President’s Letter. January 2015

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all! I want particularly to send good wishes to those of you who have just started a new job or who have recently joined the AHPCC. I hope that, amidst all the changes, you will find your membership of the organisation a source of colleagueship and support.

Speaking of membership: a renewal form for 2015 is attached for your convenience. We decided at our last AGM to keep the membership fee at £35, which I hope you will feel is good value. Remember that, if you joined the AHPCC after September 30th 2014, you are already covered for this year. You will also more than recoup the cost of membership if you attend our Conference in May at the discounted members’ rate.

I want to encourage you to come to Conference on 18-20 May. This year’s theme is “Suffering and well-being: seeking a balance in palliative care”. You will already have received initial notification about the Conference by email last November (if you didn’t, check to make sure we have the right email address for you). The Conference poster and other information is on our website, and a detailed programme and booking form will be coming out at the beginning of February from our Conference organisers Dawn Allan and Tom Duncanson. As always, we have tried to respond to your feedback, and the range of our keynote speakers and workshops should provide plenty of opportunities for your own learning, as well as encouraging your employers to fund your attendance! Much of the value of Conference, however, lies in what happens between the formal sessions: in conversations, sharing of practice and mutual support. We hope to see you there.

On a broader front, it has been a busy year for chaplaincy. If you have been keeping up with news from our chaplaincy organisations (go to “Study & Policy” on our website and click the link ‘The Future of Chaplaincy’, you’ll know that the Chaplaincy Leadership Forum has been meeting regularly. We continue to make steady progress on some of the major issues that I only wish could be settled quickly: the 2003 NHS Chaplaincy Guidelines have been revised and handed over to NHS England to initiate the final process before publication, and we continue to move towards becoming a registered health profession. Those of you who have been chaplains for a long time may feel you’ve heard all this before, while those of you who are new to it may wonder what you’re getting into. I remain convinced that this whole painstaking process is not just about safeguarding chaplaincy *per se*, but about ensuring that spiritual care remains at the heart of health care provision. I hope that by the time I write my pre-Conference President’s Report I will have specific developments to share; and in the meantime, do contact me if you want to ask questions or share your views.

Looking ahead to our forthcoming AGM at Conference, there will be vacancies for the AHPCC Executive. Whether you’ve served on the Exec in the past or not, whether you’ve worked in palliative care for years or are relatively new: can I urge you to consider putting your name forward, or encouraging someone else to stand? On a personal note, I can honestly say that this is the most stimulating and worthwhile committee to which I have belonged in more than 20 years in health care chaplaincy – and I’m a person who usually runs a mile from committees. A lot of it is about being part of a group which is passionate about chaplaincy and the importance of spiritual and religious care and prepared to put in some work to support others in that role; but it is also hugely enjoyable, and you will receive as much from the experience as you’re prepared to give.

So please think about whether this might be for you, between now and our Conference in May: and feel free to ask me or any of the Exec in the meantime about what’s involved.

Finally, I want to thank you all for the work you do. I’m aware that some of you work in environments where there is little understanding of your role and it feels like you have to be continually explaining yourself. The people who do understand are the ones who benefit from your presence: the patients, relatives and staff whom you support. Never underestimate the difference you can make.

Please get in touch if there are any chaplaincy issues that you need to discuss, and I will do my best to respond promptly.

With every good wish for the coming year,

Judy

Judy Davies, AHPCC President