

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2005

This month's Front Page article

THE ROAD TO BEING ALONGSIDE

I ventured recently upon an NHS Manifesto, aimed at promoting a healthier future amongst local citizens. Among the resolutions was the aim to reduce the gap between the most and the least healthy citizens – “Whatever do they mean by that?” I thought. I had an automatic vision of everyone on the train making a specific point of searching out the most infectious looking body to sit beside, and in so doing, might contract the same disease, which might make the sick person feel a little less so, knowing that another shared the same illness.

I don't think 'being alongside' is quite like that, although sometimes I ask myself the question, “Who is alongside whom here?” In the case of the soul's quest, I expect that it's never quite the way it appears on the surface and the person to whom we think we may be ministering to may in fact, be ministering to us. That's what I most value about 'being alongside' pastorally, but it's also what I find to be the most difficult.

So how might we translate this into the field of mental health to reduce the gap between the most traumatised and the normal person? Whoever that might be. Perhaps all we can share is what we have and whom we are, our time and our love, that which is given freely and received freely – all God's gifts. Resolutions without the recognition of God's provision are empty resolutions, like works without faith are empty. We spend millions striving for the perfect manifesto but fail to provide that one essential ingredient that the whole nation is yearning for. “Love”, without which as St Paul says, “We are nothing.” By listening, ministering, nurturing, valuing and responding to the needs of the spirit, the journey begins – when we begin to walk, that's where the road starts.

I recall a year ago when first elected as Chairman, I returned home thinking, “Oh, what do I do?” “Where do I start?” I felt a heavy cloud of uncertainty weighing down upon very inexperienced shoulders. I would have to set some boundaries I thought; soon to discover that the nature of being alongside and the idea of setting boundaries is quite contrary to the notion of pastoral care. I've discovered that since I stopped trying to set them that I didn't need them at all, except from myself perhaps, and from God. We never feel invaded when God rules inside our hearts and our goal is to do His will. When we are focussed upon God's love for us constantly, even when under nebulous circumstances where doubt prevails and we may feel unsure, still something within us knows the truth. The Holy Spirit provides comfort when we ask. God knows our limits.

I often feel myself more fit for hell than for heaven; mood swings, ingratitude etc I'm so inconsistent in my efforts to be a good Christian. When I consider the many requirements on the nature of how to conduct oneself amongst others, I feel positively incompetent, positively human! Maybe that's good! I do believe though that God knows where we've been. He remains alongside us at 'intimate distance'. Jesus stayed alongside whilst Thomas doubted, without condemnation, until he was ready to see. In the same way I think God works beside us, gently revealing Himself until we recognise Him more fully; helping us to grow and respond and acclimatise ourselves to His radiance. He knows that we sometimes need to scream and rant and rage, and he gives us tears of healing.

Continued

The Road to Being Alongside

His presence allows painful memories to re-emerge so that they can be relived – sometimes in relationship with others and restoration and forgiveness can be facilitated. However, the inadequacy that we might feel at not being able to fulfil our Christian roles can frustrate us. It's as though there's a side to us which is almost being denied existence – the human, unique, changing, fallible parts of us that define our nature, the darker sides which yearn to be accepted, parts of the self it seems are to be stamped out and there is nothing more frustrating than a 'nice' Christian who is so polite, but appears not to be engaged in the suffering, or denies even that he or she is full of hate because that's not what good Christians are about. We are who we are, and only God can bring that change within us, which is the transforming love of God which reaches the very depths of our suffering, reaching the inmost parts of our beings. Sometimes it seems as though we are required to endure another's pain and feel it almost as if it were our own, but we can ask for God's guidance and discernment. Even when the pain or someone else's circumstances disturbs us perhaps God is calling us to forgiveness, drawing out our pain, exposing the enemy and bringing us to restoration and reconciliation, perhaps to strengthen us and teach us something of His grace and mercy. "Only love can make allowance for the human traits in the other – the differences that jar."

So it seems that we must endure much suffering as we journey on into intimacy with God. It's been said that the Devil builds his chapel next to where God builds his church. Why would Satan even be interested in someone who wasn't close to God? He loves to break up Fellowship, find our weaknesses, manipulate them, twist them, invent schemes which are so beyond our capacity to apply human intelligence that only God's wisdom can provide relief, and even turn them to our best advantage when our minds are focussed on His Word – this is why it's so important that we know the will of God by being alongside God's written word and praying for wisdom.

Often we fear that God won't be there when we share painful silence ourselves instead of trusting God to enter in. We deny the reality that there is a helplessness that we cannot endure. God seems to be in all the things that we find positively hopeless, so why not give Him a chance? We can be instruments of God's music which is so beautifully out of tune with the world. The flats are perfectly in tune with the wisdom of God; inharmoniously syncopated and unrhythmically free. God knows the fears which are concealed underneath petty irritants in life and disturbances and latenesses and absenteeism, and wants to set us free – will we let Him? The woman at the well (John 4) only went for a bucket of water but she returned with complete assurance of another source of life, one that will never dry up. We're all in need of living water that only Jesus can provide. Instead of water, we crave substitutes – coffee, tea, chocolate, but without water we don't even have those, only water sustains us, cravings deplete us, dehydrate us, dry us up, empty us out. Jesus feeds us. He gives us His Holy Spirit with the promise that we shall never thirst.

A Glass of Water

Here is a glass of water from my well
It tastes of rock and root and earth and rain;
It is the best I have, my only spell
And it is cold, and better than champagne
Perhaps someone will pass this house on day
To drink, and be restored, and go his way,
Someone in the dark confusion as I was
When I drank down cold water in a glass,
Drank a transparent health to keep me sane,
After the bitter mood had gone again.

(Sarton M, Benson G, Chernaik J, Herbert C (eds) (1995) Poems on the Underground: Cassell, London)

I am grateful to all those of you who have been alongside others and myself this year, and I hope that you will continue to express your opinions in poetry in the Newsletter.

May God sustain us in His Love.

Suzanne Heneghan
Chairman

"STUDENTSINMIND"

Mission Statement.

Studentsinmind is a socially inclusive charity, which is committed to providing a high standard of sensitive support to both volunteers and service users. The ultimate goals are to guide students who may be suffering from varying degrees of mental distress to the most appropriate support, to encourage them to be confident enough to seek help if required and to work towards removing the stigma and taboo surrounding mental distress. We will listen to student voices.

Thank you to all of those who have supported me with the development of Studentsinmind.

Natasha Donnelly

Founder and Director, Studentsinmind.

Why 'Studentsinmind'?

Many people over the last few years have asked me "What drives you? Why do you feel so strongly that this charity is needed? Why are you giving up a stable lecturing job to work on this charity?"

I have many reasons for being so passionate about working towards removing the stigma associated with mental distress and a firm belief that positive mental health can be achieved and should be celebrated but we that we have to acknowledge that most of us live with a fluctuating state of mind. We as a society need to work towards supporting each other in times of distress rather than being exploitative and discriminatory. From my life experiences of being a nurse, carer, mother, friend, teacher, emotional human being and eternal student I believe that people need support and encouragement to complete their own personal journeys. Every journey is very different and unique but if a person feels they have achieved in some way this will have a positive impact on their mental health

Following four years of teaching and research into student suicide and mental distress at University College Chichester, Universities UK and Southampton University I became determined to try and find ways of supporting the many students who were experiencing varying degrees of mental distress. I recognised that in order to help we first needed to listen to the students which is why I developed the website called 'The Voice of the Students,' in 2001. This early site was supported by Jeremy Paxman and was a way of listening to students and their thoughts about mental health issues.

I was further inspired when presenting a networking session at the MIND Annual Conference (2001) where a student in the audience said that they were 'fed up with researchers.... what was I going to do to help?' I responded by asking those present if we could use the session to put ideas together and that if anyone was interested they could have copies of my research findings. We then began brainstorming ideas and a group of us continued on into the evening thinking about useful strategies.

Following the session the student who had asked what I was going to do to help shared his story with me – how he had begun hearing voices when he arrived at University, how he had been confused by the huge lists of supportive sites on the internet, isolated himself from friends and family, felt frightened and a failure and dropped out of lectures and eventually tried to take his own life. He thought the idea of a signposting service was a great idea and would have helped him through. Following this and analysis of data collected from an online questionnaire, (that I had been running to gather student opinion on the existing mental health services via the National Union of Students website), the idea of Studentsinmind was created.

Students are our creative future we must assist them in their personal journeys. This support may include finding strategies to enable them to work towards successfully completing their courses of study, which include short courses, vocational courses and university degrees.

Studentsinmind is not being developed as a replacement for any existing service but one that will act as a 'stepping stone' to further help by encouraging the students who contact them to get the most appropriate support from the most relevant supportive services. It will raise the profile of many services across all sectors, it will assist the students to plan for appointments and find coping strategies, it will provide professional training to enable students who have had direct experience of mental distress to work as volunteers for Studentsinmind. It is a socially inclusive charity.

Longing for Heal – an Encounter with Jesus

In her book *I am my Body – New Ways to Embodiment* the theologian Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel suggests that we read the stories about healing in the Bible as our own stories.

Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel summarises her ideas about the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, which can be found in the Gospels of Matthew (Chapter 9), Mark (Chapter 5) and Luke (Chapter 8).

"A woman is ill, and those who are ill often experience sympathy and help. This woman's disease, however, is different: she is isolated, rejected and impoverished. For twelve years she has been afflicted with continuous bleedings, which, in the imagination of her environment, render her unclean. People avoid having anything to do with her. Her attempts to find a doctor who can cure her have eaten up all her savings, to no avail. Maybe she had been married once or there had been relatives who cared for her; now she is all alone, and on her own she approaches Jesus, the miraculous healer, who has healed many before. The author of the Gospel of Mark uses the same word for her sufferings that is also used for the suffering of Jesus in torture and crucifixion. A strong word with dramatic power, which connects Jesus and the woman very closely. The story of her suffering becomes a story of the passion.

But now the miracle happens that the woman leaves her passivity and becomes active. She talks herself into courage, touches Jesus' garment and realises immediately how a hitherto unknown power comes into her. Up to now all strength had been leaving her, every loss of blood had made her weaker, more afraid and more desolate. Now she experiences how something within her becomes stable: her fragile body. Energies begin to return and she begins to experience her body anew. The Bible says: "she sensed in her body that she had been healed from her plague." This word "to sense" contains something of pleasure and the joy to be alive, a sensual joy to exist. No longer streaming apart, being forced to dilute all the time! It is a wonderful process, entirely without words which is being described here: a woman becomes open to God's living power which restores the life within her and allows her to experience her own body as restored and whole again.

And Jesus? The living power that restored the woman to life came out of Him. He was somewhat frightened by it as he began to realise the healing powers within him: healing powers that human beings need and can get from him. "Go in *shalom*," he said to the woman. "You will not only be happy and content in your body and your restored strength, you will reflect Shalom, salvation, well being, wholeness, peace from you into the whole world."

If we follow Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel's suggestion and read the stories like this one as our own stories of healing, we recognise that the long for healing will be fulfilled if we allow the divine power to enter into our bodies, an experience which women and men have even today, despite the fact that they remain chronically ill.

Hanna Strack, translated and adapted by Natalie K. Watson

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## A Memorial of Thanksgiving

On a site in Howard Davis Park on St Helier there exists a memorial, which reads:

"He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let others who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten."

Howard Leopold Davis

Highland Light Infantry – Died of his wounds Aug. 12 1916

Memorials aren't for the dead but for the truly alive.

If we are truly alive in Christ then this might be an allegorical account representing Christ's love reworked in our lives.

As we 'pass out of the sight of men' may we be permitted to see Him more clearly. Thanks be to God for His mercy, grace and the gift of salvation and help us to see with God's eyes and to be thankful.

*Suzanne Heneghan*



# NOTES FROM THE AGM

## Chairman's Report

Gratitude goes out to all committee members for the efforts and dedicated loyalties throughout the year. To John Vallat, Company Secretary, Pam Freeman Coordinator and Sister Theresa Pountney for their sustained commitment throughout what has been a trying year for all three. Congratulations to John on the arrival of his new grandson, Casper.

We are especially grateful to John Rawson who continues to maintain excellent standards as Editor of the Newsletter. Its traditional format and selective content is greatly appreciated by all, and his approach is a perfect reflection of the aims of APCMH of "Being alongside" John encourages contributions from members and non-members alike.

We take pleasure in welcoming Dianna Klewing and Dave Allen as co-opted members. We are most grateful to Flora Njoku for her work as Treasurer and to Lionel Perkin as Webmaster, to Solomon Brown and to Stephan Ball for his dedicated research. On a lighter note we would like to congratulate Amanda Headley-White and Paddy Uglow on the engagement and wish them every happiness in their new home.

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THE ASSOCIATION FOR PASTORAL CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH

EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS AND TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPT. 2004

Activities

The company is a charity and exists to promote the relief of persons suffering from the problems of mental illness and their families by the provision of pastoral counselling and care appropriate to their individual needs. The aim is to enable these people so to develop their spiritual, physical and mental capacities that they may realise their full potential as individuals and participating members of society, and so that their conditions of life may be improved. This is achieved (a) through the activities of local branches such as drop-in facilities and befriending schemes (b) by encouraging others to provide similar activities and appropriate pastoral care and (c) through its web-site and by the publication of a national newsletter and resource information. All the work of the Association both locally and nationally is carried out by volunteers.

Future Strategy

The directors see an important role of the national committee as encouraging the development and continuation of local initiatives to support those with mental health difficulties and their carers. An emphasis is placed on seeing individuals for themselves rather than in terms of their illness and also on the importance of "being alongside".

In future, local groups will be encouraged to affiliate to the Association rather than become branches although existing branches will be allowed to continue as such as long as they wish to do so. The Croydon branch has become an autonomous organisation with its own independent charitable status. The net assets attributable to the Croydon Branch £15,401 were transferred to the new organisation on 1 October 2003. It will continue as an affiliated group.

The Association produces resource sheet on a number of relevant topics. A web site will be maintained and improved. A newsletter will be published every two months and its readership will, if possible, be extended. Suitable conferences and seminars will be organised.

The Association has been supported by the Young Friends who adopted the Association as its charity for 2003. We have worked closely with them and, consequently, the Association's work has focused more on younger people.

Directors and Trustees:

Mr Solomon Brown
Mrs Pam Freeman
Ms Amanda Headley-White (appointed 22 May 2004)
Ms Suzanne Heneghan
Sister Teresa Pountney MBE
Mr John Vallat

THE CHURCH & MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

Faith communities can contribute to improved mental well being by offering an important source of friendship, belonging and support that both helps prevent mental distress and assists people with mental health problems to cope with and recover from mental distress. They can also provide spiritual guidance, counselling and emotional support, and support for carers and families of mental health service users. Religion or spirituality can act as a part of the holistic healing process that gives calmness and peace that is so vital to recovery. A great deal of work is undertaken by church leaders and lay people who help and support people with mental health problems, who either may come to them in distress or come to talk about their problems. The worshipping, witnessing and caring life of the church contributes something to good mental health by bringing people in touch with Jesus the great healer.

The Church has a really important role in raising awareness and increasing people's understanding and knowledge about mental health problems. It can do this through the way it behaves and includes people and by acting as a sanctuary. Many people with mental health problems find that the church is the one place they can go where they are treated the same as everyone else and be accepted for who they are.

Within any faith community there will be people who are experiencing mental distress, people who currently have a mental health problem or who have experienced one in the past, and many others who are affected by mental health problems as family members, friends or carers. Church communities together with the wider community in which they sit have a responsibility towards and concern for people affected by mental health problems.

Helpful aspects of spiritual life include:

- religious belief

- faith as a source of comfort or support, including the sense that God is always there, no matter how you feel or what happens in your life

- prayer as a source of reassurance or guidance

- reading the scriptures to provide guidance for life

- belonging to a religious community, and the support gained from other people who do, including religious leaders, through the sharing of beliefs and a sense of community.

In the next issue we shall be dealing with the following headings in detail :-

Building social capital

Offering information, emotional and practical support

Support for someone experiencing mental distress

Be prepared to offer support when needed

When someone becomes distressed

Offering social support

Providing counselling and therapy

"COPING WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA "

A guide for patients, families and care givers. (Steven Jones and Peter Hayward)

This is one of the best books I have come across in many years. It deals with all aspects of the illness. It is specially good and sympathetic to carers. Each chapter is well laid out and illustrated by a case history and concluded with an excellent summary it generally takes an optimistic view of the outcome and gives full information about help that is available and lists all the major support groups. There is an appendix on relaxation. It is written in plain English and free from technical jargon. A copy should be in every public library. Members should go along and ask for it.

Pam Freeman

~~~~~ **FOR REFLECTION BEFORE THE SERVICE**

If we wait in hope and patience, the power of that for which we wait is already effective within us. He who waits in an ultimate sense is not far from that for which he waits. He who waits in absolute seriousness is already grasped by that for which he waits. He who waits in patience has already received the power of that for which he waits. He who waits passionately is already an active power himself, the greatest power of transformation in personal and historical life. We are stronger when we wait than if we possess. When we possess God, we reduce him to that small thing we knew and grasped of him, and we make it an idol. Only in idol worship can one believe in the possession of God. But if we know that we do not know him, and if we wait for him to make himself known to us, we then really know something of him, we then are grasped and known and possessed by him. It is then that we are believers in our unbelief, and that we are accepted by him in spite of our separation from him.

From *The Shaking of the Foundations* by Paul Tillich

~~~~~ **SOUL CAGE**

Within the marrow of claret coated bones
Underneath fingershells and hairline frowns,
Inside the motions of tentative tertiary windows;
Lies real nakedness.
Etched in the creases of experience,
Running along the seams of solar plexus's
Concealed within the curves of sensual maps,
That's where real nakedness lies.
Deep down in the spiritual depths
In the place where the soul resides
Stretching its wings
Between the lines of sentences
Below the surfaces of jokes
The self harming of painful pretences
And the growing pains of trying
Lies real nakedness.

Almost invisible to the naked eye
In its subtle shades of difference.
Deep down in the spiritual depths
That's where nakedness lies
In the space where the soul lives
Stretching its wings in an ivory cage
A sacred space where Angels sing.
Opening its doors to the universe
Saying "hi", to blue and shades of sky
and sea.

*(contributed by Terence Wilde, Artist and member of
the Croydon Branch of APCMH)*

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*Three men were walking on a wall,  
Feeling, Faith and Fact.  
Feeling got an awful fall  
And Faith was taken aback.  
Faith was so close to Feeling, he fell too.  
But Fact remained and pulled Faith up  
And that brought Feeling too.*



*"A White Cow in a Snowstorm"*

*John Rawson*

*Dear Reader*

*The above picture, and this twenty-four point message are examples of what I am driven to in my duties as your editor. They are also a reminder that I don't have sufficient copy to fill this month's issue*

*.....HELP!!!!!!!!!!!!*

*p.s. Signed copies of the above picture are available for the price of a donation to APCMH*

## **THE ASSOCIATION FOR PASTORAL CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH**

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*The views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association*

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