March 2013

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all! I want especially to give a warm welcome to any new members to the AHPCC. This is an organisation that thrives on close colleagueship and the sharing of ideas: we hope that you will find plenty to benefit you in your work, and we look forward to learning from you.

You will all have recently received an invitation to our annual Conference. Please make it a priority to attend, as we have a stimulating and varied programme, with interesting speakers. Above all, Conference provides an invaluable opportunity for meeting people, learning from one another, and for mutual support.

I want to echo the thanks already expressed on our website to Ian, our former Conference organiser, who did so much of the groundwork for what is being planned. Exec members always have to fit their Exec responsibilities around other commitments. Ian, because of his talents and enthusiasm, had more commitments than most. I am extremely grateful to him for what he has brought to our Executive, and hope that he will in the future be able to enjoy Conference as a punter rather than an organiser! We are also delighted that Dawn Allan and Tom Duncanson have agreed without any arm-twisting to take on the organising responsibilities together.

I want also to alert you to some changes that will soon be confronting us as an Association. In recent years, administration of our membership lists/renewals, along with support for our annual Conference, has been managed by Help the Hospices. This arrangement will cease after the end of March – for other organisations as well as ourselves – as part of a rethink of strategic priorities by Help the Hospices. We are grateful for the help they have given us in the past, but we will need to make different arrangements for the future. I will write in more detail about this in my President’s Report, which will be available on the website in good time before Conference: but it seems likely that there will be two options before us:

1. We could come to an arrangement with Equinox, publisher of a new Chaplaincy Journal which is to replace the previously separate Journals produced by the College of Healthcare Chaplains (CHCC) and the Scottish Association of Chaplains in Healthcare (SACH). Equinox would be prepared to offer us a “package”, whereby members would receive the Journal and they would administer our membership (Equinox has already agreed a similar arrangement with SACH).
2. We could find another organisation or an individual who would be willing to provide us with administrative support.

There will be financial implications for us, whatever we decide. So watch this space; and I hope to be able to lay out the options before us in more detail before Conference so that we can make an informed decision at our AGM.

At our AGM, we also need to make some minor updates to our Constitution. This has to be notified to our members in writing no less than six weeks before the AGM, so our Secretary Sue Clarke will be writing to you all towards the end of March, with a copy of the Constitution and the proposed amendments.

One more piece of news: when you read the Constitution, you will notice that the Executive Committee has the freedom to appoint a Vice President. Many of you will know that our previous President, Steve Barnes, had to stand down at the last AGM due to ill health, which meant that we had to hold an election at short notice. Having discussed this as an Exec, we’ve come to the conclusion that it would be a good idea to have a Vice President, both to deputise when necessary for the President at meetings to represent the organisation, and also to be available to step in and provide continuity if the President has to stand down before the end of her/his term of office. We unanimously felt that Markus Lange would fulfil this role admirably, and I’m grateful to Markus for being prepared to take on this responsibility.

I hope to see many of you at Swanwick in May. In the meantime, I would be extremely grateful if those of you who have not yet renewed your AHPCC membership could do so before the end of March, when our arrangement with Help the Hospices ceases. Also, bearing in mind that our Conference organisers and Treasurer will have an increased workload this year in the run-up to Conference, please do your best to book your place (and encourage your organisations to pay for you!) as promptly as you can. Remember to send your booking forms direct to Dawn Allan (*not* Help the Hospices) and make your cheques payable to the AHPCC.

If there’s anything in this letter that you want to follow up with me personally, please don’t hesitate to get in touch, either by phone or email. This comes with my very best wishes to you all in your work. These are challenging times for those who engage in Chaplaincy and spiritual care within our healthcare system; but our work can be a privilege and a joy.

I hope it is so for you.

Best wishes,