

Crisis Centre Ministries
Bringing God's grace and healing love
to people with life-disrupting problems
Newsletter : March 2004

HEAVEN AND HELL

Life is never simple and generalisations, though apparently simplifying a situation, are often misleading. Recently two people described homelessness to me. A shop assistant described his experience like this: "I sometimes sit down and talk with this homeless person. He seems cheerful enough. His clothes are as good as mine, and the place where he lives is nicer than my home. It seems quite a good life." The other one was a brief, handwritten note: "Please pray that we get out of this Hell . . ."

Both are accurate descriptions of homelessness – at different times. Many homeless people will have experienced both. Heaven and Hell are both rare experiences in this life, for homeless people as for the rest of the human race. Most of the time, our experience is somewhere in the middle. But for most homeless people, that 'somewhere' is far closer to Hell than it is to Heaven – normal life is large amounts of pain and misery, mixed with the occasional small dose of pleasure and enjoyment.

For each one of us, no matter how good life may be right now, our pleasure is always fragile and uncertain. This is especially true for the homeless: the people who invite you to stay today may kick you out tomorrow. The friends who share their last cigarette with you may steal everything you have while you sleep. The drug you need to keep you going may kill you next time you use it.

It is a problem experienced by many people today, not just the homeless: they simply encounter it in a more obvious, unavoidable way. And there is no answer to this problem. While people are seeking to find pleasure and avoid pain, they can never achieve

either. You can only avoid the pain caused by relationships if you embrace the misery of isolation; and pleasure is only really found when you are looking for something else.

The answer lies in the paradox of the gospel: if you want to save your life, you must lose it. If you wish to avoid suffering, you must accept it, and if you desire pleasure, the best way is to help others. I know this may sound trite, but it is deep truth, and in the long run, it is the only way to live that does not end in futility and despair.

It makes little difference whether people start using drugs or alcohol as a way to find pleasure or to avoid pain: the sad fact is that neither attempt can possibly work, and while people are only seeking to gain pleasure and avoid pain, no answer will work. We are spiritual beings and, in the long run, only spiritual answers can satisfy and form the foundation of a stable, secure and joyful life.

Paul Hazelden, General Manager

As a Christian organisation, then, with an understanding of the need for spiritual answers, we have a significant part to play, alongside other organisations, in the provision for our clients in Bristol. Our considerations of the way forward for us as an organisation, and how we believe God is leading us, will feature in this newsletter.

WAKE UP!



*Zion, wake up!
Dress yourself with strength as
if it were your clothes . . .
What a beautiful sight it is to
see messengers coming with
good news!
from Isaiah 52*

Not quite 'On your marks, get set, go' as the clipart suggests, but there actually is a connection - it feels as if we

are on the starting line, ready to go forward and being encouraged to wake up to the purposes of God, and the implications of this. Now, of course, we are not setting out from scratch because we have been operating since 1984, but it feels like we are at a new beginning.

At our AGM last October, our General Manager, Paul Hazelden, talked about where we are as an organisation in the context of today's society, saying that for us to be viable and remain viable we need to grow, and our Trustees are presently preparing a three year strategy for our development. This strategy will include such issues as legislation, codes of practice and various monitoring requirements; anticipated development within each aspect of the ministry; appropriate staffing across the organisation; training for staff and volunteers; financial targets in relation to all these aspects and fund raising to reach these targets.



We are in this position of being able to plan ahead because of the strong foundations which have been laid in this ministry. Our early experience of responding to a God-given vision to provide a resource for 'street people' with life disrupting problems has been tried and tested over the years – spiritually (in terms of our trust in God to equip the ministry financially and with appropriate personnel, and to bring change into situations affecting our clients) and practically (as we have operated alongside other organisations; voluntary and statutory, locally and nationally, Christian and secular and developed experience and expertise which is well respected in this context, and also consistently offered a resource to our clients which they have valued). It is only with such good foundations that we are now able to continue to operate and also plan for development.

Our ***Open Day on Saturday, 26 June***, will be an opportunity to celebrate these good foundations and to look forward. Please

come and join with us for this. More details are given later in this newsletter.

CONGRATULATIONS

These are just some of the good things happening at Crisis Centre Ministries:

Paul, was awarded 8 out of 10 (by a Bristol Evening Post journalist) for a sermon he preached at Pip'n'Jay in January. An article, plus a photograph of Paul, Malcolm Widdecombe and the journalist Sarah Key, can be found in the 28 January issue of the Evening Post



Trudie has gained a Diploma in Counselling; she completed her training in December.

Jason, a student from our LITE Course, is now in permanent work. This success was recorded in the Bristol Evening Post, 4 February issue.

Di, mentioned in our previous Newsletter, has moved into her new flat.

S, one of our clients, has been offered a new flat which she is really keen to move into – *“I feel so excited, just like I’m five years old and being given a present”* she said, and this is in striking contrast to the majority of her life experience over recent years.

Five LITE students who graduated last year and received Community Education Awards which were presented at a Celebration of Learning Event held at the new Family Learning Centre in St Pauls.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Looking to the future, staff training and development is important and features in our three year plan. Investing in our personnel

resources is not only good practice, but very beneficial to the work we do.

With Staff: Jayne has completed training in food hygiene and first aid and has been presented with certificates; James is presently undergoing leadership training through his church; Andy is training with Life for the World Trust towards Certificate in Drug Misuse Care and Counselling; Trudie has completed her training to Diploma level as a counsellor; Paul is training with Spurgeon's College on MTh in Applied Theology.



As well as being significant to the work we are doing and further equipping our staff, it is important that we model growth and development to our clients if we want them to take seriously our invitation to change from addiction and homelessness to a more constructive lifestyle!

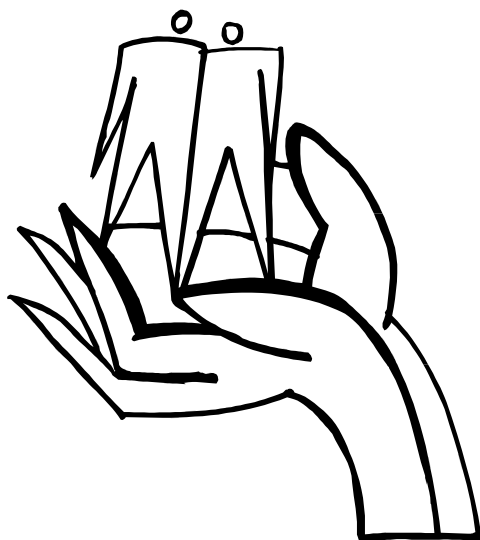
With volunteers (and others): Paul continues to organise training for our volunteers and others who may be interested, through Bristol Christian Action Network. This resource is being extremely well used by a number of organisations involved in working with our client group and is one way in which we are making a unique provision within the city and encouraging a professional and informed approach to working with these people. More information on this training is available on our website – www.bcan.org.uk

PASTORAL CARE

We are using the term 'pastoral care' to refer to the in-depth, ongoing contact we have with a number of clients. Because we can see the benefits of this, it is something we would really like to develop.

When a client moves into a flat, this can be a dream come true for them. However, the reality of living alone in an area with which they are not familiar can be daunting and issues such as loneliness can pull people back into addiction.

To support people in situations like this, we presently have a few volunteers who meet clients outside of the Centre for coffee and a chat, or visit them at home when that is appropriate, and sometimes we are able to put 'work parties' together to help decorate a room in a client's new home.



There are, of course, other issues which affect our clients: some find themselves in rehabilitation centres, hospital, prison etc. and, where possible, we like keep in touch with them; some have complicated family issues and we like to offer support; some are struggling with addiction issues and here we like to

build relationship and encourage change. Offering support and encouraging change can involve liaison with various organisations, referral to specialist services and personal support throughout this process.

This is just a glimpse of the way in which we support our clients. To develop in this area, more volunteers would help, but what we really need is a member of staff dedicated to this work. We want to plan to make this happen, while being realistic about the need to raise the additional support for this new salary – and this is included in our three year strategy.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

We have always been committed to working alongside local churches, and over the years have found that this can work out in a variety of ways. A recent development for us is considering specific partnership with local churches. This is already happening with a few churches who have been helping us pilot this concept, and we would welcome the opportunity to explore the possibility with one or two others.

We have drawn up a 'Partnership Proposal' to describe some of the ways we can work alongside a local church - for example, ways to encourage people in the church to pray for us, and ways in which we can help the church fulfil its own unique calling.

If you would like to know more, please ask the CCM office for a copy of the Partnership Proposal.

FINANCE

We have continually proved the faithfulness of God, and the generosity of our supporters, in our financial situation. Over the past few years, our regular outgoings have increased to cover LITE Course expenses (and we continue to look for funding possibilities for this) and a further full-time staff salary. At the same time regular and one-off donations to us have increased and we have received grants as a result of applying for financial assistance. However, at present, our regular monthly income is not meeting our outgoings and the shortfall is £4,500 each month. One-off donations and grants have been helping to cover this shortfall, but this does continue to be a serious situation for the ministry and we would be very grateful for your prayers regarding this.



As we look forward, we believe it is important to explore ways to increase our monthly income. In fact, our aim is to work towards the statement in our Annual Report – “to hold reserves at least sufficient to fund approximately six months of planned activities”. Holding reserves in this way would mean that, when general giving does decrease (as happens at certain times in the year), we do not find ourselves in financial crisis. Towards reaching this aim, we have set targets to have reserves of £5,000 in one year and £10,000 in two years: setting such targets is new for us and is an act of faith. It does seem to be wise to put works alongside our faith (James 2:14 questions the value of faith without works) and we are looking at measures we can take to reach these targets.

In terms of your giving to Crisis Centre Ministries, you may find the following information of interest:-

➤ ***Giving to charity through the tax return***

Back in 2002, the Chancellor announced in the Budget that from 2004 Self Assessment taxpayers would be able to use their tax

returns to donate tax repayments to charity. So, from 6 April 2004, a taxpayer will be able to nominate a charity to receive a tax repayment due to him/her as a result of making the tax return.

Each charity which has registered with this scheme has been given a unique code. For Crisis Centre Ministries, this is **UAM 44LG** and this code can be used on the tax return to nominate us. You can choose how much of your payment you donate to charity by indicating the whole repayment or a specific amount, and the amount given to the charity can be Gift Aided, by using the declaration on the tax return.

➤ ***Sponsored events – Aid International***



If you are someone who enjoys the challenge of sponsored events, (cycling, walking, running, climbing etc. etc.) or you know someone who does, then there is the possibility to be involved in events organised by Aid International, with the proceeds coming to Crisis Centre Ministries. Aid International, as their name suggests, organise events in various parts of the world as well as locally. Crisis Centre Ministries office can supply you with further information (contact details on the back page of this Newsletter)

➤ ***SMS Text Giving***

It is now possible to give by text, from your mobile phone. We have registered with this scheme but not yet received the information we will need to pass on to you for you to make use of it. Look out for more information in our next Newsletter.

➤ ***Give As You Earn***

You can still give to CCM through your payroll. Details of this should be available to you through your employer.

➤ ***Gift Aid***

Many of our supporters already Gift Aid donations and, if you are a taxpayer, this enables us to claim back the tax on any donation

you make. We can supply you with a Gift Aid declaration on request.

From 6 April 2003, Gift Aid donations can be treated as if they were made in the previous year. This can be valuable for a taxpayer whose circumstances have changed dramatically, perhaps through retirement or leaving work to start a family.

➤ ***Standing Orders***

If you are not already doing so, can we please encourage you to consider supporting us on a regular basis, by standing order with your bank. We very much appreciate one-off donations, and if that is your preference please know that we greatly value your support in this way. One of the benefits of regular donations is that this provides us with a monthly income on which we can rely, and on which we can plan our budget. We can supply you with the appropriate form on request. As with any donation made to us, payments made regularly in this way can be gift aided, if you are a taxpayer.

➤ ***Amazon UK***

Another new way to support CCM is to visit our website – www.crisis-centre.org.uk, and buy your Amazon books and other items on line via a link from our site. It doesn't cost you anything extra, and each item purchased in this way yields 5% of the purchase price to CCM.

FLIGHT OF THE WILD GOOSE

This is Crisis Centre Ministries' promotional video, hot off the press and something with which we are delighted. It is a professional, 20 minute overview of our work and our thanks go to Keith Sheather for his time and skill in working on this and putting it together for us.

This video is ideal for use in church home groups, or any small group situation, and we have no hesitation in recommending it as a church resource. Individuals, too, will find it of great interest and a good way to pass on information about Crisis Centre Ministries

to friends. It is for sale at just £10, and we would also be happy to consider loaning it to churches.

We can also offer the opportunity for a member of staff of Crisis Centre Ministries to visit a small group with the video, and be available to answer any questions arising from it or explore issues relating to it.

If you would like further information, or to order a copy of the video, please contact the CCM office.

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OPEN DAY AT THE CRISIS CENTRE

It may be interesting to hear about what we do at The Crisis Centre, but this is now an opportunity to come and see for yourselves - at a time when our normal services are not operating, but staff and some clients are here and can explain how the ministry works and how people's lives are affected and change happens.

Please accept this as your invitation to our Open Day, on Saturday 26 June, and feel free to pass this invitation onto your friends.

You are welcome to come at any point and for however long you would like, between 2.00 and 7.00 pm on that day.

Our theme this year, as the heading to this section suggests, is Hope, and we are particularly thinking of our clients, their lives and ways in which they find hope. So many people in our society feel they are without hope and often try to find ways to cope with life. We believe that there is a key to finding hope, even in the most difficult situations (and the tear drop in the word Hope, above, aims to indicate that hope does not mean the absence of difficulties). Scripture tells us that 'where there is no vision the people perish' (Proverbs 29:18, KJV) – or, without a hope for the future people become lost and disillusioned and 'cast off restraint' (NIV).

At our Open Day we will be showing how the work we are doing brings hope to our clients, we will be celebrating the good foundations which have been laid since we were first established and introducing what we believe God is saying to us about the way forward. As well as displays of the different aspects of the ministry, powerpoint presentation, testimonies and the opportunity to talk to staff and clients, there will be light refreshments, music and interractional activities, followed by worship from 6 to 7 pm.

We look forward to seeing you on the day.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

The Wild Goose:

We are so tremendously grateful to our brilliant volunteers who make it possible for us to open The Wild Goose regularly. The shop is well staffed with volunteers at present, but we do still need more, for Tuesday and Thursday daytimes particularly. Whatever time you are able to offer, however limited, we would love to hear from you.

A new development involves a group from Vineyard Church who are taking on responsibility for Monday evenings in The Wild Goose. We have provided training, and offer the opportunity to work alongside our team and other volunteers as a means of introduction into the work and our approach. If your church, or a group from your church, would like to know more about being involved in this way, please get in touch.

LITE (Lifeskills Initial Training for Employment):

Andrew Luxford would so much appreciate some volunteers working with him on Sparks, part of our LITE Course. If you have experience in training and can offer some time then that's brilliant and we'd love to hear from you. If you don't have experience in this area but would be interested in supporting a student through training, or knowing more about what might be involved, again we would love to hear from you.



Admin:

We specifically need volunteers to be involved in fund raising. We are putting together a fund raising strategy and would value support with this. If you have any administrative skills and/or fund raising knowledge and skills (or would be willing to learn) and could give us some time on a voluntary basis, then please get in touch.

This newsletters demands much time in preparation, photocopying and posting out. We would greatly appreciate help with this and if you are interested in any aspect of this we would love to hear from you.

Practical:

There are also those amazing people who bake for us – cakes, biscuits, curries, puddings etc. Clients love home-made cakes, sausage rolls, flap jacks etc (as do staff!) and things like curries are such a blessing and can provide the meal for one session in the shop.

Also, groups, churches and individuals collect tea, coffee, sugar and tinned goods for us – meat, beans, sauces, soups etc. If this is something you would like to do then please get in touch.

If your skills are in the area of DIY, then we are in desperate need of shelves in the offices and it would be really good to hear from you.

If you would like to volunteer with us but we haven't mentioned something you would like to do, then please get in touch and we will explore with you how you might be involved with us.

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