

CARING NETWORK BULLETIN

August, 1992

THE CARING NETWORK CONCEPT

The Caring Network arose out of discussions which took place in Milton in September, 1989 at the "Day of Reflection". An opportunity was identified to do more work as a community in accordance with the instructions of the apostle Paul to "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galations 6:2); and the commandment of Jesus to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

The Caring Network attempts to provide a means for brothers and sisters in need to obtain, on a confidential basis, guidance, a listening ear, and spiritual care from brothers and sisters who have some general familiarity and sensitivity to the kind of counseling that lay people can undertake. The Caring Network also acts as a resource for individuals and ecclesias for information that can help deal with a variety of problems on a proactive and reactive basis.

This bulletin functions to maintain a contact between the Caring Network and the ecclesias and their Caring Teams so that there is regular communication between the groups.

ECCLESIAL CARING TEAMS

SCARBOROUGH On Saturday June 6th 1992, the Scarborough Ecclesia hosted a workshop on 'Listening with Sensitivity - Are You Listening?' Some twenty brothers and sisters attended this excellent workshop which was led by Sister Deanna Pandya from the Norfolk Ecclesia (U.S.A.). Sister Deanna is a professional counselor who has had extensive experience and works with alcohol and drug abuse, family counseling, grief counseling, teenage counseling, suicide and crisis intervention.

The workshop made use of many exercises, both individual and team, to heighten our listening skills and to interpret body language. Many very good examples of listening situations were demonstrated by Sister Deanna. The workshops also looked at many of the characteristics of effective helping relationships. Listening skills on the telephone were practiced. Some time was spent on suicide intervention. The workshop concluded with biblical verses on listening, hearing, and the characteristics of good listeners - judging not, comfort, compassion, healing and humility.

Much of what was learned are basic life skills; listening - really listening to what others say - can not only be applied in support situations but also in the workplace, at home, and with friends. Sister Deanna has a great wealth of experience and her presentation manner put everyone quickly at ease. The day was extremely profitable and everyone present came away enthused.

HUNTSVILLE - The Huntsville ecclesia hosted a two day seminar on "Family Life in the Lord" given by Brother Tony Giordano. The seminar was well attended by the Huntsville ecclesia. The content was excellent and was very beneficial and enjoyable for the brothers and sisters in Huntsville.

PICTON - There are many biblical references relating to caring. Picton has decided to study this topic in their bible class.

ONE ARRANGING BOARD'S USE OF A CARING TEAM

One Ontario ecclesia's arranging board recently delegated work to its local caring team in a different and effective way. At this ecclesia, a regular agenda item for arranging board meetings is "member welfare". Any concerns regarding the well being of ecclesial family members are raised by those in attendance for attention by the board. A different approach was taken this time.

At this meeting, the ecclesial list of members and friends was reviewed thoroughly with respect of possible welfare concerns. The board found they had been overlooking certain situations and the list for follow up was substantial. One board member suggested it would be appropriate for the new caring team to assist with this work. The board decided to handle certain situation directly, but to ask the caring team to deal with the others. The board liaison for the caring team was directed to call the team's chairman to request help with this task.

The team accepted this work and divided it up among themselves, contacting each of the people for whom there was concern. The team's calls and visits were well received and significant positive results were achieved.

This is an example of one way I which an arranging board can work with its local caring team. Often board members have many duties and such delegation allows them to effectively share the load. The caring team was used to proactively deal with member needs instead of waiting for problems to develop.

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: Basic Principles of Biblical Counselling

AUTHOR: Dr. Larry Crabb

PUBLISHER: Zondervan Publishing House

OVERVIEW

This book is relatively short but has some very good observations. The book itself is non indexed and consists of 111 pages divided into 10 chapters. Although it is not stated in the Table of Contents there are three distinct sections consisting of:

1. The Preface and Introduction.
2. A section reviewing recent historical and current secular psychological thinking.
3. The final section (also the largest) consists of the authors observations and basic principles.

CONTENT

The author presents a case for Christian readers to consider regarding approaches to Christian counselling. After receiving an education in psychology and counselling and setting about to establish his vocation Dr. Crabb was forced to reconsider some fundamental questions. He realized that all of his training had a firm root in secular humanistic philosophy. As a convicted believer in the gospel and it's inspired message an obvious conflict presented itself to Dr. Crabb. Fundamentally he understood that current counselling methods left God and his message out of the overall equation. He presents the case that in psychology today there is confusion. Many different theories abound and he briefly explores some of the main contributors to counselling methods. People like Freud, Carl Rogers, B.F. Skinner etc. are examined. After reviewing the thoughts of these influential thinkers one can see that eclecticism results in a plethora of thinking virtually guaranteeing no absolutes. What theory would the aspiring counsellor embrace?

It is the scriptures that provide a framework, a fixed set of rules, unchanging values based on the revealed truth of an all wise creator, that need to be embraced. What a contrast to the eclectic mix found in counselling today. In the final analysis there are two questions that must be answered by readers;

- a) There is an infinite designer of this world and all of it's habitation.
- b) Our world happened by pure chance.

Dr. Crabb bases his thinking on the more scriptural approach. The clear message presented throughout this book is that "as a man thinks so is he". Wrong thinking leads to incorrect behaviour. Dr. Crabb believes that people have a number of basic needs that must be met in order to lead effective lives. People need to have a purpose in life. We need to know that we matter, we have significance. We must believe that each of us are equipped to do the jobs we encounter along life's path. We must be able to accept ourselves. In no way does this mean incorrect behaviour is acceptable. In fact one of the principle thoughts throughout the book is that each of us are responsible for our behaviour.

In a few words the first half of the book could be summed up by saying the following: God is real, therefore there is design, therefore purpose. His purpose is relevant to my life. Christ provides purpose and importance to our lives. In Christ God has provided every person with significance, a meaningful purpose for living. Without this a person must operate under the principle that random chance is the governing principle. With this we would be without hope and of all men most miserable indeed.

The remainder of the book explores more deeply the reasons why we think incorrectly, therefore behave incorrectly. Primarily we are sinners. Our vocation must be to be made conformable to the image of Christ. Without going into detail some practical methods are explained and a model presented to the lay counsellor. The underlying idea being to help counsellors meet their clients basic needs by understanding that God is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

CONCLUSIONS

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in this field for the following reasons. This book is designed to instruct a lay community, such as ours, to think more clearly about the issues of 'koinonia'. The ecclesia is a group that is under a great deal of pressure from the influences of the world. Dr. Crabb's book provides sound thinking that in my opinion no Brother or Sister in Christ can ignore without putting themselves in a very dangerous position. The sound thinking I am referring to has to do with how we handle problems that arise in believers lives.

I think the model revealed in this book is good. It could be developed a little more clearly though. If you are reading this review chances are you have an interest in this subject. If you read the book I would be interested in hearing from you, so that I may consider your opinions. My address is in the Christadelphian 'Green Book' under the Guelph Ecclesia's heading.

Bro. Bill Lawrence
June 1992

U.K CHRISTADELPHIAN CARE GROUP

This article is reprinted from a newsletter published by the U.K. Christadelphian Care Group Committee; it is written by Brother Norman Fitchett.

The Christadelphian Care Group has now been in existence for ten years. It began in 1981 with a letter published in the 'Christadelphian' which sought the opinion of all brethren and sisters about the formation of a caring service.

The response was very positive. Brethren and sisters in the caring professions and those who had come through personal crisis, or who had cared for others, responded with offers of help and suggestions about the nature of the service required.

It was suggested that a number of brethren and sisters throughout the country should be available by telephone in an emergency or when a 'listening ear' was required. Brethren and sisters with problems who felt unable to ask for help locally could be helped within the community rather than relying upon 'outside agencies'. It was decided therefore to publish a list of telephone numbers of those prepared, day or night, to receive calls requesting help. The callers would be free to choose any number. This list of telephone numbers has been printed on leaflets and bookmarks and circulated on several occasions to every ecclesia in the U.K.

In view of the encouraging response, a meeting was held in Derby and a committee was established to formulate aims and objectives and to set up any necessary organization. The objectives of the Care Group have remained virtually unchanged since its inception. The intervening years have increased rather than diminished their relevance.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CARE GROUP ARE TO PROVIDE:

1. A confidential caring service to provide emergence help, counseling and practical support for anyone with a difficult personal problem such as spiritual crisis, illness, physical handicap, bereavement, emotional or psychological distress, breakdown in family relationships, alienation, depression, guilt, financial or moral difficulties.
2. A programme of open discussions with a view to developing a better understanding of personal crises, a more effective reliance upon God, and to encourage compassionate pastoral care in the community in accordance with Scriptural principles.

In order to achieve a common policy and practice, a set of 'Guidelines' was distributed to all who had offered their help. These provide helpers with details about the organization, responsibility, procedures and notes about listening skills and simple counseling techniques.

In a small and closely knit community such as ours, the danger of loss of trust and breach of confidentiality is very real. The Care Group Committee has, as a matter of priority, always emphasized the need to be aware of and to avoid this danger.

All Care Group members are committed to this principle, that any information divulged in confidence will not be passed to any other person without the agreement of the caller.

Brethren and sisters do care for each other and it was never the intention that the Care Group should replace this very important activity within the community. Experience has shown, however, that some brethren and sisters do have special needs for particular skills and expertise, which may not be available locally. It is in this area that the Care Group has been able to offer help to individuals and to ecclesia. Thus the Care Group can complement and support the care already provided by the ecclesia. If the Care Group has enhanced the provision of care within the brotherhood, then we thank our heavenly Father.

In addition to the telephone 'listening ear' service, the Care Group tries to arrange hospitality for anyone in need of spiritual and physical refreshment, and it will also try to link people by correspondence. In collaboration with ecclesias the Care Group will arrange meetings to consider pastoral care and to provide opportunities for problems to be shared. Attempts are being made to meet the need for publication dealing with subjects of pastoral concern.

THE CARE GROUP PRAYER LINE

The Care group Prayer Line has become an important component in the caring services offered. A person in need of our prayers, (or a friend can call on their behalf) telephones the coordinator with the request for prayer. The coordinator then informs the first member of a group of eight or so who are linked by telephone. The message goes round the group until it reaches the final member who then telephones the coordinator to confirm that the message has been circulated accurately. Thus eight or more people will be praying for the person concerned very quickly. There are several of these groups throughout the country, and as many as sixty brethren and sisters can be contacted within hours.

The difficulties presented to the Care group are sometimes complex; to some problems there are no simple answers. Sometimes all it is possible to do is to pray with and for the caller, and to be sympathetic, understanding, non-judgmental and supportive. It is a case of trying to soak up some of the sorrow, share the burden and soothe the hurt. In these circumstances we are all conscious of our personal inadequacy and our total dependence upon our heavenly father.

We accept that any kin of care and counseling is at all times an interim measure and that, at best, we are no more than a link between man's need and God's provision. Caring is just one element in the commitment to discipleship, so that we all might 'bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ'.