



SACH

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# Soundings

## To see ourselves as others see us

**M**y daughter has just completed her first year at university studying Social Anthropology. Most people nod vaguely when you tell what she's doing as if to say that they don't really know what the subject is but think that they should. Let me try and enlighten you. Social anthropology began as the science of the exotic and what would have then been termed 'savage'. Over time anthropologists have extended the range of their discipline to include almost any human group whether living in isolation in the rainforest or the workplaces of the industrialised world.

Anthropologists observe and draw conclusions about what they have witnessed. They assume nothing and can learn much from what might appear to be very similar settings. Imagine spending time in an unfamiliar European city and at your leisure wander the streets. See how many details of life on these streets or the market, inside shops or churches, strike you as different from the streets, markets, shops and churches that you know at home. For example, you may notice both similarities and differences in a visit to the inevitable McDonalds. After your Big Mac pay attention not only to the details of the physical surroundings but also to people's behaviour and how they seem to interact with each other. Your observations are the basic elements of social anthropology.

If my daughter could be persuaded to do a field study on chaplains, I wonder what she would discover. She might find a group of people trying to find their way in what is still

relatively unfamiliar territory as NHS employees; a group of people who, on the whole, still have ties or allegiances to the churches. The most interesting observations might be made at those times where one rubs against the other.



The recent debate about the appointment of a homosexual minister at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland highlighted the very real issues that can arise at that meeting point. While we are all individuals who can have our own views about this, as chaplains working in the

NHS we are working to a common set of principles along with all other staff. Were a chaplain to sign the online petition against the upholding of the call to the minister the two cultures would come into conflict and potentially a lot of difficulties could arise. Is there a debate to be had here about being in good standing with your faith community when it is at variance with your employer?

As a profession we have worked hard to demonstrate our inclusiveness and our non partisan offering of spiritual care. Whatever individuals may think of the debate in Edinburgh, as chaplains working in the NHS any kind of discrimination is not acceptable and goes against policies on equality and diversity and our own code of conduct. However if the moral and theological arguments are compelling in cases like this one then the possible consequences should be borne in mind.

**Derek Brown** (President of SACH)

## Notes from the last Executive Meeting

Held in Dunblane on 12 May

### Future of SACH

Following discussion at the last meeting as to the future role of SACH, Jim Simpson intimated a response from the Grampian team in favour of including pastoral care, particularly for chaplains in isolated areas – this to be in addition to aspects previously discussed.

### AGM

It was decided that Ewan Kelly be asked to incorporate the SACH AGM into the Chaplains' conference at the Beardmore Hotel which will take place 23-24 September. Having been invited to attend this Executive meeting, Ewan personally confirmed the availability of this venue.

### Spiritual Care Matters

Discussion took place with regard to various ways of distributing copies of this document. Each Board area has already found its own preferred method and sharing of views proved useful for those seeking the most profitable way forward.

### Accountability

There was discussion about the potential difficulties of chaplains upholding NHS policies while seeking to remain in good standing with their faith community and also expressing their own personal views where an apparent clash of interest may arise. It was agreed that when employed by the NHS, the employer's rules must be upheld and that a statement of guidance be included in SACH Soundings. (See the President's article on the front page of this edition.)

### Committee Reports

UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy – Derek Brown reported a) website problems ongoing b) unresolved issues in England with Multi-faith Group for Healthcare Chaplaincy c) next meeting in June.

Scottish Churches Committee on Healthcare Chaplaincy – Margery Collin intimated next meeting to take place on 14 May

Spiritual Care Development Committee- there was no available update

CTAG – it was agreed Ewan Kelly be asked to update - a) it is intended that the role of research and evidence-based practice be explored - perhaps to create a research community in Scotland b) intention also to make profitable use of audit results – Ewan Kelly to gather stats later this year re what chaplains

do, how much it costs, etc

### Programme Director

Ewan Kelly was asked to address the committee. He spoke of the future of chaplaincy, the role of SACH and a desire to work collaboratively.

Health Boards - Initially Ewan will find out what is happening in each Board area, while relating this to the broader UK scene. He is aware of a lack of consistency in provision across all Boards and would like to ensure all chaplains feel supported, not isolated.

Education - Being part of NHS Education for Scotland (NES) offers an opportunity to copy best practice re education, research, CPD, reflective practice, etc. Education of chaplains must meet NHS criteria. To this end the new Chaplaincy course at Glasgow University is ideal. The first cohort of 12 will be chosen from 33 applicants, incorporating a mix of Health Boards, experience and specialism. The aim is to produce competent, reflective practitioners, creating a balance between the professional and the personal – this to be highlighted at the training day on 26/05

Scottish Government – currently there is interest in the softer side of healthcare, hence initiatives around patient experience, palliative care, etc. This is therefore a good time for chaplains to have a role in shaping the future of health care in Scotland. Derek Brown thanked Ewan for sharing his vision for the future of chaplaincy and reiterated the need for SACH to find the best way forward now to support its members.

Andy Graham asked for help in compiling a business case in the event of one being required – Ewan will consider ways of supporting this.

**The next meeting of the SACH Executive will take place on Thursday 6 August 2009 at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane.**

**A date for your Diary.....**

**Wednesday 23 September 2009  
SACH Annual General Meeting  
Beardmore Hotel, Clydebank**

## The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.  
I want to know what you ache for  
and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.  
I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool  
for love  
for your dream  
for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me  
what planets are squaring your moon...  
I want to know  
if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow  
if you have been opened by life's betrayals  
or have become shrivelled and closed  
from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain  
mine or your own  
without moving to hide it  
or fade it  
or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy  
mine or your own  
if you can dance with wildness  
and let the ecstasy fill you  
to the tips of your fingers and toes  
without cautioning us  
to be careful  
to be realistic  
to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me  
if the story you are telling me  
is true.  
I want to know if you can  
disappoint another  
to be true to yourself.  
If you can bear the accusation of betrayal  
and not betray your own soul.  
If you can be faithless  
and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty  
even when it is not pretty  
every day.  
And if you can source your own life  
from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure  
yours and mine  
and still stand at the edge of the lake  
and shout to the silver of the full moon,  
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me  
to know where you live or how much money you have.  
I want to know if you can get up  
after the night of grief and despair  
weary and bruised to the bone  
and do what needs to be done  
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know  
or how you came to be here.  
I want to know if you will stand  
in the centre of the fire  
with me  
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom  
you have studied.  
I want to know what sustains you  
from the inside  
when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone  
with yourself  
and if you truly like the company you keep  
in the empty moments.

(© Mountaindreaming, from the book *The Invitation*  
published by HarperSanFrancisco, 1999)

Sent in by **John McMahon**  
Chaplain, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

### A message received by one of the Aberdeen Chaplains.....

**A**t a time when the oil in my lamp was low and the light failing,  
you replenished my lamp and helped light up a very dark path.  
At a time when I was lost and very frightened,  
you took my hand and pointed me in the right direction.  
When I had strayed from the safety of the flock,  
you came looking for me, found me and led me back into the safety of the fold.  
Thank you seems so inadequate,  
but from the bottom of my (now healthy!) heart, thank you so much.

## Scratchings

I'm sitting typing these short reflections while watching the dog scratch like mad. Following a very wet walk up Ben Venue ten days ago he acquired several ticks which have left some residual red wheals now they have being plucked off. My boys (and okay I have to confess ...me too) have been fascinated by the resilience and the ability of these wee blighters to adhere to Ben's (the dog not Venue) skin. It takes some effort to prise them off! Whilst not wanting to compare my chaplaincy colleagues to blood sucking bugs....resilience and an ability to stick with it (distress, questions, tensions and helplessness for example) are core dimensions of what makes up the person, and thus, the chaplain you are.

It has been a busy and varied start to my new role – a learning curve indeed! However, in taking a step away from the clinical coal face I have had a chance to reflect on my experience in healthcare chaplaincy and on the stories I am beginning to hear from yourselves as I get around the country (which I am enjoying immensely). Resilience is indeed a key requisite for chaplaincy and was one of the themes I took from the recent study day held in Glasgow recently – Chaplains: Professional and Compassionate? Paul Lambert, a physiotherapist and colleague in NES, and a speaker during the day reminded us all of the significance of resilience within healthcare workers and how

through CPD and reflective practice such innate abilities can be discovered, rediscovered and honed.

Part of my role in working with you all, and part of your responsibility to yourself (and those you care for), both as a person and as a professional carer, is corporately and individually, to give due attention to our ongoing personal and professional development. Not only to maintain our steadfastness and doggedness but to ensure you continue to find meaning and purpose, and indeed at times pleasure, in utilising your God-given gifts to the full in providing sensitive spiritual care.

Ben (the dog, not Venue) is now needing a walk and you will be glad to know has stopped scratching. However, if any research or training issue is itching for you and I can be of any help or support please do get in touch.

Best to all,

Ewan

### Ewan Kelly

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## From the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.....

The General Assembly, following a motion from the floor, "instructed the Ministries Council to undertake a review of chaplaincy arrangements in NHS Boards and report to the General Assembly 2010."

The Ministries Council itself presented this deliverance that was also accepted - "Remind Presbyteries of the need to become fully involved in the work of Spiritual Care Committees in the NHS Boards and hospitals in their area."

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You can find this (and previous) editions of **SACH Soundings** in full colour on the SACH Website:  
[www.sach.org.uk/news.htm](http://www.sach.org.uk/news.htm)

If you would like to receive the colour version of SACH Soundings by e-mail in Acrobat PDF Format, send your e-mail address to: **Fred.Coutts@sach.org.uk**

**The next edition of SACH Soundings will be published in September 2009.**

**Send news, articles, stories, pictures and ideas by end of August to:**

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