The fruit of our diligent work

So many people feel insignificant…
no one really cares
no one understands,
nothing makes sense
there is no hope in life.

So many people cannot cope with all of life’s circumstances and struggle to find their feet in the world. As pastoral caregivers we have the privilege to work as guides in these people’s lives.

So often we enter the sacred place of another’s life and have the opportunity to help them to understand themselves and their circumstances, to help them to find meaning in their past and present, and through God’s grace, help them open a vision and hope for their future.

This is our divine duty towards everyone in our consulting rooms.

In this calling we need to be professional, well equipped and responsible, trained and intentionally adhere to our ethical codes, values and norms to achieve unique outcomes that are not forced or manipulated.

We should never live our life through our clients’ lives or try to force our understanding on them or urge them to make changes in their lives with which they are not comfortable. As professionals we should practise professionally.

We trust that the whole process of professionalisation will lift up the standard of our profession and make us a valuable asset in the healing and caring industry in South Africa. At this moment our professional body is being established and the Association of Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP) will soon see the light. When that is finalised, the Board for Pastoral and Spiritual Counselling (BPSC) will be formally established. We will keep you informed.

At this moment Marieke en Lindie Steenkamp is working very hard to adapt our documents and administration system – a hearty thanks to them.

After 25 years SAAP is on the brink of achieving what we set out to do and we sincerely hope that the BPSC will be worthy of all the years of effort.

Thanks to all the members of the Executive for their hard work and continued support!

Dr Tertius Erasmus.
The landscape of pain and hurt (part 2)

Prof Wentzel Coetzer of North-West University was the keynote speaker at the SAAP Conference in March 2016. Following is the second part of a summary of his presentation at the conference.

B. A few pastoral suggestions regarding the landscape of pain and hurt

In our first session I invited you to join me on a journey, exploring a couple of the most prominent landmarks on the landscape of those who have been through crises and trauma. In this session I would like to make a few suggestions from my own experience – guidelines that helped me to a large extent to reach some breakthroughs.

► Forgiveness

Often victims or counselees are pressurized to express forgiveness shortly after some of the most horrible injustices or crimes were committed against them. The problem here is that, if a Christian is the victim, he/she will probably repeat the words that are expected from them purely on an intellectual basis. The act of forgiveness and the emotions connected to that act must however be connected to our intellect, our spirit and our emotions in order to be really effective.

This person, who is now compelled to express forgiveness on an intellectual level, may however still be wrestling with many unresolved emotions, like for instance rage against the perpetrator and even against God, plus a thousand other questions. In practice he/she, however, usually suppresses all these emotions and buries them very deep and then put a lid on them. So, on an intellectual and even a spiritual level he/she obeyed what was expected from him/her, but on an emotional level there was no way that he/she was ready or able to do it.

In the Meier Clinics they say that they had many such cases where, after for instance six months, such a person is taken up with severe depression. Previously this person had no history of depression and there are no signs of any chemical imbalance and eventually through his/her personal history and by filling in a detailed questionnaire they discover the deeper root. It could then for example be a rape where a 16-year-old girl was deprived and robbed of so many things:

• Her personal security
• Her womanhood
• Her joy in life
• Her wellbeing
• Her dreams for the future
• Her trust in other people
• Her trust in God
• Aspects connected to her sexual identity
• A happy marriage life in future, etc.

Then they first have to take her through a period of grief and mourning regarding all these things that she has lost, before the actual healing process can really start. In other words, just to demand forgiveness right on the spot, is in most cases not really helping the victim, but could even cause more complications, that will have to be sorted out by other counsellors at a later stage.

► The role of triggers and repeating patterns

If somebody has drawn up a timeline regarding their life history according to correct guidelines and enough questions, it is usually not very difficult to point out where certain negative repeating patterns occur over and over again. Such recurring patterns are usually connected to the same kind of triggers, and the triggers could be related to any of our five senses, whether it is sound, visual images, smell, taste, etc.

In this regard the psychologist, Babette Rothschild, wrote two very interesting books:

• The body remembers. The psychophysiology of trauma and trauma treatment (2000)
• Help for the helper. The psychophysiology of compassion fatigue (2006).

Two other books by two other psychologists that I found very helpful are the following:

• Arlyss Norcross McDonald. 1995. Repressed memories. Can you trust them? (pastoral approach)

The triggers that keep on responding are again related to the unresolved trauma that is stored in that part of the brain where the entire unresolved trauma is pushed in and stored. The unwanted negative reactions will keep on recurring and every time it will embarrass this person – sometimes over years. When it becomes too overwhelming for some per-
sions, they will revert to some way of dulling the overwhelming emotional pain and that could for instance be any addiction.

So often the deeper root of the recurring trigger (that causes negative behaviour or fearful thoughts, etc.), is unresolved pain, trauma or a grieving process that was not worked through years ago. Usually, as soon as the deeper root is identified, the trauma can be worked through and the recurring pattern is terminated because the trigger loses its power and healing takes place.

Sinclair (1993:56) makes the statement that every cell in our body has memory and then he adds:

“This physical phenomenon raises many new and radical questions for our traditional understanding of memory, addiction, mental illness, emotional imbalance, and spiritual well-being.”

▶ Identify the lies

A very big part of healing includes helping counselees recognizing lies and replacing them with the truth – in final instance the truth of God’s Word. Whenever there was trauma, crisis, rejection, pain or hurt, there is a big possibility that some lie has been rooted somewhere – especially when the same negative experience repeated itself many times. In John 8:44 Jesus says: “Your father is the devil… and everything he says is a lie… he is also the father of all lies.”

For any highly traumatized person, unresolved trauma and the associated triggers, usually connect to a very big lie, namely the assumption that the trauma has never ended. Therefore, any stress signal could in future be an indication for this person that he/she is back in the traumatic situation again.

In this regard my own approach has been to focus on counselees’ trauma-history/ timeline/genogram in order to start right from the beginning identifying how many times a lie was projected - either verbally or non-verbally to this person – and then to list all of these incidents. Secondly, we have to talk through this list, and thirdly, we have to pray through this list. Very often the incidents on the list refer to their personal identity, their personal abilities and God-given gifts and talents.

They then have to distance themselves in prayer from all previous negative pronouncements about themselves in the past - very often for the first time they have to discover their real identity in Christ. Most of the time an emotion like rejection is at the top of the list. In this process we are also simultaneously dealing with the unresolved traumatic expe-

perience that triggered negative emotions repeatedly over the years - and when the lie has been cancelled out, the trigger is powerless.

According to Glen Schiraldi in his book, *The post-traumatic stress disorder sourcebook*, the unresolved traumatic material in the brain then moves over from the *amygdala to the hippocampus*, where all the normal associated material are stored – and then healing has taken place.

In this regard, as pastoral counsellors, it can help us significantly to take cognizance of one of the neighbouring disciplines like that of *cognitive therapy*, with its emphasis on the developing of skills for testing and modifying beliefs and identifying distorted thinking. In pastoral terms we would just say: look out for the lies! Some good literature in this regard would be the following (cf. bibliography for more detail regarding each title):

- Chris Thurman – *The lies we believe*
- Paul David Tripp – *War of words*
- William Backus and Marie Chapian – *Telling yourself the truth*
- Reinette Kruger – *Pastorale begeleiding van die emocioneel en geestelik verwonde persoon met betrekking tot geïnternaliseerde leuens – NWU – M-Dissertation.*

▶ Dream patterns

As counsellors we must be aware of the fact that very often people experience dreams which are indications of unresolved pain or trauma. Therefore, I have learned that it is always worth asking about counselees’ dream patterns. Very often unresolved pain, hurt, trauma or unresolved grieving processes for the very first time surface through a dream – sometimes after many years.


- Paying attention to the messages in dreams can enlighten us about areas of our lives that are too complex or difficult to face consciously
- Nightmares are common purveyors of repressed memories
- Sometimes it is as if there is some small detail and it is like a camera that is zooming in onto this in the dream - this can sometimes be connected to some little detail that stuck in the subconscious during intense trauma
Recurring dreams are emergency signals from your unconscious – the signals keeps repeating until you respond to their message by dealing with the issue imbedded in the dream. The aspect of recurring dreams is also emphasize by the Christian psychiatrist, Paul Meier who co-authored a book on dreams with Robert Wise, with the title, Windows of the soul (1995). They make the following statements:

- “Recurring dreams or variations thereof keep coming back until the buried issue is unearthed and faced” (p.14).
- “Rather than hiding truth, the dream asks us to trouble ourselves to learn the language our inner movie producer speaks” (p.18).

Regarding dreams in children’s lives the Christian psychologist, Dr Arlyss Norcross McDonald (1995:141) refers to two very common themes, (and she also quotes Dr Lenore Terr, a well-known child psychiatrist at the University of California in this regard):

- *Dreams of falling* (falling into a crevice or an abyss or into a deep dark pit, etc.)
- *Dreams of being chased by huge animals* (and I would add: especially a snake).

By learning to ask people about certain repeating patterns regarding their dreams, I have had many interesting experiences in counselling and also cues that eventually led to breakthroughs with regard to unexplainable behaviour patterns or abnormal fears or unresolved trauma.

► Ask about any direct correlation between physical problems and trauma

There is again this powerful factor of the lie connected to the way in which we perceive or experience trauma or crisis. And if the lie has settled in and been rooted deep down, one of the logical results could eventually be physical problems. Because there is a close interaction between the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of man, every person does have a certain limit up till where you can absorb stress, trauma, pain and crises and then you reach full capacity regarding your emotional and spiritual boundaries.

There is then just one area still available to absorb this ‘overflowing reservoir’s’ spill-over and that is our bodies.

The psychiatrist, Rollo May, wrote quite a number of books focusing on this interaction between the physical on the one hand and the spiritual / emotional on the other hand (also the late well known French medical doctor and theologian, Dr Paul Tournier – cf. 2012). In his book, The meaning of anxiety (1950:82-86), May says, for instance, that he often had the experience, that in proportion to the degree that an emotion like anxiety can be tolerated consciously by a person, somatic symptoms do not appear - but when it becomes too big to be dealt with, then physical symptoms may appear and the anxiety will then disappear from this person’s consciousness. The physical symptoms are thus alleviating the anxiety without resolving the problem - there has just been a shift in emphasis.

In his book, The healing power of a Christian mind, William Backus refers to the fact that, until a few years ago, medical biologists insisted that the brain and the mind had nothing to do with the control of the immune system. That was until Candace Pert (2003), chief of the section on brain biochemistry at the National Institute of Mental Health turned this theory upside down and opened the way to a new discipline – proclaiming the power of the mind in relation to the immune system: psycho-neuro-immunology. The conclusion: the immune system is under the direct control of our brain – your brain can thus make you ill or well in a certain sense.

Because this is the case, we need to remind our counselees that, what disturbs and distresses their minds, will affect their brains – and what their brains do – especially what it does for a long time – will have mighty immune-system repercussions, positive or negative. Against this background Backus (1998:64) says this is why a new model of health and illness has invited doctors to abandon the old biomedical model of simple materialism – the idea that eventually there will be a pill for every illness. Rather, the spirit and the non-material mind will always influence the material brain and body, so that the body is to some extent the outward manifestation of the spirit and the mind.

In the Word something of this truth is reflected in the following two verses:

- “A cheerful heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit makes one sick” (Prov 17:22 – The Living Bible).
- “A man’s courage can sustain his broken body, but when courage dies, what hope is left?” (Prov 18:14 – The Living Bible).

In this same regard the psychologist, Aphrodite Matsakis (1996:202) says that, “Unexpressed grief has been implicated in the development or worsening of medical problems
such as diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension, asthma, cancer, and a variety of allergies, rashes, aches and pains.”

McDonald (1995:152) refers, for example, to many cases of asthma that have been tied to memories of an oral rape or a choking incident — the asthma then stopped after the recovery of the associated memory. Against the background of this and other research (cf. Coetzee, 2006; Ray, 2004), if someone has been through a traumatic experience, the standard question seems to be:

- “Have you become aware of any specific physical symptoms shortly after that traumatic experience that you never had before?”
- “Have you been to a doctor for a medical examination regarding this problem?”

If there is no medical explanation, but there has still been a recurring pattern of symptoms since the traumatic incident, then the next question would be:

- “What is usually the kind of trigger that activates the recurring pattern of symptoms?”

Questions like these would usually help to identify the root of the problem.

**The ‘why-question’**

In most cases of intense trauma, during or directly after the trauma most people are wrestling with the ‘why’ question — “God, why....?” I would say that one of the golden rules is not even to try to answer that question then, because at that moment there is usually no answer. Should the counsellor try to provide an answer or try to defend God, you are immediately caught in a trap. Even from a physiological viewpoint it is not wise to put too much emphasis on a spiritual issue like God’s possible involvement right at the beginning of your counselling journey with a severely traumatized victim. I say this because emotions like rage, fury and anger are part of the very first emotions after the experience of shock, trauma, intense loss, suicide, etc. Many persons then want to blame somebody and, if there is not somebody to blame, then God is to blame. Therefore, it is usually not the right time for an in-depth discussion of possible intellectual reasons and the possible role of God etc.

The best approach would be on the other hand to assure the counselee or the victim that at this very moment there are no answers, and may be you are just as devastated and speechless as he/she. You can further assure them of your support in the days and weeks ahead and keep praying with them that the Lord Himself will eventually bring the pieces of the puzzle together in His unique way.

Another important aspect to keep in mind regarding the age-old question “Why?” when emotionally affected by loss and grief and trauma, is to recognize that it is not really an intellectual question but rather an emotional lament (James, Friedman & Matthews, 2002:100). Before we thus rush in with some big intellectual definition of death or trauma, make sure that you are responding to the real question. At that early stage the best response would be just to acknowledge the pain and loss and assist them in recognizing, accepting and dealing with the truth of those feelings. Superficial answers and formulas usually lead to significant confusion and even rage against God.

“They tried to heal my people's serious injuries as if they were small wounds. They said, ‘It's all right, it's all right.’ But really, it is not all right” (Jer 8:11: - The New Century Version).

“They offer superficial treatments for my people’s mortal wound…”(New Living Translation).

During such times there is much more wisdom in less words and more listening and just being there for the victim. In this regard Rodger Hurding (1988:376) quotes John Lake as saying that,

“Hurt people have a greater need to meet a God who hears and groans, who struggles for words, than a God who has much to say to them.”

In Phil 1:9 Paul has a prayer that is so relevant with regard to counsellors:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may more and more overflow in fulness of knowledge and depth of discernment, so that you will be able to determine what is best” (The Complete Jewish Bible).

“... so that you will be able to decide what really matters” (Common English Bible)

Godly discernment in each situation and a full realization of your total dependence on the Holy Spirit, despite all your qualifications and training and experience, are of utmost importance. I am sure that many of you will agree that, so often at some stage during some counselling sessions in the past, there was a certain turning point that eventually led to a breakthrough. And in retrospect you just realized that you and your intellectual knowledge, your training, your degrees, your diplomas and your years of experience had absolute nothing to do with what eventually happened as that session developed and unfolded.
So often I had this overwhelming sense that I was just privileged by God Almighty to be used at that moment to facilitate to some extent between a broken and wounded human being on the one hand, and on the other hand Jesus Christ the Heavenly Healer. During such times I just felt like an observer, and in front of me a Godly miracle was performed in terms of emotional healing with regard to which I could not take any credit at all.

As Prof David Seamands (1985:131) describes it so strikingly: we as counsellors are only temporary assistants to the Holy Spirit in this whole process, and we must never forget that! Something of what Paul is referring to in 2 Cor 4:7:

“However, we possess this precious treasure in frail, human vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves” (Amplified Version).

Afrikaans: “…ons is maar net kleipotte wat maklik breek…” What a privilege - to Him all the glory! ■

Bibliography

Spiritual Bullying and Pastoral Care

By Colin Finucane, Pastoral Counsellor at Vista Clinic in Pretoria

Pastoral care and counselling is a very complex undertaking, which can so easily be compromised because of the complexities of human nature. Therefore, the aim of this article is to create an awareness of “spiritual bullying” within the pastoral caring and counselling context.

Very often pastors are the first to come in contact with those struggling with mental health and other issues. Those confronted with grief, trauma, family problems, illness and other mental health problems most often reach out to the pastor for help and guidance. How the pastor responds to those in need, what they say and do, will have a profound impact on the life of the one seeking help (counselee) – for good or for bad.

Furthermore, as Professor Wentzel Coetzer so aptly pointed out at our last SAAP Conference, it is very important to keep in mind that each time we encounter someone else’s most personal inner life, we are on “holy ground”. When someone reaches out for help, they are coming to counselling with their brokenness and most often they are extremely vulnerable. And we, as pastoral counsellors, being
mere mortals – earthen vessels – are representing the Lord God to these broken and hurting people.

Having said this, pastoral care and counselling, if not approached with awareness, insight, sensitivity, patience and respect, can very easily become “spiritual bullying”. Spiritual bullying takes place when authority, leadership, beliefs or influence are misused or inappropriately applied within counselling to the detriment or harm of the individual seeking help. Sadly, spiritual bullying is very prevalent, not only in counselling but also in our churches, from the pulpit, in our communities, on social media and via e-mail or SMS.

The counselling Alliance

Through the story of Job we get a striking view of a counselling setting that started out well and then turned bad. Initially Job’s friends came and sat with him to comfort him, but then began to counsel and instruct him. They insisted that he search his heart for this kind of suffering does not happen without a good reason. Job referred to them as “…miserable comforters”, and asks, “How long will you torment me and crush me with words?” (Job 16:2 & 19:2). Later the Lord responds to Eliphaz the Temanite with these words: “I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.” (Job 42:7).

I do not think they intentionally wanted to harm Job, but rather believed that they were doing the right thing to help him. They were his “well-meaning” friends who really cared, but their counsel turned to bullying and became counterproductive. So, too, as we enter the counselling alliance there is a need to be vigilant and sensitive when interacting with those who are seeking help.

Unfortunately, the sad reality is that too many people get badly hurt in the very place where they should be able to get help, support, comfort, healing, and have a sense of belonging – the church. In the counselling process it is very easy to hurt people with our words, attitudes, judgments, rejection, discrimination, stigmatization, superimposing our belief and ideas on the counselee and the like. In this regard, due to the dynamics of the counselling relationship, there is a fine line between “shepherding” and “bullying”.

The Counselling Process

Being Human

Part of being human is the need for relationships. The nature of these relationships are heavily influenced by our thoughts, emotions and past experiences. Furthermore, our expectations in regard to the present and our preconceived ideas of how things ought to be also have a profound impact on relationships. When an individual is unable to evaluate their expectations over against reality and make the necessary adjustments, it may result in mental health issues, needing specialised help.

As we enter into the counselling alliance both the counselee and the counsellor come with an own agenda, individual needs and expectations. The counselee may want understanding, support, answers and healing, while the counsellor wants to be empathetic, supportive and provide meaningful help. However, our words, questions, body language, facial expression or the lack thereof are influencing and impacting the counselling process. The way we use scripture and the particular verses we may quote, the advice we give, or what we say in our prayers with the counselee could be intimidating, manipulative, patronising, guilt provoking and judgmental, thus bullying the counselee.

Countertransference

In psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, it is held that the notion of countertransference can become an ethical dilemma within the therapeutic alliance if not kept in check. I am not hereby suggesting that countertransference is directly related to spiritual bullying, but that an understanding of it can help us have better insight into the dynamics of the counselling process and the presence of bullying.

It is understood that in therapy the counselee may project expectations, thoughts or emotions onto the counsellor awakening certain feelings such a discomfort, frustration, anger, intimidation, a need to set the record straight and the like. Countertransference takes place when the counsellor redirects these feelings back toward the counselee and their emotions become entangled with the story of the one seeking help. If the counsellor is not aware of this countertransference the therapy could become counterproductive.

On Psychology Today’s web page Steven Reidbord points out that:\(^1\)

“Since the 1950s, psychoanalysts and psychodynamic therapists have held a more benign view of countertransference. It is no longer seen as an impediment to treatment (at least not inevitably),


http://www.saap.za.net
but instead as important data for the therapist to use in helping the patient.

… Countertransference is not always helpful. Particularly when it is unexamined — or, worse, unrecognized — it can indeed interfere with effective treatment. …More often, though, countertransference is problematic when it is negative. The therapist feels bored, irked, paralyzed, or contemptuous in the presence of a particular patient. It is the therapist’s job to recognize these feelings and deal with them.”

So too, with pastoral counselling, when someone comes to the pastoral counsellor for help they come with their own needs and agendas. They have expectations for understanding, help, and problem resolution. The counselee could view the pastor as a person of God who has all the answers and, therefore, expects an explanation of, or resolution for their problem, thus putting pressure on the pastor.

At the same time the counsellor has their own emotions, thoughts and personal beliefs, which they may be projecting onto the counselee, especially if disagreeing with the counselee or believing they have the solution to the problem on hand. In the event of the counsellor having a sense of discomfort, feeling frustrated or pressured, they may have the need to react by correcting or instructing the counselee, superimposing their own thoughts, ideas, and needs onto the one seeking help. Unaware of this dynamic, the counselling process can be compromised and the counselee can be bullied or further hurt.

Breakdown of the Counselling Process

Do pastoral counsellors intestinally want to hurt or bully the counselee? Well I think I could most definitely and emphatically say – NO! We are committed to helping people not to harm them or betray their trust. So where then does it go wrong?

Modernism brought with it the characterization of the human being with the body–mind dichotomy. Furthermore, the notion of the secular and the sacred standing in bipolar opposition to each other further impacts the counselling process. Within this framework and with this understanding most often the mind is viewed as sacred resulting in something “…that crosses the denominational boundaries - and that is a near-universal misunderstanding of the nature of psychiatric illnesses and injuries. All too often wounded Christians are further hurt as churches force on them spiritual diagnoses and spir-

2 Accessed in January 2016 at http://www.balmnet.co.uk/spirituality.htm 
wisdom and an understanding heart, but when praying with the counseele or quoting scripture, to do so with insight, sensitivity and responsibility. In other words, “the end justifies the means”. This is not helping people or bringing healing but rather bullying.

**In summary**

When counselling those who are struggling with mental health issues or traumatic events we need to remember we are “on holy ground”, and there is a fine line between, “shepherding” and “bullying”.

When counselling those in need, always be aware of countertransference and spiritual bullying. Recognise the harm it can cause. Always be honest with and aware of your own unconscious needs and whatever you do, do no harm, for “the end does not always justify the means”. The misuse of authority, leadership, or influence, and for that matter the Bible or prayer, does not help the counseele but hurts them even more.

Let us always be respectful of our clients, knowing that religious beliefs and practices can and do help in the healing process. For those struggling with mental health issues, a spiritual grounding goes a long way in enabling people to cope better with life’s stressors. The respectful use of prayer, scripture and pastoral counselling does help counselees find peace and hope in religious faith and also empowers them to stand in a meaningful relationship with the Lord our God.

---

**Non-profit organisations and annual fees**

By Sankie Greyling, SAAP Treasurer

Most non-profit organisations are voluntarily originated by a few enthusiastic, ambitious and committed people interested in and concerned about the welfare and future of an activity or industry.

The purpose is to keep their subscribers (members) up to date with important information and developments in the industry, using newsletters, magazines, web sites and e-mail notifications. Through organising conferences and training workshops, members’ skills and awareness are further enhanced.

This information normally concerns changes in legislation, new developments, new technologies and improvements within the industry in order to maintain service standards and improve the efficiencies and future growth of the particular industry.

Any non-profit organisation has certain costs in the execution of its activities. Members are therefore invited to subscribe towards these costs and this is also where most of the income from subscriptions are spent.

For non-profit activities, these fees are often not enough to cover the cost and the executors have to find other avenues to generate funds to run the organisation, such as advertising, product sales and finding sponsors, all with the purpose of benefiting the subscribers.

Annual fees are usually not regarded as a grudge expense, as the subscribers feel a sense of belonging to a professional organisation, acting in their best interest.

The fees are seen as a small contribution towards being regularly enlightened about what is going on in the business environment and providing them with relevant news and knowledge that enrich and support their practices.

The SAAP Executive consists of seven members and apart from their travelling expenses, all time and effort contributed are voluntary. SAAP annual fees (subscriptions) are used to cover all administrative expenses and to professionally run the SAAP office.

Since SAAP is a non-profit organisation, the Executive strives to keep fees as low as possible. With the advent of the envisaged Professional Body, expenses will increase and SAAP will need every member to keep their annual fees up to date.

The general practice with Professional Bodies is that member registration is automatically cancelled in the event that fees are not paid within 90 days of the start of the financial year.

In the past, the SAAP Executive has been very lenient and members were granted 12 months leeway for paying annual fees. Once the Board for Pastoral and Spiritual Counselling (BPSC) is operational, the 90 days rule will come into effect.

This is therefore a friendly though urgent request for the punctual payment of annual fees. As at the end of the first quarter (31 March 2016) a total of R59 703 of annual fees were still outstanding, of which R11 465 is still owed for the 2015 financial year.

---

http://www.saap.za.net
My experience of Clinic Pastoral Internship at Vista

By Hanro Vorster

This is a summary of my internship at Vista Clinic. I started the internship in April 2015. I had just finished my M.Div. in Theology, and stumbled onto the opportunity. Although I didn’t think I needed any more training in pastoral care, I applied because I thought it would look good on my CV.

When I started working at Vista I believed myself to be fit in the sense of pastoral care. I could have hours of conversation with people and I could give advice and help them. After a month at Vista, however, I realised that one or maybe two pastoral conversations a day were sufficient to drain me.

It became clear to me that there is a difference between having a conversation with a teenager about his relationship with his parents and God and that he “doesn’t feel in a good place”, and having a pastoral session with a girl sharing excruciating detail about how her alcoholic parents abused and sexually mistreated her. I was under the impression all stories are the same, and as an objective third party working in a narrative framework I should be immune to any influences from these stories. But I wasn’t.

I came to the clinic every day feeling I didn’t have answers or advice to the stories in front of me. People that needed advice and structure came to us for help. I felt helpless and started getting depressed.

After a conversation with my supervisor, I realised the mistakes I have made. “I thought I knew what I was doing”. I was here to learn, but I had the attitude of teaching. My supervisor assured me that I didn’t need to be a hero, I didn’t need to always have the correct answers or the best possible advice, but that I should rather explore the issues with my patients.

The basic framework for my training was based on different aspects that were already in place at Vista Clinic. The first was the mentoring of Dr. Colin Finucane.

We spent hours together, talking about the processes and methods of pastoral care, and how that is used in practice. I also observed Dr. Colin while he did pastoral sessions. After a while I had the chance of doing pastoral sessions on my own, under his supervision.

I also had to attend every group session on the therapeutic program. I enjoyed watching my colleagues with their unique ways. After a few weeks of only sitting and listening, I started presenting groups myself. Apart from the pastoral counselling training, I was soon included in the chapel services in the morning and had to do a weekly service. I also had to attend all the monthly CPD sessions that was focused on therapists in the mental health framework.

In this way I was exposed to the spiritual and clinical world of mental health problems. Some of the challenges made me uncomfortable, for example doing research on spiritual expressions that was not part of my Dutch Reformed background, or researching different religions and its impact on mental health.

The information that I obtained to do a better job, also flowed over into my personal life. I changed my sleeping patterns, ate more healthy food, worked on relationships with better social skills - overall developing a healthier lifestyle in a holistic way.

I have learned so much from Vista and could not have foreseen the effect that this internship would have had on my personal life and role as pastor in the church.
In the previous article I emphasised the importance of realising that God is the source of all authority. I explained that spiritual authority which results from obedience to God enables us to set boundaries and stick to them. On the other hand those who do not surrender to His authority might find it difficult to discern what is important and gather enough courage to make decisions and stick to those without manipulation, aggression, coercion or giving in under pressure.

In conclusion I suggested that if man would turn to God in repentance as 2 Cor. 3:16-18 suggests, spiritual authority would be regained through the restored intimacy with God. Disobedience will however weaken this authority and in the area of disobedience the individual will reap the fruit of doubt and uncertainty – although it might be hidden beneath bravado, loudness, aggression or manipulation.

God gives us clear guidance on the boundaries He sets. Where can we start looking for those boundaries that are good representations of the heart of God? When I read the Exodus narrative it struck me that we could start with the covenant God made with Israel on Sinai. When reading this we need to keep a few things in mind: Who were the recipients? What was their context? What would they have heard? How do I respond?

Before exploring this set of boundaries, let us first define the term “boundary”: a boundary in the sense we use it is like a fence with a gate in it – you can decide what or who to let in and what or who to keep out. This gate has a handle on the inside only! It is intended to let the good (things and people) in and keep the bad out. Christians who misunderstand this concept, tend to see boundaries as selfish and self-centred.

Secondly, boundaries define who we are and are not. It is not something one is born with or that is cast in stone for the rest of one’s life. As our identity develops, our boundaries need to be strengthened in some areas, shifted in other areas and as we ma-
ture new boundaries are employed to define us in a work situation, a marriage, as parents and in the community we live in.

Without these boundaries we cannot build/uphold a sense of who we are. By definition a boundary is like a double-sided coin that never lands on its side: it is either head or tail. See a boundary as a double-sided coin: on the one side is written YES and on the other side is written NO. So the reality is that whenever you say “YES” to something you inadvertently say “NO” to something else.

This could be a useful tool to support you in making a decision! Whatever your choice – check the flip-side of your “decision coin” and see what the consequences of your choice will be! In other words if you said “YES” to working overtime on a regular basis what are you saying “NO” to? Family life? Time with God? Exercise? The question to ask yourself then is whether you can afford this? What will the price be?

Let us now take a closer look at the marriage contract between God and His people recorded in Exodus 20 and link it to our discussion on boundaries. The first thing God said in this chapter is that He has taken them on this journey. Secondly He said He took them out of the “house of bondage”. He freed them from their slave drivers. Who were these people and what was their context? They were a broken nation who had spent 400 years in bondage under these slave drivers who did not care what they did to the people as long as they got results. They did not respect them as people nor respected their property – even less their God.

God’s people were not allowed to set any boundaries! God Himself took action. We hear in Exodus 19 that God invited them into a close relationship with Himself when they camped at mount Sinai. They responded positively to this and God could give them this covenant – an undertaking from His side that things were going to be different from then. From then they were allowed to have boundaries in line with His character and heart for them – the one side of the coin – and there would be dire consequences if they did not live within the boundaries reflecting His Identity – an identity He replicat-
ed in His people at creation and wanted to start restoring. His intention was that all the nations on earth should get to know Him and His goodness when they watched His peoples’ way of living and leading others.
At this stage they had not done anything to deserve this relationship – He invited them into this relationship before He introduced these boundaries. The boundaries were thus not a set of rules to obey so that they could be loved by God or approved by Him but the result of a love relationship wherewith He wanted to restore their dignity – it was not an effort to make them better or good but to restore their dignity and teach them how to live free from their slave drivers.

How do we respond to these boundaries? Do we interpret them in this way or do we see them as a set of rules to be obeyed in order to get into and stay in God’s favour? If the latter were true it would bring about fear of failure, perfectionism, evaluation of self and others, self-abasement, inferiority, anger, powerlessness, fear of and a motion of distrust in God and eventually rebellion. This rebellion would then cause the loss of spiritual authority and a loss of direction when we intend to set boundaries in our everyday lives. If we could, however, see them as God restoring our dignity and teaching us to live free from our slave drivers, we may be able to endorse them and appreciate the way in which they were perfectly manifested in the life of Christ on our behalf. We may then be willing that God can take us on our own spiritual journey of learning to live through His Holy Spirit as Jesus did, so that all the nations could get to know Him through our lifestyle and leadership style!

In the next edition we are going to flesh this out a bit more…

---

**Winter School 2016**

**FAMSA Western Cape**

FAMSA Western Cape hosts its first Winter School in July 2016 with the theme “Come and Experience”.

Five well-known experts will each facilitate a workshop that will allow attendees to experience their work lives. You will have the opportunity not only to learn and experience how they do it but also discuss what you experience.

- 4 July 2016: Experiencing Narrative Therapy - Dr Elize Morkel
- 5 July 2016: Experiencing Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy - Dr Elmien Lesch
- 6 July 2016: Affirmative Therapy Practice - Dr. Marlene Wasserman
- 7 July 2016: Working with Trauma and the Body through Somatic Experiencing - Andrea Eckstein
- 8 July 2016: Come and Experience Manhood - Sergio Milandri

*Workshops are limited to only 30 seats!*

**To register**

Email: famtracadmin@famsawc.org.za
Call: 021 447 7951
Website: www.famsawc.org.za

---

**SAAP CONTACT DETAILS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAAP Secretary:</th>
<th>Banking details</th>
<th>Please note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marieke Willers</td>
<td>Nedbank</td>
<td>• Cheques must be made payable to “The Southern African Association for Pastoral Work”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:admin@saap.za.net">admin@saap.za.net</a></td>
<td>Branch: Woodlands</td>
<td>• Fax or e-mail proof of payment to the SAAP Secretary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal address:</td>
<td>Account no: 1020501553</td>
<td>• Please state your initials &amp; last name or group/centre name as reference for any deposit made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Box 704, Newlands, Pretoria, 0049</td>
<td>Branch code: 136-305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone: 082 600 6578</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax: 0865105840</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCLAIMER**

While SAAP supports initiatives for equipping pastoral workers, statements and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views and/or opinions of SAAP. SAAP does not make any warranty regarding the information supplied. SAAP shall in no event be liable for any decision or action taken in reliance on this information.