



CPSC Notes

COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL AND SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS

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The message of Christmas for us all

As we gather in churches throughout the world, I hope we can humble ourselves enough to truly worship the Christ Child and acknowledge Him for who He truly is, and not what the world - or at times even we in our human frailty and sin - wants Him to be.

The miracle of Christmas is that God chose to come be with us in Jesus Christ. While we may often romanticise the stable where Jesus was born, we can know that this birth place speaks volumes about God's infinite courtesy towards all people.

Rather than in a temple or royal palace, Jesus was born in an earthy, raw and smelly stable. In this way God shows us that Christ comes to us in all types of human condition – accomplished, but also earthy, smelly and broken.

Out of His great love for all of humanity, God comes to be with us in Jesus Christ, wherever we are in life. The Christmas message therefore has four aspects:

Firstly: "fear not." This message came to Mary when she was told, "Fear not, for you have found favour with God." It was the same message that came to Joseph in a dream: "Fear not to take Mary as your wife." (Matt 1:20)

Secondly, it is a message of great joy to all people. That night in Bethlehem when Jesus was



born, the angel announced good news of great joy to all people. It was the message of the Saviour's birth - available to all, One through whom all people, no matter who you are, can be saved.

Thirdly, this is a message of peace and goodwill.

Finally, the message of Christmas is a message that we must share.

After the shepherds saw Jesus

lying in a manger, they kept on talking to everyone about what was told to them concerning this Child. All who have Jesus as Saviour must share this message with everyone they meet.

God is with us... God touches us. He is our shepherd, ready to guide and direct us in the way we should go - the good and right way. God is with us... His presence is with us...

We need not fear, no matter how difficult or heartbreaking our circumstances... nothing can separate us from the love of God.

God is with us. So let us be with others. God touches us. So let us touch others with the good news. Let them know the joy of the Word made flesh, Who is now dwelling among us.

– Dr Tertius Erasmus, Chairperson, ACRP and CPSC ■



Christmas wishes from the Executive

Prof Nicolene Joubert

In the coming festive season the birth of Jesus Christ will be celebrated by many people.

The birth of Jesus changed the world forever, as it was the fulfilment of God's prophecy that He will send a Saviour to this world.



In Matthew 16:16, Simon Peter reveals Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. God became flesh and entered the earth in the vulnerable body of a baby to show humans how much He loves them. Jesus' time on earth literally expressed the meaning of Immanuel, God with us.

I am always deeply moved by the way God has chosen to intervene in human history and save us from the power of evil. Jesus was born and sacrificed for our sins. But, He rose again, victoriously, proving that the power of hell and death has been destroyed forever. This is the best news anybody can get and an excellent reason to be joyful during the festive season.

I pray that the festive season will be a true festival of the birth of Christ, our Saviour, and a time of peace and love for all the CPSC members and their families.

Dr Vincent Mazibuko

Over twenty years ago someone had a dream of seeing pastoral counsellors being given the space and respect to perform their calling unhindered. That took some time. Some lost hope and left the organisation.

Today we are speaking a different language. It reminds of this quote: "Success and failure are found on the same road, but success is further down". We thank our chairperson who has carried the candle, especially through the rough times. Let's enjoy the holidays as we eagerly anticipate the new year, 2018.

I conclude by this quote that I love so much "Successful people are propelled by an internal energy that keeps them moving forward, even when they face setbacks or success seems to be far away".



Ms Mantoa Moitse-Nzeku

As the year draws to a close, it is with a huge sense of gratitude to Almighty God for the groundbreaking achievements and milestones attained by the ACRP and CPSC in 2017.

To all pastoral counsellors and indeed to all in the various disciplines of Christian Ministry, have a blessed and awesome Christmas and a very prosperous New Year.

A special note of appreciation to my fellow CPSC Executive members and the Board of ACRP directors, for all your diligent hard work – enjoy your well deserved holiday!



Posttraumatic embitterment in the South African context

By dr Barbara Louw who presented a paper on the topic at the Annual ACRP Conference on 26 August 2017. She is an ordained minister, as well as a founding member and CEO of Inter Trauma Nexus, a Christian Ministry offering counselling and training.



The initial purpose of this study was to find a way in which trauma and posttraumatic embitterment can be demystified in a manner that can make a positive difference to the quality of people's lives. This study is relevant in ministry in the church, as well as in the market place and in between those spheres.

According to Linden, the first researcher to investigate this topic, Posttraumatic Embitterment Disorder (PTED) is a distinct subgroup of adjustment disorders in which the trigger event is not an anxiety-provoking and life-threatening stimulus, but rather an exceptional, but normal negative life event.

He states that embitterment is correlated with aggression, fatalistic attitudes, help- and hopelessness and feelings of being attacked and persecuted. Actions which arise from this emotion can be protest and open aggression, but also passiveness, isolation, and retreat. In contrast to depression, emotional modulation is unimpaired.

The term trauma is appropriate in PTED, because the assumption is that the individual experiences and perceives the violation of basic beliefs as traumatic. This means there is an incompatibility gap between the individual's belief and value system and the harm caused to these beliefs, by the event.

The objective meaning assignment of the event is a threat to deep seated beliefs that manifests as a powerful psychological shock upon the individual.

Embitterment can be described as a complex emotion with a blend of several contradictory and mutual inhibiting emotions, which includes shame, anger, frustration, disappointment and aggression.

It is important to note that the "trigger" can be a single exceptional, normal negative life event. The person is aware of the event and can describe the event as the cause of their illness. The event is experienced as unjust, as an insult and as a humiliation and includes deep seated embitterment, rage and helplessness.

Trigger events can include, but are not limited to workplace conflict, unemployment, death of a rela-

tive, divorce and the experience of loss or separation, as well as severe illness. Many victims also experienced being hurt in the church and larger faith community.

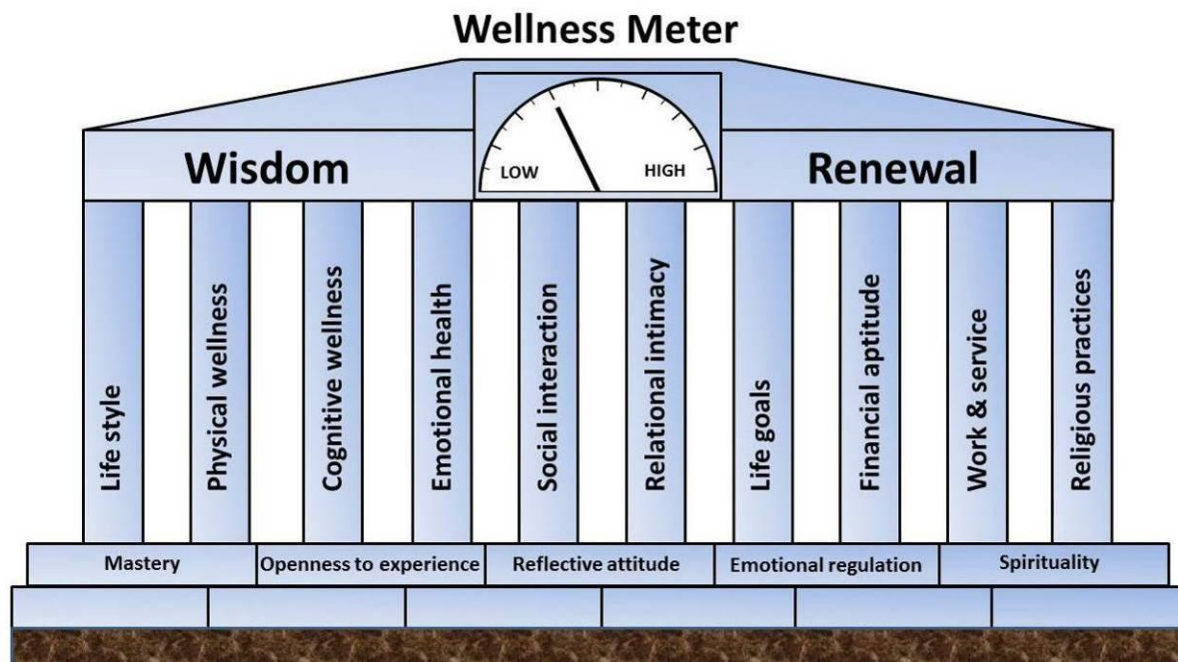
Experiencing hope for change or hopelessness are pivotal factors in dealing with the deep seated embitterment. In the cycle of bitterness there is little hope for change and pessimism allows self-pity and thoughts of malice and vengeance to advance to embitterment.

In South Africa there are many religious worldviews, which can be summarized into three major categories: monotheism, polytheism and pantheism. In this diverse community people most often hang onto more than one worldview when they are hurting or going through traumatic life experiences.

There is very few published works about the African Spiritual Universe, but authors like Credo Mutwa, Africa Malope and Lovemore Mbigi shared dissimilar points of this worldview. In the African context the understanding of God is humanity (Ubuntu), positive ancestral spirits, natural (oracular) spirits and evil spirits. Mbigi illustrates an eight level hierarchy of the African spiritual worldview, which allows for an avenging spirit manifesting bitterness, anger, revenge and restitution. In this worldview the various spirits are accommodated and this is foreign to people working with a monotheistic, Christian worldview.

The role of Christian Counselling in a South African context is to bring hope and healing for people who are hurting and suffering. Where embittered individuals see the critical, unjust event as the cause of their present state and of a persistent negative change in their well-being, we are in a unique position help people to heal.

The presentation was concluded with a brief overview of the Posttraumatic Wellness Coaching Model, which is a "wholistic" wellness approach away from biomedical diagnoses and which highlights the impact of "wholistic" wellness options. This model is applicable and transferable to all areas of peoples' lives, to allow a multi-ministry team to help people to heal and become whole.



Sources for further reading:

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Boundaries (Part 7)

By Dr Hanlie Meyer, a Counselling Psychologist in private practice.

Our previous article ended on a very high note: we learnt that our dim or even grim view of God does not need to stay like that. We learnt that we come to interpret who God is through the lenses of the emotional experiences that formed us from early childhood.

The good news is this: our interpretation is merely that - an interpretation and not the objective truth. This means that it can be changed! This is exactly what Paul has in mind when he states in Romans 12:2 that we must be transformed by the entire renewal of our minds (by its new ideals and its new attitude). He says only then will we be able to gain or regain discernment regarding the perfect will of God.



This is exciting! It means that God knows we are broken and He has the solution for that. We just need the humility to accept the boundary of authority between ourselves and God. We need to accept that He actually does know better than we do, is better than we think and fear and does care more than we care to admit. We need to face our brokenness and limited insight. But that is also so liberating! We do not need to remain broken and we need not feel

like spiritual orphans anymore! The veil of our limited view and our hurt can be stripped off if we turned in repentance to Christ – our “Kurios”.

Believing the lies

Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to strip off the veil from your heart? Why would one choose to remain in the darkness of past hurts, uncertainties and even loneliness? Sometimes we hang on to these hurts and old ways of doing and thinking, be-

cause these are all we know. Or we hang on to them because we feed on the hurts.

This is very unfortunate, as it only leads to more hurt, more loneliness, more isolation and even more victimization. In turn, this strengthens the lies we believe about God and His relationship with us and thus about ourselves. This is a road that leads to emotional and spiritual suffocation.

We believe our relational templates about people as if it were the truth and the whole truth. This clouds our perspective to the extent that, without the humility to admit our clouded view, not even God Himself, sending His own Son to reveal the intentions of His heart, can convince us!

So many people coming through my door have ideas about God that are not even remotely aligned with what Jesus presented about the Father heart of God and yet they believe what they believe enough to steer their whole lives on a course based on these lies. This is the tragedy of human pride in brokenness. This is the real tragedy of what Satan accomplished at the Fall.

The worst is that, instead of welcoming the new and different “moral and spiritual” insight presented to them, they so often endeavour to convince the counsellor pastor or friend to the contrary – sticking to their warped ideas and their suffering. Yet we cannot judge people who do this. We need to understand the depth of their hurt and brokenness as God did when sending His only Son.

Understanding the brain

The main desire people have, is the desire to be loved and to belong. The initial wiring in our brains regarding our belonging has been warped. They obstruct their own healing, when the warning system of the brain keeps sending warning signals when only love and care are communicated.

Due to the intensity of the warning signals, they scream to be obeyed. The original emotional memories have not been mediated by the contextualizing structures of the brains’ warning systems. When people are confronted with new situations, the brain scans the environment for clues on how to respond.

When the warning system, which is totally subjective, deems the new situation to be similar to a situation in which the person got hurt in the first place, the emotional outcry follows and the person is more or less unable to stop it.

Caregivers take note

This lengthy explanation informs us as caregivers and warns us against judging, losing hope or giving up on people and preaching to them. This behaviour plays into the hands of the faulty warning system, resulting in even more negative feedback.

All our energy and good intentions to change people’s lives may be misguided if we remain ignorant about the functioning of the brain. We may become disheartened or even angry and judgemental when people do not respond to our love, well-meant attention and advice on the love of God in a positive way.

As pastoral helpers we are committed to God and to His calling to help people and alleviate their suffering. Due to a lack of proper information about the basics of human functioning, we may end up doing more harm and elicit a lot of criticism from the secular scientific world.

Let us endeavour to educate ourselves with up to date scientific information and therapeutic techniques which are aligned with Scriptural truths and in this way increase our ability to really make a difference. Wounded people may not always respond positively to our well-meant efforts - their relational templates are poisoning them continually.

We need to search our own hearts before we even start helping someone, to ascertain whether we are willing to journey with this person with the same intensity of love and care that we started off with.

It is crucial that we learn to persevere with love against all the odds of possible rejection, criticism or even slander. If we ourselves are not committed to overcome our own woundedness and our own insecurities, we will not be able to persevere in love and caring. ■



Notes from the CPSC office

Dear CPSC/SAAP friends

The end of 2017 is upon us and I think that I am expressing the wonderment and gratitude of all involved as we stand in awe, looking back on 2017!

This special, eventful, blessed and groundbreaking year engulfed all of us in a process larger than ourselves and swept us along. It came and changed us from SAAP to CPSC, from members to affiliates.

It was a year where dreams came true and ideals and goals were achieved, when the years of labour finally produced fruit. It was a year that God came and touched all our lives when He willed it that the Association of Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP) as Christian organisation receive recognition as a Professional Body and that, through affiliation with ACRP, our CPSC Pastoral Counsellors can finally receive designations that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

However, 2017 also produced administrative nightmares and challenges. Fortunately these challenges aren't the norm, but merely part of the transition from SAAP to CPSC.

Reregistration process

As you know we received feedback on 7 October 2017 after the final 27 September 2017 South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) meeting, exactly two months ago. The first edition of the CPSC Notes described how we are going to reregister SAAP members as CPSC affiliates.

I prepared the more than 500 individual SAAP member files for evaluation and reregistration and our chairperson, Tertius, had the mammoth task of reevaluating every SAAP member individually. He truly worked like a machine to achieve the goal of completing by end October - hats off to him!

Thereafter, I issued the 2018 invoices, as we were so lucky that the reregistration process coincided with our 2018 invoice period. This blessing in disguise helped tremendously, as this eliminated the need

for pro-rata calculations on every invoice.

It was now my turn to work like a machine and I managed to have the last invoice sent out by 8 December. As people started paying I also immediately started reregistering them as CPSC affiliates during November and as of 9 December we already have 61 registered CPSC affiliates.

I have decided to dedicate the period until I go on leave on 22 December to reregistrations and I already have 71 more reregistrations lined up, members who have already paid the 2018 fees. This indicates the enthusiasm and support of our SAAP members, as this already represents 25% of our member total! I am so thankful to each and everyone of you.

I will continue reregistering SAAP members as the payments are received and we have until 31 March 2018 to complete this process to remain in good standing, according to legislation.

In the new year the Association for Christian Counsellors in South Africa (ACCinSA) members will also start applying for registration with CPSC and we will register everyone with affiliation until 31 December 2018. It is necessary to align all our renewal dates for CPSC affiliation as the invoicing might be done centrally next year and uniform renewal dates will simplify invoicing and renewal of affiliation.

Save the date

Our first CPSC open day is planned for 12 May 2018 and I will share more information later. This event is specifically aimed at CPSC topics and speakers - please save the date.



Annual leave

I can still be reached by cell phone until 22 December 2017, following which I will be on leave for 3 weeks, to be back in the office on 15 January 2018.

Thank you

I want to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful family of SAAP members for the support given to me during this first year of my new job! It was not easy to follow in Marieke's very deep footsteps as she is so special (a very dear friend to me as well) and you have all known her for so many years.

However, I want to thank you for the warmth that I encountered here, for all the encouragement over the year and for all the prayers. I also want to thank you for your patience and understanding during the re-registration process.

Christmas blessing

A blessed Christmas to you all on behalf of myself and my husband Len.

May you experience the wonder that Jesus Christ has come to Earth to deliver us and also the certainty that He is now God with us.



May Jesus, as the reason for the season, always be visible in our actions in the times to come and may you be blessed abundantly in the festive season and in the new year.

As always, warmest regards and best wishes,
Anita



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