President’s Letter, June 2019

Thanks to everyone who made this year’s conference such a great event once more. The executive meets soon, and we will be looking at the evaluation forms that give us feedback on your thoughts, but at the moment people seem content with what was on offer. There was certainly a wide variety of material to think about and digest. Jonathan Pye led a thorough and intriguing session on empathy followed by his most engaging workshop exploring this theme. Conor Carville introduced us to the world of Samuel Beckett and his research project on the links with death and dying. His creative writing workshops were inspiring, and hopefully he recruited regional groups to work with him on the project. Simon Evers helpfully led us through the minefield of assisted dying and euthanasia as practised in the Netherlands, opening our eyes to full information and debate that is so challenging. Chris Swift stood in at the last minute with an excellent presentation about the future of chaplaincy with particular focus on care homes and community care.

We were blessed with excellent weather, good food and a great atmosphere to stand back from our work to reflect, both together and individually, on how we practice our particular shape of chaplaincy, as well as the shape of our organisations. As ever, people shared openly and honestly about our various situations, creating a warm and creative atmosphere for networking and learning. This time was greatly enhanced by Keith Munnings, our conference chaplain, who led us from his Buddhist tradition of mindfulness and compassion.

There are a few things to follow up as a result of the conference that I’d like to draw your attention to.

Firstly, Austyn Snowden dashed down from Scotland to share updates of the PROM research that three of us are conducting at the moment. It was an enthusiastic presentation in true Austyn style and hopefully it inspired some chaplains to engage with the research in your hospice. Please do consider this opportunity to share in the project and get in touch with Austyn for further conversation. Margery Collin, Keith Morrison or I would be happy to talk with you about our own involvement in the research from a hands-on point of view.

Secondly, as mentioned, Conor is keen to engage with local hospices over creative writing workshops, which would be a great opportunity for some multi-disciplinary work, or with the AHPCC regional groups.

Finally, after a good discussion about the purpose and function of our regional groups, I hope that anyone still not in a group will search out the next meeting of your local gathering. The dates of all groups should be on the website along with convenors’ contact details. Flexibility is key, so don’t feel limited to one group if geographical boundaries mean that it’s easier to go to a different group. The support is still the same.

Many thanks again to all those who organised this year’s event so well. Thank you for advance for your feedback. Please keep in touch with the executive if there are issues to raise and remember to post news, information and resources on the website via Mike Rattenbury.

Every blessing,

Karen