

## EDITORIAL

In his editorial to the first edition of the Scottish journal of healthcare chaplaincy, John Swinton described the whole process of thinking through and launching it in terms of conceiving, carrying and birthing a child, with all the attendant anxieties, pains and joys. John's responsibility for nurturing the infant has now passed to David Mitchell and Georgina Nelson. We are aware of our indebtedness to John for all his hard work, and we hope that the journal will continue to develop and to fulfil its undoubted potential, and the hopes which John had for it. This edition is the fourth to date.

In that first editorial, John described the aim of the journal as:

*'To assist healthcare chaplains and other care workers in their efforts to love and to care, as they strive to provide effective spiritual, religious and pastoral care within the contemporary healthcare setting.'*

If the journal is to fulfil that aim, it needs to reflect the experience of those 'on the ground'; those who are in the business of engaging with people and situations which constantly demand that theology and practice be reflected upon and reviewed. This is no dry-as-dust, abstractly academic publication, of use only to a few. We want a journal which combines intellectual rigour with the practical, the lived experience of caring, and which can be a resource for a number of different disciplines involved in healthcare. This is your journal. Its success or otherwise depends upon you. So if you have something to say, fruit of your own research, experience and reflection, concerning any aspect of the work of chaplaincy, then we would like to hear from you. We would particularly like to know if you are involved in any course of study which you feel is of relevance for the personal or professional development of chaplains.

The articles presented in this issue range widely. Eric Hargreaves gives us an insight into the world of those who have made the commitment to care long-term for a relative, and whose contact with healthcare professionals, including chaplains, can over the years have a marked effect for good or ill upon the

day to day business of living and caring. Ian Barcroft writes with moving honesty of the dilemmas which arise when the chaplain, the 'detached caring professional', happens also to be a son. Such an experience raises questions as to how the chaplain, faced with the shortcomings of an institution, is best able to be a caring, Christian presence within it. Can righteous anger and critical distance co-exist? In her reflection on mental health chaplaincy, Lorna Rattray too considers the notion of 'distance' in chaplaincy; she concludes that in the theology and practice of chaplaincy, distance must give place to a creative sharing; an acknowledgement that God does not keep a safe distance.

A 'professional distance'? How does the chaplain in healthcare function as a professional? The late Tom Scott, writing in 1979, is nevertheless contemporary in his attempts to define how professionalism in chaplaincy works - its content, its implications for ongoing training, its challenges for clergy who have been used to functioning in quite a different setting. Challenging also are his thoughts on the 'peripheral stance' which he sees as being vital, and in the interests of which chaplaincy should resist being drawn too closely into the structures of healthcare institutions. Do we want to become departments of spiritual care, competing for funding on the same basis as any other department, or is this bad for chaplaincy?

On the theme of the peripheral nature of chaplaincy, Janet Dyer writes of her experience of that condition; peripheral, not only as a chaplain within the hospital, but also in terms of being a woman priest within the Episcopal Church. As such, she writes of a difficult time of learning and transition. She also points up the difficult dilemmas which arise when clamant pastoral need seems to conflict with theological and liturgical correctness. Is there still a deep division between church institutions and agents of Christian presence, as Tom Scott wrote?

Dilemmas theological and dilemmas ethical. Mark Hamilton affords us an insight into the issues surrounding infertility treatment. This fast moving technology, involving as it does social, legal, financial, personal complexities, threatens to outpace the

reflection which needs to accompany it, if we are to be progressively freed by technology, rather than progressively enmeshed by it.

At the heart of chaplaincy lies an encounter with human suffering. And yet, it is an aspect from which we would shy away if we could. If only we could take shelter in a technique, a form of words, a professional detachment, a watertight theological argument. Anything to put a comfortable distance between ourselves and the suffering which by its very nature threatens destruction of persons, of ourselves, of who we are. Stuart Chalmers tackles this subject in a way which is both psychologically insightful and theologically profound. He draws us to

reflect upon what is most sacred and most human in our practice.

Finally, we include Lorna Rattray's report on the cultural and theological insights afforded her by the ICPCC congress in Ghana, and Alison Wagstaff's sharing with us of her experience of a month of CPE, its structure, its value, its challenge.

A wide and varied selection then. Many voices raising issues of relevance and resonance for all who, again in John Swinton's words, seek to be a 'humanising presence' and who share the desire 'to care, to love, and to enable others to live lives that are marked by those same qualities.