

EAST CENTRAL REGION, ACPE

INDIANA, KENTUCKY, MICHIGAN, OHIO & PITTSBURGH, PA.

www.ecr-acpe.org

May 2003

Frankly Speaking

STEPPING BACK FROM THE EDGE

Today, as I look out the window at the bright sunshine of a spring morning it is hard to believe that it ever happened, and even harder for me to recapture the feeling in order to commit any sense of it to writing. The best thing I can tell you is that for several months, beginning toward the end of last year, and lasting until sometime in February or early March, I have felt that I was on the edge of a precipice, staring into a dark abyss filled with nothing but blackness. Since this gloom has lifted in the last several weeks, I want to attempt to share something of it with you. I want to do this partly because many of you witnessed the difference in me, and expressed your concern. Beyond that, I want to write for my own sake-to get some of it expressed for the therapeutic benefit of self-disclosure.

What I experienced, I have come to regard as severe and prolonged anxiety. During this time I had a strong, pervasive feeling of impending doom. Most of the time it expressed itself in a physical symptom, a sort of uncomfortable sensation like a "buzzing" or vibration just behind the lower end of my breastbone. It had the effect of distracting my attention from anything else. Mentally, the feeling was one of vigilance. I was on a constant mental scan for anything dangerous or threatening that might hold the seeds of sudden or undetected ruin about to break upon me. I dredged up every possible problem or difficulty in my life and would obsess about it, becoming despondent and hopeless to address the problem in any constructive way. If I did succeed in dismissing a problem or worry, that one would simply be replaced by the next one in line. There seemed to be an endless supply of new ones.

After living like this for a few weeks the gloom seemed to blot out almost everything else. I found myself living without enthusiasm. Nothing I could think of would make me smile. I was without any passion for the things I normally love. I could muster no interest in picking up a camera or flying or writing or preparing sermons. Going to work was somewhat comforting because the routine of it gave me structure. I felt insecure and found myself craving the company of other people so that I would not be alone. At night I feel asleep quickly, only to awaken in the middle of the night and begin again the mental obsession with my litany of worries.

Now, in truth, it has been a difficult time. There have been things in my life that needed to be faced and dealt with. They are some of the normal crises that life brings, but there were a lot of them. These critical issues were also playing out against two background realities that added to the weight: my own planning and preparing for retirement and the distressing conditions in the world of politics, violence and war. Whatever the causes, the result was a painful and dark experience, which was; at least in it's intensity and duration, something new to me. Now that it is behind me, I have come to have a new appreciation for the debilitating nature of anxiety and depression. When I was in it, I did not have any sense of power to work my way out of it, or to reason myself into a better place. I was imprisoned, and I did not think I had the key.

I am not sure how I escaped, but I did. I will share with you some of what seemed to help. First, I began to talk about what was going on inside of me. I shared my dilemma with my wife and with my colleagues. Talking seemed to help, it took away some of the loneliness and maybe also some tendency to feel guilt or shame about being in this state. Secondly, I began using the time that I spent awake in the night. Instead of obsessing on the sources of the anxiety, I began to engage in meditation, in reciting all the scripture or other helpful writings that I had committed to memory. Some of it seemed rationally appropriate and other parts made

no sense, but the act of reciting these memorized texts was helpful. I also made use of the time by getting up earlier when I could not sleep and getting started on my day. Thirdly, I began to find at least enough focus and energy to begin to do something about the things that stressed me the most. Gradually, I realized that I was not so close to the edge. I was feeling better, safer, and more optimistic.

I began to be capable of focusing more on work. I found that with some help, I was able to write. I took to the air again. Now I feel pretty much myself. One of the things I have become aware of as I look back on this experience is that it does not feel like I was invaded from the outside by something alien to me. Rather it feels like something that is part of me, which serves a purpose when it is in balance, got out of balance. It grew out of all proportion to its normal, useful size. I can only describe it as a sort of vigilance officer that is on duty in the back of my brain somewhere, scanning my life for potential dangers and problems, and bringing them to my consciousness in plenty of time for me to deal with them before they become too big. In this metaphor, what happened to me could be described as this "vigilance officer" becoming overwhelmed and pushing the panic button. Once that alarm was sounded, I could not shut it off or sort out rationally the causes or solutions to return to a normal mode of operation.

I feel good now. I want to thank my family and friends for the stabilizing influence they had, and for their patient caring when I was debilitated by this experience. I also want to apologize to people who found me "distant" or "unfriendly." I want you to know that I stand ready to correct any such impressions that I have given. Having stepped back from the edge, I hope I am wiser and more compassionate in understanding others who may make that painful journey.

Collegially,
Frank



Pastoral Concerns:

Prayerfully remember, **Nancy Dietsch**, who is a VA Chaplain and CPE Supervisor. Nancy was recently diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. If you would like to contact Nancy her address is: 238 Broadleaf Circle, Miamisburg, OH. 45342. Her home E-mail address is ndietsch@msn.com



News & Notes:

⇒Farewell from Alan Bowman:

To the Members of the ECR: I write to express my gratitude for the privilege of working with so many talented and generous people in the East Central Region of ACPE. I have been offered and I have accepted a call to a new ministry with the Catholic Health Initiatives. I will conclude my ministry here on May 16th with a spiritual retreat together with the chaplains and supervisors with whom I have served at Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center for over seventeen years. I will begin serving as the Director of Spiritual Development with Catholic Health Initiatives on June 2nd. I am truly grateful to so many of you who have nurtured my soul at the greatest depths of my being and who have challenged me to grow professionally as well. We have a great spirit within the ECR and I will miss you. I trust that you may allow me to visit with you at national meetings. As CHI is spread out over 19 states including parts of the ECR, I expect that I will have opportunities to visit with some of you from time to time and you are most welcome to visit with me in Denver. I pray for God's continued blessing upon each of you and your ministry and continued learning as each of us continues our journeys. Alan E. Bowman, Director, Center for Spiritual Care, St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, 801 E. LaSalle Avenue, South Bend, IN. 46617 (Ph: 574-237-7299; E-mail bowmana@sjrmc.com)

⇒Request for information from Bonnie Woods: I would like some information about what any of you are doing re: pre and post testing of 1st unit CPE students re: indicators of growth by way of the CPE objectives. I'd like to compare various ways that this is being done. Thanks in advance for your help. Sinai-Grace Hospital, Detroit bwoods@dmc.org

⇒Want to stay connected to members of the Region without waiting for the next newsletter? You can reach everyone that is a member of our regional Yahoo group, instantly. You have to be a member in order to send messages to the group list – but membership is free. As of today, there are 64 active members. Joining Yahoo!

Groups is easy! To get started you will need to register for a Yahoo! ID and link it to any email address you wish to use. [It is free and you can unsubscribe at any time]. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ECR-ACPE> and follow the directions to register.

Certification News:

Congratulations to Daryl Hanson!!! Daryl is a new CPE Supervisor after passing his certification committee in Atlanta! If you'd like to celebrate with him, his e-mail address is dmjs5255@accessledo.com.

Timeline for the regional fall meeting: August 1, 2003- Application to meet certification committee. * August 25, 2003- Materials to presenters. September 18, 2003- Certification meetings, Hueston Woods, OH *Any one desiring to meet for ACPE supervisor in September will need to be in touch with Mary Burks-Price and me BEFORE the August 1 deadline.

Applications will accepted for readiness, supervisory candidate, extension of candidacy or associate, and ACPE supervisor. Since readiness committees can be done at a sub-regional level, a priority will be given to "voting" committees (candidacy, extension, ACPE supervisor). If there is room on the docket however, readiness committees will be welcomed. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by e-mail saxtonm@sjimc.com or by phone at 574-282-8904 or mary.burks-price@nortonhealthcare.org by phone 502-629-3152; FAX 502-629-3125



Job Opportunities:

- Full time **Pastoral Care Resident** positions available for September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2004. **Lutheran Hospital of Indiana** is a Top 100 Hospital with 350 beds serving northeast Indiana and western Ohio. We offer a variety of opportunities for pastoral care in this growing medical community. The residency is a full time position with a stipend of \$20,000/year plus benefits. Qualifications include at least one unit of CPE and completion of one year of seminary or have equivalent training and experience. Application fee is \$25. Send inquiries to John Peterson at Lutheran Hospital of Indiana, 7950 West Jefferson Blvd., Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46804. E-mail jpeterson@lutheran-hosp.com. Telephone:(260) 435-7720 or 435-7117. FAX:(260) 435-7625.
- Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center—Chicago, IL—ACPE Supervisor Rush is accredited to offer all three levels of Clinical Pastoral Education. After twenty years of stability, the CPE Program is in a rebuilding phase. We are in need of an **experienced supervisor willing to explore short and long term commitments to this full-time position**. We offer four single units each year. Our residency program has five stipended positions. Our supervisory education program enables persons in full-time ministry in and around the Chicago area to pursue training while retaining positions at their respective places of employment. Rush Medical Center is also in a period of new growth with the energy that accompanies it. Position Qualifications: ACPE certified supervisor, M.Div. or equivalency, ordination or ecclesiastical endorsement, and experience with supervisory education. We are interested in talking with interested people about a variety of ways to join our team. If this description prompts you to pursue a conversation, please contact JoAnn O'Reilly at 312/942-4641 or Joann_O'Reilly@rush.edu.
- Chandler Medical Center - UK Hospital - **Two yearlong residency positions** available beginning Sept. 1. Specialties in trauma, pediatrics and oncology. We offer a stipend, holiday, vacation and sick leave, discounts on meals, on-call meal allowance, free parking and low cost health insurance. Lexington is a wonderful place to live with many cultural and sporting activities and is within 90 minutes of Cincinnati and Louisville. Requirements include: One previous (successful) unit of ACPE, Master of Divinity degree or equivalent, endorsement by a recognized denomination. Please apply immediately with a \$40 non-refundable application fee to: Pastoral Care, UK Hospital, 800 Rose Street, Lexington, KY 40536 - 0293 Donna Farrar -859-323-5301 (PH) 859-323-1743 (Fax) E-mail: dbfarr2@pop.uky.edu

Calendar of Events

- **September 19-20, 2003** – East Central Region, ACPE Fall Meeting – Hueston Woods, College Corner, OH. (Details will be provided as they become available)
- **November 12-15, 2003** – ACPE Annual Conference-Grand Geneva Resort and Spa, Lake Geneva, WI.

Information for the June newsletter must be received by May 28, 2003. Send to: Regional Business Office, 7672 Cottonwood Lane, Dexter, MI. 48130 Telephone: 1/800-336-5099; or E-mail lykbyl@aol.com

Regional Associate Supervisors

Rhonda Gilligan Gillespie
Robert McGeeney, Jr.

Regional Supervisory Candidates

Ruth Alpers
Carrie Culleen
Donald Harris
James Mitchell
Jon Paulus
Joe Roberts
Pat Sheldon Ward
Tim Waits

Officers of the Region

Frank Ciampa, Director

Rhonda Gillespie, Accreditation
Lin Barnett, Vice Chair
Urias Beverly, Nominations
Billie Beverly, REM
Alan Bowman, Board of Reps
Larry Brandon, Budget & Investment
Mary Burks-Price, Co-Chair Certification
Carl Buxo, Professional Ethics
Carol Green, Board of Reps
Earl Hoppert, Long Range Planning & Development
Robert Leas, History
BJ Myers-Bradley, Clinical Members
Kathy Nininger, Chair
Michael Saxton, Co-Chair Certification
Karl Van Ham, Standards
Cecilia Thurston, Research