

The Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health

Being Alongside

Summer 2026

**Celebrating
four decades of
faithful service**



**...with events at
Southwark Cathedral,
Battersea Park and
Bethlem Museum of the Mind**

NEWS • POETRY • GARDENS • ART

Being Alongside Summer 2026

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Editor and design: Trevor Parsons
Printed by Printinc Ltd, SM6 7AH

Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health

E&W Registered Charity: 1081642

Patrons:

The Right Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Dr Larry Culliford

We are a faith-inspired, voluntary
association of individual subscribers
and affiliated groups who recognise
the importance of spiritual values and
support in mental health.

We have a network of supporters
throughout the United Kingdom.

We welcome and encourage people
whatever their faith or belief system.

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

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Cover: applause at conference 2026
(photo courtesy of Ron Timehin)

Dr Clive Timehin looks back on his first year as chair of Being Alongside

“My first year as chair of Being Alongside has been both a privilege and a rewarding journey of discovery. It has been a year marked by learning, inspiration and, above all, the commitment and generosity of the many people who make our work possible.

Our annual conference at the Bethlem Museum of the Mind brought together inspiring speakers, Steve Radley and Sara Parratt-Halbert, who encouraged us to reflect on transformation, spirituality and wellbeing. Their messages reminded us of the restorative power of nature and the importance of the choices we make in shaping healthier, more hopeful lives.

Throughout the year we have also enjoyed opportunities to connect and celebrate together, including our sponsored walk in Battersea Park with supporters, friends, family and members of Croydon LINK.

As we celebrate Being Alongside's 40th anniversary, we look forward to our evensong service in September, giving thanks for four decades of faithful service and for all who have shared their time, talents and gifts in supporting our mission.

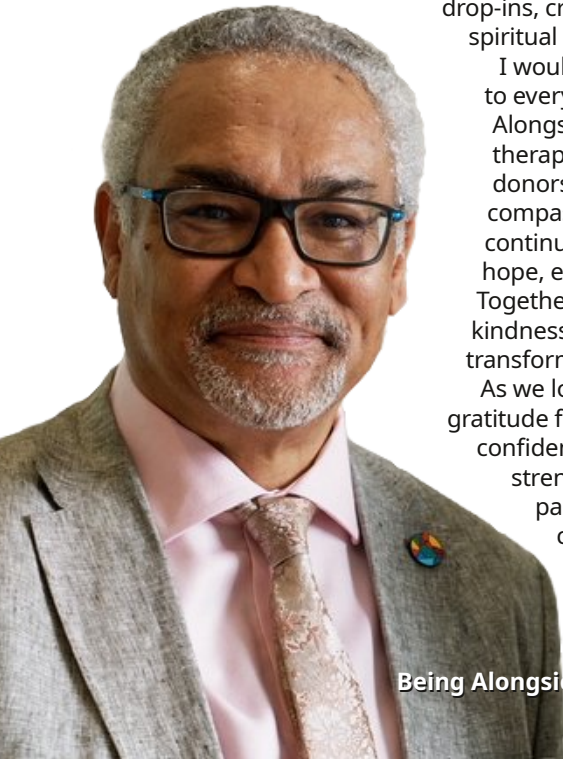
The vision of our founders continues to guide us: recognising the vital role that faith, spirituality and compassionate presence play in promoting wellbeing, growth and transformation. Through our affiliate groups, this vision is lived out every day in befriending schemes, café drop-ins, creative arts, walking groups and spiritual support within local communities.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributes to Being Alongside—our trustees, volunteers, therapists, affiliate groups, supporters, donors and partners. Your dedication, compassion and generosity enable us to continue walking alongside those who need hope, encouragement and connection.

Together, we demonstrate that simple acts of kindness can bring light into difficult times and transform lives.

As we look to the year ahead, we do so with gratitude for all that has been achieved and with confidence that, together, we will continue to strengthen our communities, deepen our partnerships and remain faithful to our calling of being alongside those who need us most.

Clive Timehin,
chair of trustees



Walk raises over £3,000

TWENTY-FOUR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS of Being Alongside put their best feet forward to join in our Summer Sponsored Walk around Battersea Park on 18th July.

It was a wonderful day of fellowship, fresh air and fundraising, and we were especially pleased to welcome six members from Croydon LINK, alongside friends, family members and trustees, whose enthusiasm helped make the event such a success.

With pleasant summer weather and plenty of opportunities for photographs along the route, the walk was enjoyed by everyone. More than simply raising funds, the event reflected the spirit of Being Alongside - coming together in friendship, encouragement and mutual support.

The total amount raised through Justgiving, PayPal and cash donations was just over £3,000. The money will go towards our annual conference and grants scheme. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who walked, donated and cheered us on!

To donate to the fundraiser, go to justgiving.com/team/beingalongside



Stepping out together
for Being Alongside



Grant scheme update

BEING ALONGSIDE launched its current grant scheme in the summer of 2023. Our aim was to give a helping hand to local places of worship and other organisations seeking to start new projects to support those experiencing mental ill-health in their community.

In the last three years, we have directly supported more than half a dozen local initiatives, including a number of regular drop-in events exemplifying the values of “being alongside” those in need.

Given this success, the trustees have decided to extend the scheme for a further year, until at least September 2027, and expand the number of projects which could benefit.

We initially focused on providing

seed-corn funding for brand new projects (principally café style drop-in events and befriending services) but, in light of demand, we are now expanding our criteria to provide support to existing projects that need one-off help to sustain their work.

We will also consider applications from previous grant recipients, where they can show an ongoing need.

To help spread our support as widely as possible, we will now encourage applicants to restrict bids to £1,500, while retaining the maximum (in exceptional circumstances) of £2,000 per award.

The trustees welcome fresh applications. Please help us get the word out! beingalongside.org.uk/grants

Personally Speaking published

LAST YEAR BEING ALONGSIDE PROVIDED a small grant to help fund the publication of *Personally Speaking*, a new book in which 22 psychiatrists share how their own life experiences have shaped their approach to psychiatric care.

Now available to purchase in paper and digital form, the book was co-ordinated by Dr Glenn Roberts, who previously produced *Strengthened by Storms* in 2023, which brought together stories from people working in mental health services in the county of Devon, as well as *Beyond the Storms*, a 2009 collection of recovery stories.

The aim of Glenn's new publication has been to gather psychiatrists together to share in an open and honest contemplation on how they can learn from difficult life experiences in service of their lifelong journey to maturity, and in service of developing compassionate, relational and person-centred responses to mental distress. It carries the hope of being a creative contribution to cultural change in psychiatric training and practice.

Find out more and order your copy at personally-speaking.com



The seeds of Being Alongside

Being Alongside had its formal origins in a church hall nearly 40 years ago. In an account which you can read in full on our website (at beingalongside.org.uk/history), John Vallat explains how it all began.

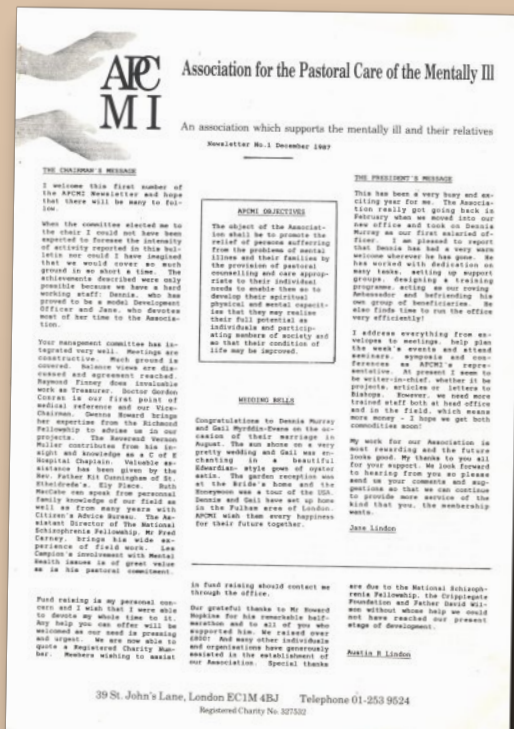
"Jane and Austin Lindon's son, who had schizophrenia, had been a psychiatric in-patient for two years when Jane realised that he had not received a single visit from a priest during that time. That was not surprising in the mid-1980s as it was then felt by many, if not most, mental health professionals that spiritual or religious thoughts were delusional or even a symptom of mental illness and that those matters were best avoided. On the other hand, parish priests and other faith leaders had little experience of people with severe mental health issues and took their lead from the psychiatrists. It was not unusual for the spiritual well-being of seriously ill patients to be ignored. Jane, a Catholic, was appalled. Determined to try to do something about it, she sent a letter to a number of people whom she and her husband, Austin, thought might be interested in helping. She invited them to a meeting at St Giles Church Hall on 2nd October 1986 at which a steering committee was formed."

Bright beginnings

John's historical account continues: "There followed a number of meetings in quick succession. Austin Lindon's proposal to "form an association concerned with the spiritual well-being of the mentally ill and their close relatives" was adopted with the addition of a phrase included in Jane's initial letter "which would involve visiting, befriending and informally counselling the mentally sick". Austin became the Chairman, Jane the Secretary, Dr Gordon Conran the Vice-Chairman, Anthony Grundy the Treasurer, Dennis Murray the Training Officer and Fred Carney the Publicity Officer."

Within a year the new organisation, whose original name was the Association for Pastoral Care of the Mentally Ill, was registered as a charity, and growing quickly. An office was established, funds were raised, and members were recruited. Dennis Murray's role soon changed to that of Development Officer, with the main focus being the establishment and support of groups of interested people in their own local areas.

By December 1989 there were nearly 400 members, seven established branches (including Dulwich, Croydon and Guildford, all of which continued to thrive for many years) and three embryonic branches. By mid-1991 this had grown to 11 branches. Training courses for volunteers had been conducted at branches in Kingston, Croydon, Guildford and Eastbourne. Many other seminars and similar events were held in centres from Aberdeen to Chelmsford and from York to Tower Hamlets with an event in Bexley entitled "Community Care...Our Pastoral Response" attracting more than 90 people. A Carers Helpline had been established in Guildford and had won a £1,000 prize from Scottish Widows. There were well-staffed offices in London and York. But there were testing times ahead and, in the following year, much was to change.



Above, our first newsletter, published in December 1987. You can find a near-complete archive of newsletters and magazines spanning four decades at beingalongside.org.uk/magazine

40TH ANNIVERSARY

Testing times

Amid all this rapid growth, and despite the confidence and faith with which the work had been taken forward, there were concerns. The management committee was responsible for everything, including the local branches over which there was little “head office” control, added to which the association was not incorporated, meaning that committee members were potentially personally liable for any debts which might arise—as arise they did. Core funding was inadequate. Financial viability depended on sufficient ongoing fundraising. But with 2.5 paid workers and two offices, the annual budget had increased to such an extent that at the June 1991 committee meeting it was forecast that it would be necessary to raise £84,000 for the next year alone—about £200,000 at 2026 value. The writing was on the wall. By the autumn, development worker Dennis Murray was given his notice. Within a year, the association had lost the services of its founder, its main fundraisers, its staff and its offices. These were, indeed, testing times.

Nick Cotton became the chairman, and Brother Adrian Tate (*memorialised in Being Alongside, Winter 2022/23, p10*) took over as treasurer and administrator, steadying the ship until funds could be raised to pay off the association’s debts, which was achieved thanks to individual generosity.

But it was also necessary to re-define the association’s aims and objectives with a less ambitious approach to development and growth. Brother Adrian prepared a draft report with the conclusion that the association’s role was firstly to sowing seeds that others cultivated and, secondly, to nurse embryonic branches. “Without being expressly adopted, this role has more or less continued up to the present time,” as John Vallat observes in his history, drafted in 2016.

Re-setting the sights

A new committee was formed in 1993 under the chairmanship of Jeremy Boutwood, with Pam Freeman as secretary and Neil MacKenzie treasurer. All three had all been involved in their local branches for some time but they had little experience of the association at national level. They faced an immense challenge just to keep it going. But the mere existence of the national association was seen to be important to the existing branches. If it ceased to exist, the branches would also be dissolved and would need to start again as individual charities. There was also a role in networking and awareness-raising.

And so the course of the coming decades was set. All efforts would be made to maintain the existence of the association, but in a scaled-down form. New groups were increasingly encouraged to become independent charities and to be “affiliated” rather than branches of the association; Hastings, Tower Hamlets, Forest, Brentwood and Chelmsford all became independent. The number of branches reduced from 13 in 1995 to only five by 2001.

The new emphasis of networking played to Jeremy’s strengths. He was skilful at bringing like-minded people together, valuing each person’s contribution, listening to their ideas and, where appropriate, encouraging them to put their ideas into practice. He was a natural networker and encourager.

Small, but important

The Boutwood era association arranged many conferences and seminars. A course in 1998 entitled “God be in my Head” attracted a total of 480 attendances. Numerous other awareness-raising days were held to stimulate local interest. This became a major part of APCMH’s role. Publicity material was also produced, advising how to set up drop-ins, befriending schemes and awareness-raising. These “action sheets” are still available in updated form on our website.

Another lasting legacy of that period is the part we played in the establishment of the Spirituality and Mental Health Forum, which continues as a community of spiritual leaders, scholars, mental health practitioners and service users, with representatives from the nation’s nine main faiths.

Through the years which have followed, this “small but important charity”, as our outgoing administrator Revd Lucy Roose (see p27) describes us—has continued to pursue and periodically reaffirm its long-established and essential goal, set decades ago, of *sowing seeds*. Some are sown in the form of material support; most in the currency of ideas, encouragement and presence.

In the meantime many new organisations and initiatives with a similar focus have come into being, some of which we have profiled over the past few years in this publication. We rejoice in their emergence and see it as a blessing. But there is still something special about Being Alongside. And so, as we gather together to celebrate our anniversary on 18th September at Southwark Cathedral, and in our individual prayers and meditations, let us recall these words written by Jeremy Boutwood in 2002, a few weeks before he died:

“All these names and activities might seem to imply that APCMH is no longer special. But, on the contrary, what we do in being alongside people is a sign that, at the end of the day, our vision—that faith communities should be places where people belong, where needs are recognised and met, and where people are encouraged to come together and to challenge, enlighten and enrich the community—is a real statement that the Presence of God is here.”



Light in open spaces

Supporters gathered in the May of this, our 40th anniversary year, for an especially reflective annual conference in the Bethlem Museum of the Mind

Visual expressions, interpretations and testimonies of mental health, of its treatment and of recovery are central to the displays of Bethlem Museum of the Mind. This made it an especially appropriate place for supporters of Being Alongside to gather, on 15th May, to hear two practitioners of the visual arts explore how our perception and experience of light—even light's absence—in open spaces can tend to the soul and help us feel held.

First to speak was Revd Stephen Radley, who told us how happy he had been when he received our invitation to talk on the theme of light in open spaces. He began by describing his own journey of learning to notice light—not only in landscapes, colour and softened shadows, but also “the light that returns slowly after seasons of darkness”. Photography had helped him to pay attention to this

Steve Radley
spoke
meditatively
about how
photography
can help us
notice the
light within
ourselves



light. It slowed him down, offered a language for feelings that were difficult to articulate, and shaped the way he listened to people in ministry, chaplaincy and mental health settings.

His early life on a farm had introduced him to “early mornings, open fields, long horizons” and the need to observe the changing weather, seasons and landscape. He wondered whether this had been the beginning of his contemplative life. Later, at Lee Abbey in Devon, he encountered a spirituality rooted in silence, prayer, creativity and community. There he learned that God could be found not only in words, but also “in breath and stillness and beauty”.

Photography had entered his life through his father and the experience of working in a darkroom. The red glow, the quiet and the slow emergence of an image had taught him that some things revealed themselves gradually, and that clarity took time. “Photography becomes a natural language because it mirrors how my soul works,” he said. It slowed his breathing and gave form to experiences he could not always explain. This way of seeing had also influenced his ministry. “I don’t come with answers,” he said. “But I try to come with presence, with attention, and a willingness to sit in the shadows with someone until their eyes adjust and they can see the light again.”

Steve spoke candidly about periods when his own sense of identity had been shaken. During his RAF service, after a bereavement, he experienced depression. He had believed that mental illness affected other people, and initially interpreted his depression as a personal failure—as a chaplain, husband, father and man. The culture of “man up”, he acknowledged, had not helped, although the support of an outstanding psychiatrist had. His subsequent experiences in the Gulf and Afghanistan, including weekly attacks, poverty, suffering and death, had left their mark. Flashbacks, anxiety and burnout followed. When his marriage later ended, he again experienced a profound sense of failure. The loss was not simply an ending, he said, but “a deep rupture in the story I thought I was living”. It made him question his identity, vocation and work.

These experiences had shaped his understanding of shadow.

Drawing on Carl Jung, he explained that the shadow was not necessarily evil, but the part of ourselves that had not yet been brought into the light. It could contain suppressed emotions, unprocessed memories and wounds, but also strengths that had not yet been claimed. “The shadow is not the enemy,” he said. “It’s the doorway to the self.”

Photography offered a practical illustration. Hard light created sharp, defined shadows, while soft or diffused light reduced their harshness and revealed greater nuance. Steve connected this with the story of Peter, whose confident promise of loyalty to Jesus collapsed when he denied him three times. Peter’s failure shattered his understanding of himself, and he returned to fishing—the familiar place where he might avoid his shame.

It was there, on an ordinary beach in the early morning, that Jesus met him. He did not condemn Peter or offer a lecture. Instead, he offered breakfast, warmth and gentleness, before asking, “Do you love me?” Peter’s shadow was not erased,

***“The
culture of
'man up'
had not
helped”***

CONFERENCE



Attendees deep in thought...

Conference photos courtesy of Ron Timehin

Steve said; it was transformed. His failure became the place of his calling, and his shame became a doorway to vocation. This was the quality of light that healed rather than humiliated, restored rather than condemned.

The direction of light provided further images for companionship. Front light could flatten a subject and expose every flaw without depth or compassion. Side light revealed texture and contour, much as a

charity such as Being Alongside could offer “the gentle side light of companionship”—walking with people without judging or trying to fix them. Back light could make a person appear only as a silhouette, obscuring their sense of worth. Compassion, Steve suggested, reflected the light behind someone back towards them, helping them to see themselves again.

“Sometimes we need someone else to reflect God’s love towards us,” he said. “A friend, a community, a charity, a chaplain.” The task was to hold the light steady until another person could hold it for themselves.

For Steve, photography is more than a technical skill or pastime. It is a form of prayer, “a modern form of visio divina”, or praying with the eyes. It cultivates attention, gratitude, humility and openness. A photographer cannot command a bird to land, or manufacture a sunset; the practice requires surrender and a willingness to receive what the moment offered. “Faith begins with paying attention,” he said, quoting Walter Brueggemann. “Photography is the practice of attention, and attention is the beginning of prayer.”

Steve also considered the connection between light, colour and the body. Mindfulness encouraged people to notice their emotions rather than resist them, while contemplative practice and compassion helped them remain present to what they felt. Drawing on the model of three emotional regulation systems, he described the threat system, which kept people alert to danger; the drive system, which encouraged achievement; and the soothing system, associated with safety, connection and belonging.

Many people, he suggested, spent too much time in threat or drive and too little in soothing. Open spaces, art, music, meditation and time outdoors could help calm the body and soften the breath. In this sense, Jesus’ gentle encounter with Peter represented “the soothing system in theological form”.

Steve invited the conference to notice the light in the room, observing where it fell and where it softened. This simple exercise of attention, he suggested, was prayer: a way of seeing “with the eyes of the heart”. Healing, he concluded, involved learning to see ourselves and one another in a gentler, kinder and more spacious light.

Our second speaker, Sara “Siggy” Parratt-Halbert, a cartoonist, graphic recorder, Methodist trainer and facilitator, began by recounting her childhood in a rural area, where the world outside her door had been her playground. She believed that many people since her generation had been “short-changed”, losing a relationship with the planet, with God’s creation and with their own inner selves.

She spoke personally about the circumstances that had led her to understand afresh the importance of being alone in nature and open space. Her partner, John, had been diagnosed with tongue cancer, following the deaths of her mother, father and mother-in-law. The cancer treatment had been severe and life-changing. John had undergone a 14-hour operation, followed by radiotherapy and continuing health problems. For two years, Siggy had managed his affairs while working full-time and fighting for medication, care and support. Eventually, exhausted by the accumulated strain, she experienced a breakdown and took several months away from work.

During the most difficult period, she found that darkness became a source of light. Daytime was full of demands, appointments and responsibilities, while the night offered a rare sense of safety. An open-water swimmer, she began swimming before dawn, sometimes in a reservoir and sometimes in an urban boating lake. In the darkness, she could breathe. The black water felt like “a caress” against her skin, while the moon, stars and pre-dawn silence gave her solitude and refuge.

“Here I was in a cloak of darkness where nothing bad happened because it was dark,” she recalled. Sitting in her garden at three in the morning had offered a similar experience. The sounds of badgers, foxes and rippling water created a distinctive silence in which she felt at one with the created world.

Drawing on John O’Donohue, she described the night as “the ancient womb”, a time when the world rested and everything was released from its fixed shape. In darkness, she felt able to set aside other people’s expectations and simply become herself. It was also a place where creativity and spiritual awareness could emerge.

Siggy reflected on silence, music and resonance, drawing on Martin Israel, the ancient idea of the harmony of the spheres and the writings of the Camaldolese Benedictine monk Fr. Bruno Barnhart. She described the spaces between sounds and words as places where she experienced the most profound spiritual conversation. “The dark is acting like a sieve,” she said, “catching the unnecessary in the weave, letting through only the profound.”



Siggy Parratt-Halbert finds solace in the dark, the dawn and the water

CONFERENCE

A photograph of Colin Gale, the museum's dynamic director, speaking at a conference. He is a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a brown jacket over a dark patterned shirt and an orange lanyard. He is gesturing with his right hand raised, palm facing forward. He is standing in a room with several framed artworks on the wall behind him. The foreground is slightly blurred, showing the backs of several audience members' heads.

The museum's dynamic director Colin Gale conducting a tour for attendees of the Being Alongside conference

Nature, Siddy argued, was not merely a backdrop to spiritual life. It was the place where inner and outer realities met. At dawn, she experienced the light on water, birds moving through mist and the changing colours of sky as a kind of divine dance. Creativity, wellbeing and faith became interwoven. "This is why I hunger for the dark, for the outdoors," she said. "It is the air I breathe. The music that feeds. The vision that anoints."

She then widened her focus to consider the loss of connection between people and the natural world. Her research into young people's relationship with the outdoors had shown that many children were not in fact choosing screens instead of nature; they were being kept indoors because adults believed the outside world was unsafe or because they feared dirt. As a result, many had never had the chance to develop an affection for trees, animals, insects or local wild places.

This disconnection mattered for mental health, she suggested, and also reflected a theological failure. The church had too often interpreted humanity's relationship with the earth in terms of domination rather than care. Siddy offered an alternative reading of Genesis, emphasising humanity's responsibility to serve, preserve and learn from the earth, which she described as God's dwelling-place.

She encouraged people to begin with what was near and tangible: the night sky, swans in the mist, hawthorn and cow parsley, or the hedgehog trying to make their way past obstacles into a garden. People were more likely to care for what they loved, and more likely to love what they had encountered directly. "Love the earth," she said. "She will love you back."

In her closing reflections, Siddy connected the refuge she had found in darkness with the safe spaces needed by people whose minds were fragile. Drawing on the idea of "refugia"—places where living things found safety during upheaval—she described nature as a refuge for both human and more-than-human life.

"There is a refugia for everyone," she said. "You need to find it and connect to it." Her final invitation was simple and spacious: "Outside, in the world God created and asked us to care for, there is a space shaped like you. Go and look for it. Sit down in it. And breathe."

Bethlem Museum of the Mind

Co-located with the Bethlem Royal Hospital in Beckenham, Kent, Bethlem Museum of the Mind cares for an internationally renowned collection of archives, art and historic objects, offering an unparalleled resource to support the history of mental healthcare and treatment.



Bethlem Museum of the Mind, housed in the hospital's former main building. Photo by SLaMNHSFT (CC-BY-SA licence)

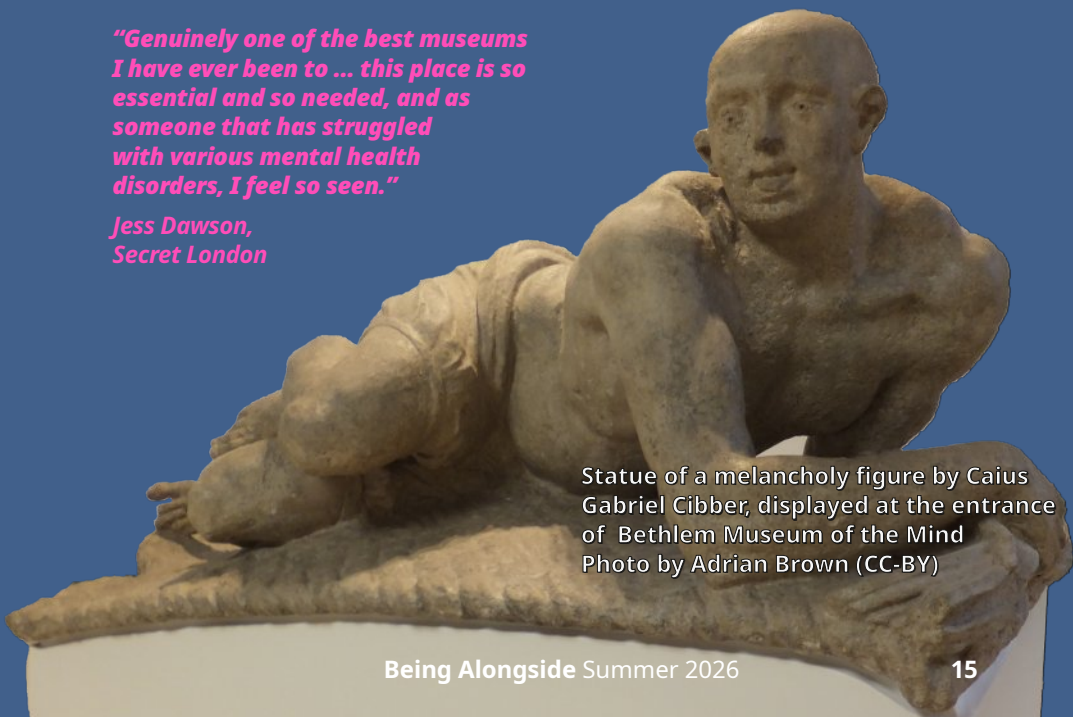
Displays include work by artists who have suffered from mental health problems, such as former patients William Kurelek, Richard Dadd and Louis Wain. Another work is a pair of statues by Caius Gabriel Cibber known as Raving and Melancholy Madness, from the gates of the 17th century Bethlem Hospital. Other displays illustrate the history of mental healthcare.

The museum cares for extensive archives from Bethlem Hospital, Maudsley Hospital and Warlingham Park Hospital, and some of the archives of Bridewell Hospital. There are documents dating back to the 16th century.

The museum is open to the public Wednesday to Saturday. For full information, as well as free guides and a 360-degree virtual tour, go to museumofthemind.org.uk

"Genuinely one of the best museums I have ever been to ... this place is so essential and so needed, and as someone that has struggled with various mental health disorders, I feel so seen."

***Jess Dawson,
Secret London***



Statue of a melancholy figure by Caius Gabriel Cibber, displayed at the entrance of Bethlem Museum of the Mind
Photo by Adrian Brown (CC-BY)





Works by Karen Fielding

Abstract Psychosis (*previous two pages*) depicts the experience of psychosis through fragmented images of eyes, voices, and whispered hallucinations. It explores feelings of being watched, intrusive thoughts, paranoia, and altered perception. At its centre, an abstract eye reflects depression, inner turmoil, and emotional fragmentation. Metal nuts and bolts symbolise the rigidity and stiffness associated with older psychiatric medications. Together, these elements express the fractured realities and challenges of living with severe mental illness.

The Figure in Red (*opposite*) depicts the experience of depression. The figure, clothed in red, appears trapped within a web of thoughts, emotions, and anger, unable to find a way out. It conveys feelings of frustration, helplessness, and despair. Electrical circuits and firing signals symbolise a mind overwhelmed by conflicting messages and emotional turmoil.

Both artworks were created during a period of hospitalisation, reflecting the artist's personal experience of mental distress.

Art at The LINK, Croydon

DESPITE ROCKY TIMES financially over the past few years, Croydon APCMH—now operating the new snappy working title of 'The LINK'—continues to offer a programme of groups and activities that provide people with an opportunity to meet others and express themselves creatively in a safe and supportive space, based at the St Mildred's centre.

Activities include the spirituality group, the Wander into Wellness walking group, and the weekly therapeutic art group, of which Karen Fielding is a member.

The art group meets every Friday afternoon, facilitated by a trained art therapist who encourages participants to explore their thoughts and ideas through creative art projects

More information at apcmhcroydon.co.uk



GROWTH

The beauty of Bridewell



Jamie Summers experiences the peace of Bridewell Gardens in Oxfordshire, where the invitation to work with one's hands, growing and nurturing plants, is helping people rebuild their lives in a safe and supportive environment.

In 1796, nearly 200 years before Bridewell Gardens was founded, the Quaker philanthropist William Tuke founded the York Retreat in 11 acres of land at Lamel Hill outside York. This was the first establishment in England where mental illness was regarded as something from which a person could recover, and where patients were treated with sympathy, respect and dignity.

Paramount in his ethos was the introduction of walks, animal husbandry and farm labouring (including horticulture) in pleasant rural surroundings with personal attention and benevolence restoring people's self-esteem and even self-control. This form of occupational therapy was pioneering at the time, replacing the traditional manacles and chains of cruel earlier treatment. Tuke believed that closeness to nature and open space would be therapeutic.

Tuke had been aggrieved to learn of the appalling treatments administered to King George III for his illness; cupping, bleeding and so forth but was particularly horrified to see a naked female patient chained to a wall at St Luke's Hospital in London. This was towards the end of the Age of Enlightenment when his friend, the Yorkshire M.P. William Wilberforce, was working to abolish the manacles and chains tethering those sardined on slave trade ships. In France, Philippe Pinel and Michel Foucault, were adopting similar 'moral treatments' for the humane care of those with mental illness.

Fast forward two centuries and are we any nearer a panacea for the care of the mentally broken? The long stay hospitals have morphed into 'community care' but there is still a reliance on the medical model approach of medication. However, the benefits of occupational therapy and talking treatments, in particular cognitive behavioural therapy, are now universally acknowledged. The gardens at Bridewell epitomise Tukes' thinking, where working with one's hands, growing and nurturing plants can help people rebuild their lives in a safe and supportive environment.



GROWTH

Bridewell Gardens comprise a site of eight acres leased on a long-term basis by the Cecil family of nearby Wilcote House to Bridgewell Organic Gardens, a charity which recently celebrated 30 years of delivering a recovery service here, based on therapeutic horticulture. The project began in a 1.5-acre walled garden which was built in the 1880s. An additional five acres of farmland on the southern side was leased in the year 2000 to create an organic vineyard, and a 1.5-acre woodland area was added to the lease in 2025.

The gardens feature a cottage garden with a fishpond, an avenue of roses and apple trees, a knot garden, a herb wheel, a fruit cage, a French-style kitchen garden, raised beds for vegetables and flowers and a new woodland area currently being developed. Additionally there is a large greenhouse, as well as workshops for a metal smithy, woodwork and rural crafts such as willow weaving. Activities include poultry and bee keeping.

Bridewell provides a welcoming environment for people who are recovering from and living with some form of serious mental illness. Being involved with

the garden in a social context can help the recovery process for those with both short and long-term mental health issues. People are typically involved at the gardens for between six months and two years, and leave Bridewell when they feel ready, with most having a paid or voluntary role to go to.

The charity that runs Bridewell Gardens create a work-like space where people can take on new challenges and get a sense of achievement when they complete a task or learn a new skill.

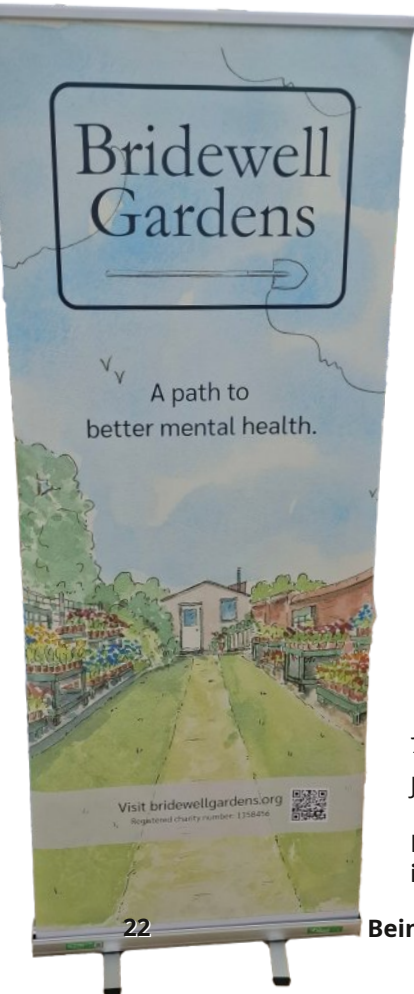
Witness, on the ensuing pages, some of the testimonies from the participating gardeners. (NB the term 'gardeners' and not the somewhat pejorative term 'service users').

Referrals come from Adult Mental Health Teams and services, GPs and other medical professionals. A regular minibus comes from neighbouring towns five days a week. Valuable input comes from the board of Trustees and a team of some 40 volunteers and nine part-time paid workers.

Long may Bridewell's excellent example of mental health support flourish and serve as a template for similar projects up and down the country.

My wife and I had the pleasure of visiting on the June open day. We would recommend a visit to see for yourselves. Open days are typically held in May, June, July and September.

Find out more at Bridewell Gardens' extremely informative website: bridewellgardens.org



“At Bridewell they are doing therapy without you realising it. Everyone here is a nice, good person. Oh – so that means I am too! Yes!”

“My first impression was of a safe, calm place – there was something magical about it. I was doing something for me for the first time.”

GROWTH

“The space allows me to feel, not be. Being outside really helps too.”

“Bridewell has been a massive part in my journey to recovery giving me the confidence to carry on.”

“The people here show kindness, clearness, structure, choice. This is a reality I can grow in. You grow just like the plants.”

ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE.

Roors and leaves themselves alone are these,
 Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and
 pond-side,
 Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around tighter
 than vines,
 Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as the
 sun is risen,
 Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the living
 sea, to you O sailors !
 Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh to
 young persons wandering out in the fields when the winter
 breaks up,
 Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,
 Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,
 If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and
 bring form, color, perfume, to you,
 If you become the aliment and the wet they will become flowers,
 fruits, tall branches and trees.


Walt Whitman

Reproduced from a
 1905 edition of
Leaves of Grass

Thank you, Lucy!

On behalf of a grateful Being Alongside family Ben Wilson bids *au revoir* to Revd Lucy Roose

Lucy joined Being Alongside as Administrator in 2021, five years ago. In that time we have been busy. We changed legal status, moving from being a company limited by guarantee to being a charitable incorporated organisation. We restarted our annual conferences after the Covid years. We launched a grant scheme to help support local projects get off the ground. We updated various resources and publicity materials. And much more.

All of this would quite simply not have been possible without Lucy, who has been incredibly supportive of the trustees in all our endeavours. When Lucy arrived she had just completed her ordination training and for much of her time with us she combined her work for BA with a part-time curacy in two villages in Hampshire. It's been a great joy to see Lucy's ministry develop alongside her work with us, and to see her pastoral skills now being put to valuable use in her chaplaincy role at Frimley Park Hospital.

But the Church's gain has to some extent been our loss, as the pressures on Lucy's time have become too much, so it's with sadness that we bid Lucy farewell. When she began her role with us she wrote in our magazine that some of her life experiences had given her a passion for securing parity of esteem between mental and

physical health issues; that it is 'okay not to be okay'; and that kindness, love and compassion towards one another is more important than anything.

I can't think of a more succinct way of describing the ethos of this organisation and we have been very lucky to have an administrator who shares our values and vision, but who also lives that out in how she treats others.

Lucy has been a friendly, thoughtful ambassador for this charity throughout her time with us and not only has she ensured all our administration runs smoothly, she has contributed well beyond that through her interactions with a great many of us.

While I'm sure Lucy won't miss the last minute sandwich runs to a local shop when more people turn up events than we expect; or the task of minuting some of our trustees' more 'expansive' discussions; or helping implement some of our more leftfield ideas, she should know that we will miss her very much.

So on behalf of all of the trustees, I wish Lucy all the very best for her future ministry and whatever else life holds for her. Thank you Lucy!



Lucy with Ben (right) and chair Clive

Lucy responds...

I write to say farewell as I move on from my work as Administrator of Being Alongside after five years. I will have met some of you at our conferences and hope to be back to meet others at the Evensong at Southwark Cathedral in September, an event which will honour an amazing 40 years of the work of this small but important charity.

I have enjoyed my work with the Trustees and with all of you greatly. We have managed to move the charity banking and governance procedures into the 21st century (which is no mean feat in itself!), I have enjoyed collaborating with Trustees to develop a programme of annual conferences, as well as ensuring these Summer magazines and our winter newsletters keep you updated with our work and more widely informed about all “matters mental health”. I hope I have managed to keep the administrative side ticking along well enough that you don’t really know what it is that I have been doing!

It has been a great privilege to be part of seeking new ways to serve and help those who are living with challenges to their mental health. When I started out with the charity, I was studying and approaching ordination in the Church of England and looking for a small role to fit alongside that. Since then I have completed a three-year curacy and am working as an Associate Minister in my busy “curacy” churches in Hampshire but am also in my second year as a Hospital Chaplain in an acute hospital, now there four days a week. When I add in the “on call” nights and weekends and a family at home, I have reached the point where there are no longer enough hours in the day (or possibly days in the week) and – to ensure my own wellbeing – I am having to reassess my priorities.



PEOPLE

So I will be leaving the charity to focus on my ministry, but will continue to champion its cause both in my own churches and of course in my work with all those I meet in hospital. From that work I can be sure there is a huge need for charities such as Being Alongside. We all know the battering the nation's wellbeing has taken in the last few years, and we all know how stretched resources are within the healthcare system. Anything we can do collectively or as individuals to help is so valuable. Only a few days ago a lady I was supporting in the hospital said to me: "Sometimes it is simply kindness that makes the difference. A kind word, a friendly smile, knowing that someone who cares will come alongside me".

I will continue to trade on that in my ministry and offer it to you as the least we can all do for one another. For as Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:40 "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me". We perhaps can't change the world but we can all make a difference. And if you prefer your inspiration from a non-Christian source, I offer you, below, one of my favourite stories about the boy and the starfish. And I wish you all the best for the future.

Rev Lucy

The Boy and the starfish

(based on a story by Loren Eiseley)

One day a man was walking along the beach, when he noticed a boy hurriedly picking up and gently throwing things into the ocean.

Approaching the boy, he asked: "Young man, what are you doing?"

The boy replied: "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die."

The man laughed to himself and said: "Don't you realise there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make any difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it into the surf. Then smiling at the man, he said: "I made a difference to that one."



Photo by Theo
Crazzolaro (CC-BY)

The Cellar Camino Café

A place of welcome, hope and community in Godalming for an amazing 47 years

The Cellar Camino Café, at the heart of Godalming in Surrey, is much more than a place to enjoy a cup of coffee or a hot meal. It offers welcome, practical help and companionship to people from every walk of life.

The café's story began in 1979, when the Warehouse Christian Trust was established by local Christians who wanted to create a place where people could meet, talk and feel accepted. The original vision was described as a "pub with no beer": a friendly, safe environment where people could simply be themselves.

More than four decades later, that vision continues at the Cellar Camino Café, which we are proud to say is now an affiliate of Being Alongside.

All are welcome, but the café has a particular concern for people who may be struggling with loneliness, mental illness, emotional distress or financial hardship. For some, coming through the door may be an important first step out of isolation. A friendly conversation, a listening ear and the knowledge that someone cares can make a significant difference. Trained staff and volunteers provide encouragement, informal support and practical advice. The café is connected with local organisations, churches, health services and community support networks, helping people find further assistance when they need it.

At a time when household budgets are under pressure, the Cellar offers good-quality, reasonably priced food and drink. A simple meal and emergency supplies of basic food can also be provided for people in real need. Homemade soups, scones and other straightforward meals help make the café a welcoming option for anyone watching their spending.

The present economic climate has continued to increase the number of people requiring this type of charitable local care and service. At a time of ever-increasing running costs, the Cellar's team is focussed on sustaining existing levels of support to the vulnerable people in the community and reaching out to new 'customers' who may need support. In an affluent locality, those who are socially marginalised can otherwise be ignored. They do not have to face life alone.



Refreshment for all at the Cellar Camino Café

Find out more about the project and donate at thecellarcafe.co.uk

Supreme Mental Health Involves a Spiritual Dimension

After formal baptism as an infant, *writes our patron Larry Culliford*, raised in a family adrift of religion, I was blessed in childhood to come under the influence of four devout Christian women. My Godmother, Emmy, offered sustained support and guidance. A neighbour, whose last name was in fact 'Christian', took me under her wing and taught me to read before I had even entered nursery school. Miss Laura Sparshott, my class teacher at the age of seven, taught us the hymn - Firmly I believe and truly, God is three and God is one, and I next acknowledge duly, manhood taken by the Son - and bid us sing it every day. Finally, for four years at boarding school, our scripture teacher, Elizabeth Waddy, took her class through the bible, making the Old and New Testament stories come alive. Clearly in love with Jesus, Miss Waddy had no difficulty in making us love him too.

Like many people raised in the Anglican faith, I stopped going to church in my teens, after leaving school and starting my medical studies at Cambridge. However, I resumed attending services in my thirties, and continue worshipping regularly to this day. In my twenties, in Australia, as a doctor training to become a psychiatrist, I was struck by the apparent absence anywhere of a comprehensive overview of good mental health; but knew intuitively that this was more than a lack of symptoms. In attempting over the ensuing years to develop a better understanding of the issue, I delved further into the wisdom of several world faiths, and became convinced early on of the need to include a spiritual dimension in my overview; if only because, from the psychological perspective, spirituality is important in giving a person's life meaning and a sense of purpose.

As a Christian psychiatrist, living in a predominantly secular, materialist society, alongside colleagues and working with patients from all the world's different religions, or with no religion at all, it has been necessary to be circumspect; and it helped to develop a neutral kind of language, one of universal spirituality without direct religious connotations. It also helped to differentiate the other dimensions of human understanding and experience that make up the whole, so I adopted a scheme consisting of five in total:

- Physical (energy and matter) – the miracle of existence
- Biological (organs and organisms) – the miracle of life
- Psychological (mental activity) – the miracle of consciousness
- Social (relationships) – the miracle of love
- Spiritual (souls and the sacred) – the miracle of unity

These are distinguishable but not separate, being seamlessly interlinked, overlapping and flowing into one-another, with the spiritual dimension pre-eminent as an originating principle, creating, linking and shaping the other four. Supreme mental health cannot therefore be separated from physical, social and spiritual health.

Another strand of my scheme evolved from James Fowler's work on faith development throughout life. The crunch point for many revolves around this dilemma: whether to be guided in one's thoughts and behaviour either by a strong desire to conform and retain a sense of belonging, or by the need to feel independent and make up one's own mind about things, including about religion and spirituality. Some would say that organised religions tend to promote conformity, and could do more to promote independent personal spiritual development.

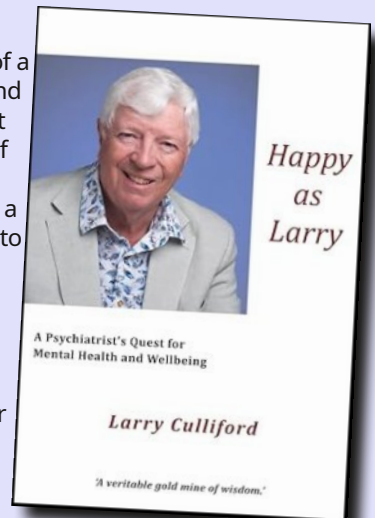
Beset by curiosity, I was and remain in the latter camp. In one sense, supreme mental health can be thought of as the goal of spiritual growth, characterised by emotional stability and resilience, by joy, compassion and wisdom. As a result, spiritually mature individuals are guided at all times by virtues like kindness, honesty, tolerance, gratitude, forgiveness, humility, courage and hope.

To expand on this, let me share a personal experience. My grandfather was cheerful in the hospital when I visited, looking surprisingly well after treatment for a chest infection. As I was leaving, intending to visit the next day, he smiled broadly, held up the four fingers of his right hand, and said, "See you in four years!" Grandad died peacefully two hours later. What did he mean? Had I only four more years to live? I was only twenty-six at the time.

As the four year mark approached, increasingly deeply concerned about love, life and death, I had a powerful dream. Reflecting on it the following morning led to a breakthrough in which I felt overwhelmed by love - the unconditional love of a grandparent, his essence lodged blissfully forever in my heart.

Yet, I sensed something more. This was God's love flooding my consciousness, bringing not only utter joy and serenity, but also the incontrovertible awareness of a seamless connection to everyone else; past, present and to come, despite any and all apparent differences. I felt equally connected to all living creatures, to the fabric of the planet and the entire universe. For days, I was in a state of grace, fully attuned to the wisdom afforded by a profound epiphany that all was sacred, inviolable, and to the logic that bringing harm to anyone or anything, even intending such harm, inevitably has destructive consequences for the perpetrator. Likewise, intending and doing good, helping others and caring for the natural world, loving God and all creation, these bring benefits aplenty. As Saint Paul says, "We reap whatever we sow".

After this dream-induced experience, all fear of death left me, and I was much better orientated to living in the moment. The Holy Spirit had, I would say, set me free.



Events and ideas described here can be found in more detail in Larry's autobiography, *Happy as Larry: A Psychiatrist's Quest for Mental Health and Wellbeing* (New Generation Publishing, 2025).



Please save the date for
OUR NEXT CONFERENCE

Saturday 22nd May 2027
at All Saints Church, Battersea

