

RESPONSE TO ANDY CALDER'S PAPER
"CPE IN COMMUNITY AGENCIES:
A POSSIBILITY FOR THE NEXT 40 YEARS?"
FEBRUARY 29, 2008

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to respond to Andy's paper and to speak at this Conference.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand. I call upon their spirits to be with us on this occasion.

I found it most interesting to read the varying points that Andy has raised particularly

1. the model of CPE that he is applying in community based church agencies
2. the varying methodologies he is incorporating into his programmes to expand his reflective practice with participants
3. and his thoughts about the future.

What excited me was his statement "I believe the rich heritage of CPE lends itself to an expansion of horizons to embody an even greater experience of wholeness." I gave a very strong "yes" to this when I read it.

I like the way Andy reflects on the history of CPE and how it developed over time. He makes the point, as you heard, that "pastoral care, as practised in CPE, is predominantly a specialised professional ministry which is psychologically-based and individually centred, which over time became quite compartmentalised, not unlike what was happening with other professions."

I also, recall that Anton Boisen learned the case study method while studying social ethics at Harvard. As writers have expressed it:

"Anton Theophilus Boisen, who founded the clinical pastoral training movement over 75 years ago, was insistent from the very beginning that effective help for others cannot be achieved by assuming that 'one size fits all.' Boisen spoke repeatedly of the need for a 'systematic attempt to diagnose' where the suffering person stands, so that 'we may be able to bring to bear, according to the needs of the particular case, the forces of healing and power which lie within religion. One must assess the situation in order to apply the most appropriate assistance."¹

¹ Miller, Perry N, Lawrence, Raymond J, and Powell, Robert C: "Discrete Varieties of Care in the Clinical Pastoral Tradition" *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 57(2): 111-6, 2003.

Anton coupled the individual and the context of a person's life, just as Andy has stated. I believe the original vision of Anton's had breadth and depth. He could see that reflective practice within the context of a community could be quite transformative.

As we know individuals can only be transformed and healed in the context of a community. Their personal life must be coupled with their cultural, social and religious life if healing and the journey to wholeness is to emerge.

Anton, as we know was a researcher. He engaged with the discipline of psychology. In his writings he repeatedly called for the need of "a systematic attempt to diagnose' where the suffering person stood. I believe he would also have been in touch with social and cultural anthropologists and other disciplines of the time to have the vision he had. He was prophetic in his own way in his attempt to create a formation programme for the people preparing for ministry.

The essence of CPE is in this broad vision and application of reflective practice. Pastoral care has this wonderful dimension of being inclusive of the whole person as Jesus said "I have come so that you may have life, and have it to the full." John 10.10

I believe this is the time to recover Anton's vision. It is being lived out in small pockets in the CPE world and I hear this in Andy's paper. It is also thriving beyond the confines of CPE but this is another story for another time.

I ask - What will it take to restore the historical imbalance? It will take people with courage. It will take dialogue and reflection to find a way to understand, analyse and grasp the culture of the society we live in today.

Andy speaks of the use of social analysis in CPE programs. Social analysis is a tool which can be used in many contexts to aid us to listen to the signs of the times of the world around us. It is also a tool to expand our biblical understanding, theological thought and frameworks that underpin the way we interpret the gospel from our traditions.

I was glad to see that Andy has expanded his use of these tools in theological reflection. This excites me when I see people stretching the boundaries of a process to be relevant to the needs of the people he is working with.

Social analysis is one of many tools that could be used to analyse the present world of Clinical Pastoral Education in Australia.

I believe the greatest need in achieving the revival of Anton's vision and to take CPE into the future is

- i) firstly, to break open the gospel anew. Do a Pope John XXIII and "open the windows to let the spirit be free."
- ii) secondly, listen to the sources, to find a way forward. Often we have to go back to find the essence of the gift, and it is this, that we take forward
- iii) thirdly, listen to the Spirit of God being spoken to us in the people we encounter around us every day

move to the edges of our contexts and hear the Spirit speaking in language that we may not understand be it cultural, societal, historical or religious. If our presence with people is relational and dialogical we will hear what is being asked of us.

The clearest place that I hear the Spirit speaking is with those whom no-one else wants to communicate with, the difficult patient, the angry family member, the person who is homeless on our streets, the prisoner who is regarded as the lowest of the low by society, groups of people and communities suffering discrimination.

Cultures, people, contexts, can shift us if we have the courage to want to embrace change. Our ministry of formation involves being multidisciplinary, multicultural, multi-faith and prepared to embrace multimedia. It is meant to be prophetic.

Since the Reformation we have seen the rise of science and historical consciousness. This has shaped our modern world and this is the challenge before us. So today, what are the ecological, political, social, economic, cultural and religious movements of the modern world? Andy mentioned the need for this. How are members of the CPE movement to break open the gospel and respond in ways that are relevant and challenging?

This study and reflection will take us to uncomfortable places as I am sure Andy has experienced. If we want CPE programmes to be relevant to to-day's world we have no choice but to reflect courageously on the past, present and future of our practice. We have been given a precious gift and an effective tool in the methodology that we use.

Pastoral Care is not a 'soft' ministry. It is demanding. It calls for people with courage, to take up the challenge to stand beside people we serve if they are being treated in a way that is not bringing them to the fullness of life. For example, we need to identify and resist government or institutional policies, including church laws and customs that are not life giving, cultural and social

discrimination etc. just to name a few. It is not about just listening to the hurt or anger of those who experience exclusion.

If CPE is to be with us in 40 years it is imperative that participants in the process read and dialogue widely, not only with the western theologians, but also with the theologians working in the Third World and other cultures, ecologists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists and historians.

Our primary focus is to bring about the Reign of God in the hearts of people in our world. It is not about satisfying our own needs, or keeping the spirit of CPE bound in structures that no longer bring life.

The spirit of transformative reflective practice which blossomed through the Clinical Pastoral Education movement is alive within CPE centres as Andy has illustrated. It has also moved beyond the edges of the structure of CPE and is re-creating itself. It is finding relevant ways to respond to the 'signs of the times,' the changing context of our world, the heart of people, the call of the Churches and institutions. This I know from my own history and present experience and application of using this methodology.

I was thinking, what does Clinical Pastoral Education with the recovered vision of Anton Boisen really need most of all to continue on the journey to the Promised Land?

I believe it needs

1. creative people with lateral thinking, with their feet firmly planted on this earth. Their arms outstretched to capture the needs of the times. A listening heart to hear the God within us all
2. people with the courage to move beyond the known, and only take with them the structures that will enhance the work of the Kingdom of God.
3. people who are life long learners – reading widely and analysing wisely
4. people will need "birds of a feather' to reflect with them on what they hear. Friends and colleagues who will challenge and support them as they begin this journey
5. processes appropriate to being professional – much more than is presently being offered and demonstrated in practice
6. people prepared to stand up with courage in the face of adversity
7. People who will speak the truth against processes that are not giving life to those they serve in our institutions or in society

8. people with self confidence, and thick skins, to take the knocks and criticisms, as they will surely come if they take this recovery of the early vision seriously
9. prayerful reflective practitioners - able to read the signs of the times and break open the gospel anew.

To conclude, I picked up Andy's image of the crystal ball in his paper and his words, "Might we dare look into it?" For myself as I looked into that crystal ball I heard Anton's words again. He noted that crisis periods in life also bring about creative possibilities

Anton wrote, "In times of crisis, when the person's fate is hanging in the balance, we are likely to think and feel intensely regarding the things that matter most." Amidst such circumstances new ideas flash into the mind so vividly that they seem to come from an outside source. They are moments bringing forth change either for better or for worse."

I leave you with two questions:

- 1 Is the spirit and energy of Anton Boisen's vision mainly caught in the model of "one size fitting all?" The image I have is of the spirit caught in a "bunker"

Or, is the spirit and energy of the original thoughts of Anton Boisen moving and re-shaping according to the context of changing times of society and ministry needs today? Is the spirit living in a "tent" very moveable and free flowing? If it is – is it receiving full encouragement and blessing or is it being seen as a threat to what has been?

- 2 Will Clinical Pastoral Education as we know it be with us in 40 years? I am not sure

Will transformative reflective practice be with us in 40 years – it certainly will.

This room is full of creative passionate people, many who have experienced the transformative power of reflective practice. I believe you will find a way to the Promised Land.

I thank Andy for raising the issues and giving us a glimmer of just one possibility.

Thank you

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