



The Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains
Newsletter
 Spring 2008 No2

A word from the Editor

The Revd Anton Muller MA



Welcome to this second issue of the AHPCC Newsletter – if you didn't get the first one which included a report on our conference in 2007 you can view and download from the Website www.ahpcc.org.uk

The plans are well on the way for the conference in 2008 check out the details on P3. Please note that you will be able to apply for a grant from Help The Hospices towards the cost of attending.

Thank you for the reflection on life and death from Lance (p4 – a dove's perspective) and in a new section I have included some recent media articles. Please let me have any copies of your involvement with the press which I might be able to include here or post on our website.

The article in The Times came about largely as the result of a piece of work which freelance writer and journalist, Michele Hart, was doing for Help the Hospices. I have also included here my own involvement with an animal project and would be interested to know of any similar programmes linked to palliative care facilities. Donations welcome!!!!

I would also welcome any stories or experiences that you have that you feel would be of help to the wider community of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains and I would be more than happy to include contributions in a newsletter or to post on our website.

A number of requests come into us regarding advice on spiritual care assessment. If you have a system which works please do send it in. You can contact me by emailing:

editor@ahpcc.org.uk

Contents	
A word from the President	2
"Here's Hoping" AHPCC Conference 2008	3
Doves - <i>A Sign of Hope</i> by Lance Blake TSSF	4
Taking the Pain out of Dying Ruth Gledhill, "The Times"	5
Dealing with Death Michele Hart HtH	6
Penny Jones Animal Hospice - a new dimension to patient care	7
A Word from the Secretary	8
New kid on the block?!	8





A word from the President

The Revd Tom Gordon
Marie Curie Hospice Edinburgh



Dear colleagues

“Here’s hoping…” (our conference working title) was on my mind when I was asked to see a patient in the hospice this week. I’d never met her before, so I was ‘hoping’ it would be OK.

But what kind of image of a chaplain would be in this person’s mind before I arrived? What stereotypes would I have to struggle to dispel? Was there an expectation that I would be like an American TV evangelist, brash, loud, judgemental, looking for a deathbed conversion? Was I going to be the archetypal boring vicar, so full of holiness that religion is the only subject of conversation, and pretty depressingly too? Or was I going to be a hospice equivalent of a Derek Nimmo in “All gas and gaiters” or a Dougall in “Father Ted”, a bumbling ass, an amateur, good fun but really a waste of space? “Here’s hoping…” I thought, and I wondered how it would go.

‘Hello, I’m Tom, and I’m the chaplain here… and apart from that I’m quite a nice chap…’ (Humour was always a good ice-breaker!) And it turned out to be fine, and a conversation ensued about end-of-life issues and family relationships. But “Here’s hoping…” is often about breaking stereotypes and finding ways of getting alongside people with real needs.

Of course, it doesn’t always work, and the prejudices that abound continue to create barriers that are too strong to break down in a short-time frame. But chaplaincy is about being yourself, with integrity and confidence, so that “Here’s hoping…” is not just a vague chance that something might work, but a positive expectation that hopes will be fulfilled.

There is no need for us as hospice and palliative care chaplains to be diffident, approaching our role like shrinking violets. “Loitering with intent”, a phrase that was around when I began in hospice chaplaincy 14 years ago, should no longer be our mantra. Instead it should be something like “Be bold! Be confident! Believe in yourself and in your role!” “Here’s hoping…” should not be tentative and woolly. It is professional, committed and, if approached in the right way, bears much fruit.

I’ve enjoyed my first nine months as President of the AHPCC. And it’s confirmed all of the above over and over again. In consultations and conferences, in teaching and training, with our executive and extended networking, with competencies and capabilities, we are seen as being thoroughly professional, as an organisation and as individual chaplains. It is my hope that the AHPCC can continue to enhance this for all of our members, and for the hospitals, hospices and palliative care settings in which we find ourselves, in full-time, part-time or in voluntary capacities.

So it’s “Here’s hoping…” for our conference, for the AHPCC’s future and for your chaplaincy, with the expectation that we can continue to move forward with confidence and with integrity, and that our hopes will, indeed, be fulfilled.

Best wishes

Tom Gordon
President AHPCC
president@ahpcc.org

Death is not the extinguishing of the light. But the blowing out of the candle because the dawn has come. (Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1941, 80 years old)





Jacki Thomas lay chaplain with Thames Hospice Care is our conference organiser this year. This is what is being cooked up for us this year:

For info Email: conference@ahpcc.org.uk

Here's hoping...
*an exploration of the place of hope in
 palliative care*

May 19th-21st

At The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

Speakers: Sister Frances Dominica of Helen House, Oxford
 Jackie Chaplin, who has experience of Hope Clinic research
 Claire Henry, Chair of the Committee for End of Life Strategy

Here is the proposed structure of the Conference –
here's hoping you like what you see!



Sr Francis

Day 1 *'Hope is...'*

Exploring the nurturing of ourselves and our own hope, and hope early in life.

Day 2 Morning: *'How hope changes...'*

Exploring hope in adults, particularly those with life-limiting diagnosis followed by 'workshops'

Day 2 Afternoon: *'Hope at the end of Life'*

Day 3 Morning: *Over to you:* workshops, a plenary session and a final act of worship will bring an end to our 2008 conference

Here's hoping...

Delegates are invited to arrive between 2pm and 3pm. Tea will be at 3.45pm and the program proper starts at 4pm with a Welcome and Meet & Greet. The first session, will begin with the focus on ourselves and be introduced by members of the Executive who will then introduce our first speaker, Sister Frances.



Claire Henry

Workshops are run by our speakers and by ourselves. Sister Frances will run a workshop focusing on hope and the palliative care of children and young people. Jackie Chaplin will also run a workshop. Note has been taken of the feedback from last year's conference – and we do hope to offer the workshop on audit once more.

Prayer and worship times will be part of the program and in response to last year's feedback you will be invited to sing!

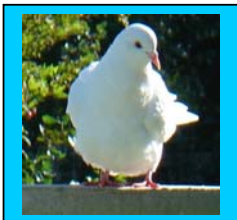




Doves – a Sign of Hope

By Lance Blake MA TSSF Hospice Chaplain – The Rowans, Portsmouth

I used to keep Birmingham Roller. They are roughy-toughy pigeons that like to fly high and then do acrobatics that outshine anything you'll ever see at Goodwood - a dizzy display of backward somersaults that just leaves you breathless. Why do they do it? Well, I think they just have a zest for life. But now, my dovecote is haven for a few white garden fantails, cooing, looking pretty and at first glance a picture of perfect peace. If there is one thing which chaplaincy has taught me it is that for the true picture of anything to be revealed you must look deeper and stay with the moment longer. The dovecote is no exception.



Peaceful first impressions then give way to reality, what at first sight was an image of serenity shows itself to be a private melodrama that on occasions has resulted in me going indoors and exclaiming, "It's like Albert Square out there!" The dovecote contains all the characters of East Enders, from the dutiful couple, inseparable from each other, to the women's libber who flies off during her turn on the eggs and lets hubby get on with it, right through to *Jack the Lad* who has a full time wife yet chats up anything in feathers!

There is a definite hierarchy - top birds have the top bay with best view and facing the sun, the rest take a descending order until you reach the couple in the bottom rear 'garden flat.' There are rivalries, punch-ups, unfaithfulness and, inevitably, tragedy.

The first time a sparrow-hawk hit the dovecote it was horrifying. There was utter confusion and sudden loss and I realised that in this small feathered community life was being played out with all the parallel passion of our human existence. Shock and numbness lead to a bereft male frantically looking for his mate - he mourned - he perched for hours on our rooftop gazing out to the field - watching, waiting, hoping. Can I get soppy over just a bird? Well, yes I can, because it brings out the same sort of feelings that I experience every day at the hospice as we support families and friends all trying to deal with their loss. I don't just mean dying, but all the stages of illness, loss of mobility, loss of energy, loss of work, loss of meaning and loss of body image.



So what keeps me going in my job where, like the dovecote, difficult times and moments of deep sorrow are constantly put my way? I guess it's the fact that I also know that these moments are only part of the story, part of the bigger picture and that there was lots of living going on before and there will be more times to come. They will come but no more quickly than they are meant to come. My lonely dove went through his period grieving but after a time he repaired in both senses of the word. He started anew. Yes, some remain alone, but not lonely. They form new friends around them and their life eventually regains meaning.



The truth is that the hospice and the dovecote are very similar. Perhaps, for all of us, there's little choice. We are born to travel this road or this sky with all it's highs and lows and in the darkest moments we remain alongside those we love until they are set free, or with those who remain until they can again soar, swoop, dive and swirl in great circles for the sheer ecstasy of flying (living) with a renewed zest for life like my Birmingham Rollers.

Doves are symbolic in many ways, as a sign of peace and not least as the Spirit of God which helps to keep focussed on the bigger picture. For me, they are also a sign of hope. As epitomised by the dove that Noah sent out when it looked like everything in the world had gone, only to return with an olive twig, a sure sign that she'd found new land. Our journey should always contain hope

.....and the promise of a new land, however we might understand that to be.



Taking the pain out of dying with peace, love and understanding

Ruth Gledhill The Times Tuesday 11th December 2007

After a difficult life, a woman facing death in the hospice was too angry with God to contemplate a visit from the chaplain, the Revd Anton Muller. But the Anglican cleric was determined to find out why, in spite of the drugs and palliative care, the woman remained in great distress. He discovered that she was terrified that there would be no one to look after her dogs once she had gone. "In a sense, her dogs had become her spiritual support," he said. He found someone to take them and the new carer brought the pets to visit her in the hospice. When she died she was at peace.



Mr Muller, 46, said: "People are often OK about leaving their spouses because they think humans can cope." When they have to leave children and pets, however, they often struggle. As acting chairman of the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains, Mr Muller, who is the spiritual care co-ordinator at Eden Valley Hospice in Carlisle, Cumbria, embraces the "total pain, total care" model of support envisioned by the founder of the hospice movement, Dame Cicely Saunders. He is helping to devise a University of Cumbria diploma in death and dying, using spiritual care as palliative care.

Anton is adamant that in most cases, before the spiritual, social and emotional needs of a patient can begin to be addressed, the physical pain must be reduced. "While physical pain management helps us to deal with the other aspects, every now and again it happens the other way around." As an advocate of the spiritual but non-religious approach to dying, he does not wear a dog collar because it can get in the way of caring for those of different denominations and beliefs. "Often, a person in pain will ask why God is doing this to them. They might say, 'I am not a believer, but if there is a God, why is he doing this?'. It is something people ask, irrespective of whether they have a belief."

People cannot be fobbed off. The most helpful thing is to have experienced the stories of others who have gone through these things." He is helped by a team of volunteers who all have personal experience of bereavement. It is these personal stories that are of most help to the patients.

Mr Muller, (pictured right) who held a senior post at The Church Mission Society before being ordained in 2000, will introduce the Christian approach to suffering and death when he feels that it is appropriate.



"What we can demonstrate is that the most critical thing in the ministry of Jesus was compassion based on understanding. First and foremost, what we do in a hospice setting is respond to human need with loving kindness. Palliative care is expensive. Individual fundraising is what keeps the hospice movement going, in the main, aided by organisations such as Help the Hospices. "We need to have a society where death is not viewed as a failure in hospital."

Have you got a news story about your hospice and your work – send it now the editor!

Books and Resources: I'm receiving information about new books on spiritual palliative care... check out the website for a review of *Life in a Hospice: reflections on caring for the dying* by Dr Ann Richardson Radcliffe Publishing, Oxford, ISBN=1846192439



Dealing with Death

how we can all learn from the UK hospice movement
by Michele Hart



As acknowledged leaders in palliative care, the UK hospice movement works closely with the wider caring community to share best practice and promote a holistic approach to end of life care. Help the Hospices is the charity which represents the UK hospice movement on a national level. Thanks to £70,000 of funding support from Healthplan provider HSA, part of Simplyhealthy Group, it has recently has been able to provide grants to selected hospices across the UK to enable them to develop outreach training courses within their own regions.

One such course was that developed by the **Heart of Kent Hospice** aimed at helping clergy and church workers to support both those affected by life-threatening illnesses and themselves. Alison Bellamy who helped develop the course explains: “Perhaps surprisingly, very few faith leaders receive any kind of formal training in death and dying yet we expect them to deal with such issues on a weekly basis. One priest told me he was left emotionally drained after conducting four funerals one week, one of which was for a young child, another for a suicide. He was at a loss as to where to turn for support.” The course addresses leaders’ own need for support as well as looking at spirituality in the wider context and at emotions around and reactions to bereavement with a strong emphasis on communication. “Patients tell us that, while well meaning, religious leaders sometimes say the wrong thing or their approach is not always helpful,” explains Alison. “We help them consider and address this.”

Elsewhere, individual hospices and hospice chaplains work with their local faith and caring communities both on an informal basis and through specific courses, some in conjunction with British universities. These include a course accredited by the University of Kent and developed by **Pilgrims Hospice**. A module on the Kent Institute of Medicine and Health Sciences’ MSc in Supportive and Palliative Care, this week-long course is also open to all health care professionals looking to seek a greater understanding of the spiritual side of palliative care.

Meanwhile, at the University of Cumbria Anton Muller, a Vice President of the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains (AHPCC) is designing a Certificate in Death and Dying aimed at anyone working in a caring capacity. Anton caused something of a stir when he joined **Eden Valley Hospice** two years ago, renaming the chapel the ‘Quiet Place’, discarding his dog collar and referring to himself as Spiritual Care Co-ordinator rather than hospice chaplain. Anton feels that spirituality is about more than religion and is fundamental to the hospice movement’s holistic ethos. “Some people are denied the spiritual support they need at end of life because they feel alienated by a religious approach to spirituality.”

His views are echoed by Karen Murphy, Chaplain at Weston Hospice and Secretary of the AHPCC. “The hospice movement is there to ensure that every person’s individual needs are met at the end of life irrespective of religious views. Indeed too many people confuse religion with spirituality.” Karen also supports Alison Bellamy’s findings that show that many religious and spiritual leaders are uncomfortable around death and dying. “You would be surprised by how many chaplains tell me they never know quite what to say to someone or to their bereaved relatives.”

Karen explains how the hospice movement strives to break down barriers and build people’s confidence in supporting those at the end of life, including those from the religious community who we assume to be ‘experts’ themselves. “I believe the most important thing is that we all address our own spirituality,” says Karen. “By being self-aware we are in a much better position to support others.” She believes we should all explore our own spirituality on a regular basis, asking ourselves questions such as: What do I believe in? What gives my life meaning? What do I hope for? Who do I love and who loves me? What would I change about my relationships?

Michele Hart is a former journalist and PR consultant working with Help the Hospices in a freelance capacity.
For more information about hospice care see www.hospiceinformation.info



The Penny Jones Animal Hospice

A new dimension in patient care by Anton Müller, Eden Valley Hospice, Carlisle



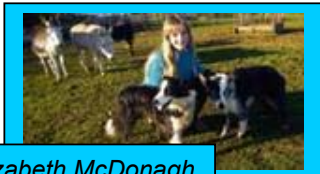
Penny with Mollie and Skye

Penny Jones came to the Eden Valley Hospice last year following a terminal diagnosis and during this time it became clear that a major source of anxiety and stress for Penny was the future and well-being of her beloved Mollie and Skye. The future was not good, the best we could do was find a home for Mollie, but the older dog faced termination.

At the eleventh hour a lady who was already involved in animal rescue came to our rescue and took Mollie and Skye into care. With Mollie and Skye in a safe home and in safe hands, Penny prospered and was able to do much to get on with the rest of her life. Penny and her children visited Molly and Skye in their new home and spent a lovely afternoon with them. In the few days before Penny died I went with Elizabeth, the warden of the Animal Rescue project and we took Mollie and Skye to see Penny in hospital. The children also came to see them.



Mollie & Skye at Ullswater



Elizabeth McDonagh

During that visit Elizabeth and I shared with Penny our thoughts and feelings about creating a new project within the existing rescue work which would help other folk who might be in a similar situation to Penny. It seemed right that this project be called *The Penny Jones Animal Hospice*. Penny was overwhelmed and deeply moved by the request to name the project after her. The Penny Jones Animal Hospice has already

received a generous donation following Penny's funeral and a further £500.00 was sent in specifically for this project.

It is a principle of Hospice care that folk are enabled to live the remainder of their lives with love and support through the careful management of pain. That pain is not just physical, it is emotional, social and even spiritual. The nurse at the hospital where Penny died told us that many people struggle with this issue and that for some the worry and anxiety for a much loved pet is greater than for the family who remain!

The Penny Jones Animal Hospice will continue to do its everyday work with the animals that have already come and others will be equally welcomed and cared for. It seems to us after the sad but also encouraging experience with Penny, that this is the right way forward. Fund raising is already in progress to provide new kennel accommodation and to improve the existing site and structures. This will be adjacent to a lovely little wooded area where a board walk is to be created suitable for people in wheelchairs and where the names of the many animals that have been helped in the past will be remembered within a short woodland walk.

The Penny Jones Animal Hospice will enable owners and their families to continue some contact with their pet and just as we visited Penny in hospital with Mollie and Skye we will try to continue with such visits for other folk, as appropriate. It is really exciting to be part of this work which links in so well with my own work at the Eden Valley Hospice where we try and do whatever we can to alleviate suffering – and that we have discovered includes helping with a person's pet. A new website will soon be available to visit at www.pennyjones.org.uk



Penny's Children



A word from the Secretary

The Revd Karen Murphy
Weston Hospice



Travelling the Journey

At the conference last year I spoke about a 6 week course our hospice is offering to patients of working age. After recent experiences of caring for younger patients, we felt that there was a real need to offer the opportunity to talk about strategies of coping for this age group. What has evolved is a course of 6 sessions to which patients and their carers are invited.

We draw upon the skills and experience of several members of our team including doctors, complimentary therapist, physiotherapist, bereavement support and chaplain. Each session can stand alone if patients feel unable to attend for any reason. People are referred to attend through our community nurses, the hospital palliative care team or any of the hospice team who is involved with a patient.

For some people it will be the first time they come to the hospice and that is an achievement in itself. The title of the course, '*Travelling the Journey*', may sound a little hackneyed to some but after talking to our attendees, they think it's the right phrase and describes how they feel. If anyone would like to know more about how this works, please get in touch with me and I can send you a copy of our current programme. It has been a great addition to what we can offer our patients and it has made a real difference to our understanding of their needs.

A (not so) new kid on the block! Spotlight on Dawn Tierney (nee Allan)

My patients need to talk and that's why I'm here By Barry McDonald (*Glasgow Herald*)



For someone who spends most of her life confronting death, Dawn Allan is surprisingly cheerful. As the chaplain for the Marie Curie hospice in Hunters Hill, she's more Vicar of Dibley than Reverend IM Jolly. Offering non-denominational spiritual and emotional support, the 41-year-old has the sensitive and delicate task of helping people face their own mortality. Patients can suddenly find themselves facing questions they might never have wanted to face, says Dawn, who is an elder in the Church of Scotland.

It can lead to some tricky questions about the existence of an afterlife. "I don't have all the answers," says Dawn. "People don't always need an answer, they just need a sounding board and often that's my role as a chaplain. They may be very angry at God and I'll encourage that. I think it's fine that they talk about their emotions. It's much healthier to express their anger than to suppress it. It's healthier for them, on a spiritual, emotional and psychological level."

"For many of the hospice's patients, it can be a time when their faith is tested to the limit. Doubts about the existence of an afterlife are common, people question their faith more so in the last weeks and days of their lives."

Dawn is the part-time lay chaplain at Marie Curie Hospice, Newcastle, having transferred from Marie Curie Hospice, Glasgow October 2007

Every blessing and our prayers for you Dawn in your new post Dawn we look forward to following your progress in the rags south o' the Border!!
Editor

