

# *At the Heart* **hope springs NEWS**

Spring 2004



## **The Power of Dreaming**

Air, water, food, shelter, faith, hope and love - these are basic to sustaining human life. The first four are obviously about physical survival; the last three shape the relationships that give the meaning and purpose without which our survival would be an empty experience.

Serious mental illness threatens the basis of a person's relationships in life. That is why the pastoral care response to people affected by mental illness is about faith (believing them to be God's beloved children), hope (there is life beyond shattered dreams), and love (the sharing that helps people to grow).

Things change for the better as a result of individuals or people together dreaming of a more ideal world, a world where all people have their basic needs met, where the inherent dignity of all is accepted, where people are enabled to become the person they were born to be, freed from oppression and freed to live creatively, responsibly, joyously, and where relationships are characterised by openness, justice, care and self-giving.

Change can happen either by a problem-solving approach, which often brings short-term solutions or by dreaming and action, a more holistic approach, involving spirit as well as mind, which makes connections beyond the immediate.

On August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King delivered his famous I have a Dream speech. It changed the course of race relations in the US and it is still evident why it did - It is full of righteous anger and powerful vision, in language hearers knew well.

“... I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”

“This is our hope.... with this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope... Let freedom ring....”

The most important concern in the provision of mental health care is to redress the situation of people robbed by illness of participation in ‘normal’ society. Some years ago a dream for a better system of health care was implemented. No longer are unwell people placed in psychiatric hospitals separate from the rest of the community. No longer is psychiatric illness a reason for a “not like us” label. Now many supports, albeit under-resourced, are provided to maximize recovery and reconnection in community.

People may find themselves in the “least restrictive” place for effective treatment of their illness. Carers are learning new skills, and adequate support services are being developed for carers in the home. People with experience of mental illness are now freer to participate in community activities, enriching us all. Now their voices from the margin of society can be more clearly heard, and the people concerned with their suffering are freer in helping to bring them to new places of welcome and healing.

People like us can follow our dream to the place where it comes true. All sorts of marvellous things will happen along this way towards wholeness. And the Suffering Servant is our companion.

He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles,  
they will run and not grow weary,  
and they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40: 29 ff.

Hold fast to dreams  
for if dreams die,  
life is a broken winged bird  
that cannot fly.

Langston Hughes

*hope springs* people follow up their dreaming.

Peter Sanders

If there are starving people  
in our community,  
FEED ONE.  
If there are poor & needy people  
in our community,  
HELP ONE.  
If there are homeless people  
in our community  
SHELTER ONE.  
If there are persecuted people  
in our community  
DEFEND ONE.

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## The Bigger Picture

The Mental Health Services Annual Conference  
Gold Coast Queensland, September 2004

This is the 'must attend' Conference of the year. Over 600 delegates from all over Australia and New Zealand gather share ideas and enthusiasm for mental health service provision. Three and half days, with over 100 people presenting academic papers, experience based reflections and posters make a very rich mix.

The significant newness this year was around children of parents with the mental illness, services for whom have been until now lacking. Presentations I attended included research into depression in the workplace, and the depression awareness research project conducted by beyond blue and the Mental Health Research Institute in Melbourne. There were excellent presentations by consumers on recovery and recovery-based support. Victorias Department of Human Services gave a good presentation on programs for people with both mental illness and drug or alcohol dependence. There were several presentations from Carers Western Australia, one entitled 'Worried, tired and alone', another one on carer participation in the overall support of the person with mental illness, and an excellent study on the effect of caring on the health of the carer (Did you know that carers save the Australian government \$18 Billion per year through unpaid work). There was an excellent presentation on recovery in terms of lived experience - people learning how to be well again, and another one called 'Shaking off institutional program approaches' by Neami Whittlesea.

A Sydney psychiatrist gave one of the Keynote addresses called 'What are we blind to?' which examined the spiritual nature of personal identity, the spiritual purpose of human society and the effect on the human spirit of mental illness, and then described the program that he has developed to explore spiritual narratives and healing.

I was pondering the place of spirituality in the work of the mental health sector and am of the opinion that much of it has a spiritual base, even though there is little or no religious language used. So many workers support their clients quest for a renewed sense of meaning following illness, there is much attempt to reconnect people to a meaningful place in community, and there is so much plain loving goodwill. An example of this is a program directed by a Dental Clinic in St Kilda to homeless, mentally ill people living locally in parks, often with shocking dental problems, offering treatment and a boost in self-esteem.

All in all the Conference was worth the pain in recovering from the cold I brought back from sunny Queensland.

## ***Toward the Light***

A Seminar on Integrating the Experience of Depression  
31<sup>st</sup> October 2004

Facilitated by *hope springs*  
At the Greensborough Uniting Church  
37 Grimshaw Street Greensborough (Me120 K2)

You are welcome to attend all or part of the following:

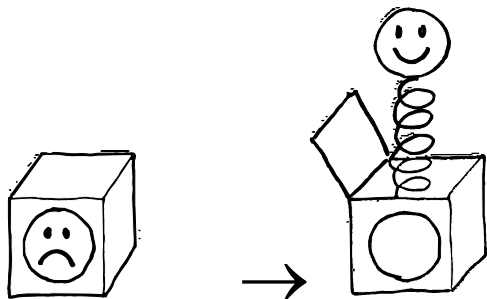
10 am Worship Service

11.30 am Lunch (Bring finger food to share)

12 noon Seminar

- Depression Awareness: Maggie McGuiness  
(Mental Health Research Institute)
- The Cry from the Depths - Spiritual resources
- The Experience of Recovery
- What next?

2.00 pm Conclusion



## **News**

First some old news:



At the end of last year hope springs was the proud recipient of a Banyule City Council Disability Access Award for the work of establishing and running the Drop-in Centre at Heidelberg West which has proved to be great value.

## **New news**

- Dr Paul Collier from The North-East Community Health Service met with members of the Eltham Carer Support Group in September and in his relaxed and thorough way provided some very helpful information on treatments and support for our members.



In July we had another successful four-day camp At Upper Plenty Conference Centre enjoyed by 10 people and Michaels dog.

- We have received a grant from the West Heidelberg Mall Church Bargain Centre to set up an art and craft facility at the West Heidelberg uniting Church will use by Bunjil house residents who live only 10 minutes away. This will be run by the occupational therapist from Bunjil House.

## ***hope springs Groups***

### **The Springboard**

*Activity & friendship group*

Meets 10.00 am Tuesdays

Drop-in Centre, Scots Church, Heidelberg

Contact: Peter Sanders 9459 8859

### **Rosanna Carer Support Group**

*Support, information, new skills, friendship*

Meets at 10.00 am, 1st Wednesday of month

Contact: David Tregear 9459 7350

### **Eltham Carer Support Group**

*Support, information, new skills, friendship*

Meets at 8.00 pm, 2nd Thursday of month

Contact: Jan Gill 9434 7642

### **Mind & Spirit**

*A Christian way of sharing in the recovery from illness*

Meets at 8 pm, 1st & 3rd Wednesday of month

21 Arden Crescent, Rosanna

Contact: Rev. Peter Sanders 9459 8859

### **Marimba Percussion Group**

*Making marimbas and having fun playing music in a group. No music background necessary*

Meets once a month on a Sunday afternoon

Contact: Kate Verghese 9434 2861

### **DROP-IN at West Heidelberg**

Every Wednesday 1.30 - 4.00 pm

*For a game of Pool or Table Tennis*

*Watch a Video or surf the Internet*

Where? Cnr Edwin & St Helliars Streets

West Heidelberg. Ivanhoe Bus route 548

Contact: *hope springs* 9459 8859