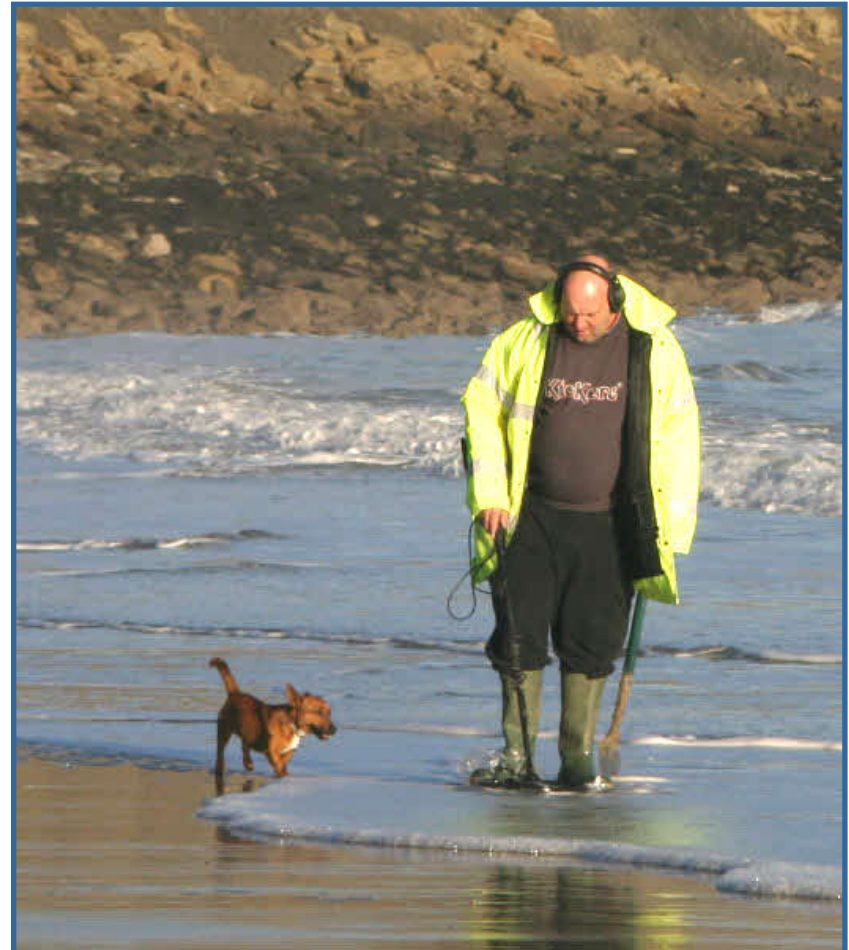


I think of the garden after the rain;
And hope to my heart comes singing,
"At morn the cherry blooms will be white,
And the Easter bells be ringing!"

Edna Dean Proctor



Being Alongside



Mar - Apr 08

the Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the
**Association for Pastoral
Care in Mental Health**

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 APCMH

Mondays 2pm - 5pm

November First Aid

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: Captain Mark Dadds, or Sister Theresa: 0207 724 8517

'When he arrived and 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)

Mental Health Support Group

(The Dymphna Group)

St Andrew's, Frognal, United Reformed Church NW3

2nd and 4th Friday of each month

10.15am-12noon

Aiming to provide friendship and mutual support for those living with mental health concerns, both sufferers and carers, where matters may be explored and discussion encouraged.

contact: The Rev'd Jonathan Dean: 0207 435 5725
or Jean Marsham: 0208 455 1240

Junction of Frognal Lane / West End Lane / Finchley Road.

near Finchley Rd Met / Jub;
113, 82, 13, 46, 268, 328, 139, C11 (West End Green);
Finchley Rd / Frognal (NL Metro),
Hampstead (Northern);
West Hampstead (First Capital Direct)



The Who and What of APCMH

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Patron | Bishop Stephen Sykes | |
| Patron | Professor Andrew Sims | |
| Chair | Stephan Ball | 0844 800 9744 |
| Secretary | John Vallat | 01483 428131 |
| Co-ordinator | Pam Freeman | 02086 473678 |
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| Newsletter Editor | Steve Press | 01303 277399 |
| Printer | PrintInc | printinc2@btconnect.com |

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

For Specific Contacts, see above; for General Enquiries reach us:

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Marylebone, London NW1 6NJ

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All submissions welcomed by the Editor.

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The views expressed in *Being Alongside* are
not necessarily those of the Association.

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**The Manchester Women's Conference:
8-9th May 2008**

**Hulme Hall, Oxford Place, Victoria Park,
Manchester M14 5RR**

*Seminar series: 8th May
'The Physical Health of Women with Mental Illness'*

*Workshops: 9th May
'Developing and Implementing Healthier services for
Women in your Area'*

more Details & Booking:
Carol Rayegan, Centre for Women's Mental Health Research,
Williamson Building, University of Manchester, M13 9PL.

Tel: 0161 275 0714 Fax: 0161 275 0716

Ooops!

*Last issue we were lucky enough to be able to print the poem
'Dignity' - on p16 - by John Wetherell.*

*This is the correct spelling of his name, whereas that in the
previous magazine was incorrect. Sorry John! And can we have
another poem soon please?*

Steve

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APCMH Workshop and AGM

Saturday 17th May 2008
10.30 – 2.30
St Paul's Rossmore Road, NW1

10.30 Registration and coffee

11 – 1 pm Movement Workshop led by Tricia Teahan

Chi Gong is an ancient Chinese form of exercise, a simple meditative form of movement that helps calm mind & body.

1 pm Lunch

(Contributions are invited to cover workshop & lunch)

2.15 AGM.

All are invited to stay for the AGM.

There will be an opportunity to meet the new secretary.

3.15 Tea and departures

For more details & to book in advance, contact Pam Freeman:

02086 473678

16 Beechwood Court, West Street Lane, Carshalton, Surrey.
SM5 2PZ

Mind's new research exposes shockingly high levels of bullying, harassment and exploitation experienced by people with mental health problems while living in the community.

Mind believes everyone has an equal right to personal safety, and that people experiencing mental distress have the same rights to justice as anyone else.

Sign our petition to the government at:

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/anotherassault/>

Find out more about the campaign: www.mind.org.uk/anotherassault

Mind relies on your donations to improve the lives of those who experience mental distress. Please make a donation by visiting

<http://www.mind.org.uk/How+you+can+help+us/Donate/>

Mind (National Association for Mental Health)

Registered charity number 219830.

Registered in England number 424348.

Help at Hand

Samaritans: 08457 909090

Saneline: 08457 678000

Rethink Advisory Service: 02089 746814
www.rethink.org

Young Minds Parents' Information Service: 08000 182138

Carers: www.carersinthecommunity.org.uk

MIND: www.mind.org.uk

www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mentalhealth.html



Mind: Annual Conference 2008.

Brunel University

This event will be exploring the link between poverty and mental health, with speakers from both the finance and the mental health sectors.

5pm on Monday 16 June to 5pm on Tuesday 17 June.

There will be the option to attend as a residential delegate (with food, refreshments and single-occupancy accommodation available) or just on Tuesday 17 June (accommodation and entry to the conference on Monday 16 not included).

Who should attend:

Mental health professionals
Those working in the finance sector
Citizens Advice Bureaux and other advice organisations
Service users and service user organisations
Local Mind associations
Housing workers and associations

Further information, registration details etc will be forwarded as we have them. Or, you can keep an eye on the relevant section of our website:

www.mind.org.uk/Information/Conference+and+training/In+the+red.htm

or speak to one of the Conference and Training team on 0844 4480 4450.

Pru Sly,

Conference and Training Manager. Direct line: 020 8215 2311

Another assault: Mind's campaign for equal access to justice for people with mental health problems:

Front Page from Pam Freeman

It is always good to hear from Members and Colleagues Here are some recent pieces of news that may interest our Readers.

Rev'd Jim Cotter is to be Priest in Charge of Aberdair, along the Llyn Peninsular in North Wales. It is the first time he has been in the 'hot seat'. This will give him more time to continue his writing which we have greatly appreciated over the years.

Philip Dixon-Phillips congratulates the editor on the magazine - such a lovely layout and quality booklet.

Margaret Harding - a member for many years says 'I have always appreciated receiving your newsletters. Sometimes they arrived when I was in need of some of their contents'.

Howard Eisenberg who has appeared on cable TV and had an article written in magazines is now on a Ricky Gervais (ed: yes, you did read it right!) DVD called *Fame*. He appears for twenty minutes being interviewed on Primrose Hill by a colleague of Ricky's, Karl Pilkington. The item is called *The Man Who Has Discovered the Secret of Immortality*. The DVD was edited from a discussion that took three hours in total. I have seen it and found it interesting and controversial. Howard often used to appear in Hyde Park at Speakers' Corner.

Mick Ewing reported, in an e-mail to Philip Dixon-Phillips, that research of the last hundred years reveals an exact correlation between the fall in church attendance and the increase of crime.

He wonders if there is a correlation between decline in church going and an increase in mental illness? However, he does note the probable shift in diagnosis procedures and the generally more open attitudes over the period may make difficult any direct comparisons.

Anyone have any thoughts, or like to investigate & report back?

If you have any comments, views or news you'd like to share, don't hesitate to let us know.

Many thanks,

Pam Freeman

Fourem Publications:

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Business & Technology Centre, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, SG1 2DX

web : www.livingwithmanicdepression.com

e-mail: fouremspubUcations@tiscali.co.uk

Double Trouble:

Living with Manic Depression

by Pauline Rhodes ISBN 978-0-9529765-6-1

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Martina Heap - Rethink

This book is a MUST for anybody who cares

Alan Nicholls (Retired Anglican Priest)

'It is a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit through the dark and hellish days of depressive illness...It verbalises that which many of us cannot put into words.'

Sue Hills (MIND Service User)

RRP £7.50; online price £5.99 from:

www.livingwithmanicdepression.com

(50p from each sale goes to MIND and Rethink)

What's In a Name? (con't)

Do you find the initials 'APCMH' a mouthful?

If you have a view as to if we should re-name ourselves and, if so, what that new name might be, please get in touch. Write to, or e-mail, the Editor (addresses inside the back cover), or call the APCMH number and leave a message: 0844 800 9744.

Thanks to those of you who have responded; more thoughts are always welcome, so, keep em' comin'!!

*Having travelled this way before
Determined against the odds to say
Never again will I go so far
Excluded, isolated, a self-imposed bar
For my loved ones, the hapless protector
For depression, I was the vector.*

*Like a jumper on a bungee rope
Emotional strain too much; couldn't cope
Elastic threads in my mind too taut
In the web of wind - up, I was caught
Warning those around of the danger
Turning again into an unrecognisable stranger.*

*Six months later, the battle is done,
Decisions made, the victory won
My health restoring, back on form
A stronger character being reborn
To minister to others in their pain
God's grace letting me start again.*

*His path for me, clear now in hindsight
The Lord's love my guiding light
Song, dance and films always a comfort
This ship of state as arrived at a new port
Released from my pirate's indenture
Ready to embark on love's great adventure.*

With acknowledgments to Midge Ure and Ultravox, Gilbert and Sullivan, Cole Porter, *High Society* and the Gandhi @ Sandy!!

I really hope that my poems will help those who are in need of God's love in times of trouble. I don't mean to be sanctimonious, cheesy or corny - I happen to believe that, when I prayed to Him, He heard my prayer. These words are my way of saying THANKS to GOD for, I wouldn't be here to type this if it wasn't for Him.

With love in Christ

Wendy Hill

*Through the misty veil, I saw Your face
Sought shelter and into hiding I went
Felt from a distance, Your loving embrace
Fell to my knees, my passion spent.*

*I open my eyes and gaze all around
At the wildflowers and fields of golden wheat
My heart marvels at the peace I have found
As I bow down, and fall humbly at Your feet
The wind, Your breath, my soothing balm
Gently blowing across Your beautiful creation
Stills my anxious soul, restores my calm
As my grateful soul is lifted in praise and adoration.*

*After the storms of passion, there is peace
Newness of life springs up all around
Your gentle voice bids my fears to cease
At last, my feet firmly on the ground
Every step I take, I know You are with me
Teaching, guiding, helping me to cope
Lord Jesus, thank You for setting me free
To serve You with a heart full of hope.*

Breakdown

*Enough is as good as a feast
Angry passions subdued; quell the beast
Inside my soul a devil hid
Waiting for me to lift the lid
Disease like, its spread was rapid
Leaving my body lifeless and vapid.*

*Fatigued, weary, no longer immune
Unable to continue into June
Clinging on for as long as I dare
Having to justify my need for care
Knowing that I was on a downward spiral
My illness mental; an infection viral.*

High Calling, High Endeavour

This is from a generation ago, but can hopefully still comfort the guilt laden, guide those who seek to serve in God's name and inspire us all.

Grace is more than mercy. It is more than a multitude of tender mercies. It is more than innocent love.

Grace is Holy Love, Holy Love in spontaneous movement going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely, that, by the ministry of its own sacrifice it might redeem the unholy and unlovely into its own strength and beauty.

The Grace of God is Holy Love on the move to thee and me, and to the likes of thee and me. It is God unmerited, undeserved, going out towards the children of men that He might win all into the glory and brightness of his own likeness ...

Arthur Poritt

 www.pastoral.org.uk 

*Thanks to all those who offer contributions to
Being Alongside.
If you know the originator or copyright holder, please do acknowledge.*

Thanks,

Steve

By Felicia Houssein, this is her story of a faith encounter overcoming the darkest of intentions. Not a new story - it first appeared in the Catholic Herald having been commissioned by the Deputy Editor. It is a powerful beacon of hope.

In and Out of Darkness Through to Light

"But how do you come through a depressive illness with any faith left?" The young woman eyed me honestly. She was the third person at that weekend conference to have confided the same private anguish. I admitted that at times faith had been almost impossible, but I still asked how I would have survived without it. Then, seeing she was able to use her own depression creatively, I dared to add: "Sometimes I'm tempted to think, 'What a waste of years'. But it wasn't. I wouldn't be without that experience."

For many still on this hard road such a claim makes nonsense. But others will recognise it as the essence of Christian paradox, when God is known by his long absences, and where the battle between being and non-being is relentless and the outcome unpredictable. Recognition of my own illness was perhaps the most arduous phase of all.

Once there, intuitively I sought the right help. And somehow a 'hand-picked' team evolved, ordered, it seemed, by a kind of divine economy. Throughout, there was no searching for the right priest, therapist, or doctor. The number varied, when, for example, psychoanalysis was replaced by combined pastoral and specialised medical care in one person under the Healing Ministry.

There were long periods when I lived on my pastor's unquenchable faith; undoubtedly the source of his faith in me, mirroring the person I was in the process of becoming. (I use the term 'pastor' of both priest and priestly doctor.) Because of the devastating loss of selfhood, the principal team member agreed to act as my lifeline. With the ever-present danger of the vacuum I had become, only by this transference could I justify my existence while negotiating the gap I came to know as 'the abyss', and later, with Thomas Merton, that God himself "is our abyss". There is no hoodwinking the depressive, no jollyng' along. To have someone *willing to remain alongside*, who was not afraid to let me see that he did



Wendy's Poems

Ed: I met Wendy at Crowhurst Christian Healing Centre. I was there with a Church Group. We got - and stayed - chatting because we had both been involved in teaching. She spoke of her breakdown and the creativity subsequently unleashed. Here are a couple of the fruits:

The Journey

a poem by Wendy Hill

(following reactive post - natal depression and a stress breakdown)

My spirit was heavy - laden, Lord, like a willow tree

The branches of my soul bent with guilt and shame

Deep dark blackness all I see

Crying out in despair at the person I became

But You heard my plea, You heard my voice

You saw my tears and felt my pain

Your word helping me to make the right choice

Your presence helping me never to feel lonely again.

Feeling numb, hollow, full of pain I didn't understand

Hopeless, helpless, emptied of love

All my certainties suddenly on shifting sands

Lifting my eyes to You in heaven above

Lord Jesus, You took my hand in the dark

Losing confidence and the will to fight

Like a blind person, I stumble and fall, short of the mark

But Your presence is my guiding light.

Like a volcano, anger grew within my tortured soul

Deep wells of hurt buried for many years

Denial and rejection of You, Lord, taking its toll

Erupting, exploding in a torrent of tears

OLD ATTITUDES GONE

To the psychotherapist my changed state had come about through dying to my old attitudes and through my acceptance of life, towards which he had been working over the months; and both psychologically and spiritually, I had begun to find my true self.

And the words that greeted me on that glorious "first" Easter Morning? The words of the Epistle - none other than these:

*'Were you not raised to life with Christ; I repeat, you died;
and now your life lies hidden with Christ in God?'*

Felicia Houssein

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not always know the answer, lessened the gap between myself and the God who humbled himself.

I had little idea then that those were early days, since any notion of a future was inconceivable. At times feelings of unreality and isolation were so acute that as I watched people speak, their voices seemed to come from next door. I remember the vivid archetypal images: the rider-less black charger of President Kennedy's funeral cortege plunging me back into the abyss for several weeks. And there were days mercifully wiped clear with final healing.

But there was another kind of day, extremely rare but stupendously beautiful, bringing moments of transfiguration to carry me over those primordial waters... Once, having reached rock-bottom and hardly able to speak, I hid out in a convent in Southern Cornwall where I was taken on gentle taxi tours of that breathtaking coastline by a lady mourning the death of her twin, because 'I can't be with anyone else.. other people talk too much, I need your serenity.' A priest there, on loan from a distant monastery, brought the beginnings of order out of chaos: "Before the world was conceived he had a plan for you." The 'penance' he prescribed (Ps 18:19) provided the key to my true situation:

*'He brought me forth into a place of liberty;
he brought me forth, even because he had a favour unto me.'*

The place of liberty I am still exploring over forty years on. Two years later, while on retreat in Kent, a chance meeting with a fellow-priest brought me news of his stroke and subsequent depression. "Please pray for him." Ah yes, before the world was conceived...

There is so much more - including a dramatic breakthrough, which snatched me back from the brink one Good Friday... and final healing, which was simply a by-product of an even more profound experience - on

A Prayer

May people affected in any way by mental illness know that the Lord is there alongside them, sharing their pain and sorrow.

And may God's Church be there for them too.

Amen.

the weekend I went to tell God I was packing Him in... But that's another story...

The breakthrough occurred one Lent during my thirties, when, still suffering from severe depression after many years, I finally decided I must end my life.

For the past two years I had been receiving treatment, and my psychotherapist, himself a Christian, was closely interested in my spiritual state since it was almost always indicative of my psychological condition. To him, among other problems, I bore the burden of a heavy guilt complex; spiritually, it manifested itself in a hopeless inability to accept the forgiveness of sins.

Knowing that without this belief I could hardly call myself a Christian, my distress was considerable; in addition, I felt divided from Christ Himself, for in fact I had never got beyond the Cross; I had never known the joy of following Him through to the Resurrection; Easter had always been a mere formality.

As Holy Week drew closer, I knew with certainty that for me, this year, there could be no Good Friday devotions. I presented myself with endless arguments, but they were of no avail; I put to myself the questions of loyalty to family and others - which must so often torment people in this situation.

I recalled that the only person recorded as having committed suicide in the Gospels was the one who had betrayed his Lord. But in the end I decided that, if I could not live through the Three Hours, I would at least die with Him. I laid my plans carefully and my farewell letters were written ready.

LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER

In one of them I wrote:

"I only pray to God that I have enough tablets . . . Though in thinking about this possibility that I may or may not succeed, I find I am looking for an answer to the question as to what life really is. Whatever the outcome, whichever side I wake up on, I am prepared to accept that that is the

life I am to live, and I promise you that if it should be that I am returned to consciousness, I will live it with my whole heart-and never again question the wisdom of God."

In a last desperate bid I opened my Bible, and the words that confronted me were those of Paul to the Colossians (3: 1-3):

"Were you not raised to life with Christ? I repeat, you died: and now your life lies hidden with Christ in God "

In my letter I went on:

"The passage is the one thing that puzzles me. I feel that the clue lies here somewhere - perhaps in the feeling that I am already living in death . . . But I am not really clear about it. I can only see now 'as though through a glass darkly' . . ."

It was a few days before the light dawned, but when it did I saw that what I suspected was true: I had in fact gone through a form of dying. He had already placed me in the situation where I had promised to live life with my whole heart. What I craved for was *not* death but life, and the Life that Christ Himself, and only He, held out to me.

There was no longer any need for physical death, since this had already been accomplished and overcome by my Saviour, and it was unthinkable that His Precious Blood, which had been shed for me, should be wasted. I saw now how the only way forward lay through my acceptance of the Cross, the forgiveness of sins and the Resurrection, to the fulfilment of those promises which exceed all we can possibly desire.

I had taken a one-way ticket to the Good Friday Devotions, for originally that was where my life was to have ended, and I wanted my new life to start with a marked beginning - with the buying of a homeward ticket.

As I emerged from the Church after those glorious Three Hours, I felt as Lazarus must have felt on emerging from the grave. Everything was new to me; it seemed that the soft wind touched my face for the very first time. This feeling of newness to all things stayed with me for very many weeks, and a Voice within me kept saying: *"Behold, I make all things new!"*