

Spirituality and Wellbeing: inter-religious perspectives

Annual conference of the Religious Experience Research Centre

17 July 2018 (Founders Library, Lampeter), 2-5.30 p.m.

2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Panel 1: Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture

Prof William West, University of Manchester

Counselling and Faith: Allowing religion and spirituality to have a place in the counselling relationship

3.30 – 4p.m. tea/coffee

4 p.m. – 5.30 p.m. Panel 2: Interreligious Perspectives on spirituality and wellbeing

Mark Seed, Cardiff

'Wherever we find ourselves': The spiritual health of children, young people and families

Dr Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen, UWTSO

Moves like Jagger: Teaching and Learning with Disability in the Room

Jayne Timmins

How counselling training, being a counsellor and neurobiology have deepened spiritual awareness - a personal journey

Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen

Moves like Jagger: Teaching and Learning with Disability in the Room

Whether encountering a new philosophy or a new patient, we all have to face our assumptions about religious beliefs and bodies. Relevancy is one avenue by which students might explore the significance of the past and, in doing so, move beyond a surface notion that history merely exists to teach us moral lessons. In encountering healing miracles of religious texts, the view about disability and illness is clear: the presence of the disabled and ill changes the community. But how is the study of religion and healthcare further impacted by a student's own understanding of themselves as ill or disabled?

BIOGRAPHY

Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen is a Lecture in Late Antiquity at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UK) and Associate Professor of Early and Medieval Christian History at Pacific Lutheran University (USA). She teaches courses in the history of early and medieval Christianity, and specific topics in historical theology, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and medicine and religion. Her research is focused primarily on social ethics found in Greek patristic and monastic texts of the late antique/early Byzantine era. She is the author of *"They Who Give From Evil": the Response of the Eastern Church to Money-lending in the Early Christian Era* (Wipf and Stock, 2012) and *John Moschos' Spiritual Meadow: Authority and Autonomy at the End of the Antique World* (Ashgate, 2014). She is currently working on a translation and history of *The Life of St. Stephen the Younger* with Dr. Tyler Travillian.

Mark Seed

'Wherever we find ourselves': The spiritual health of children, young people and families

Following the British government's launch of its Well-being programme in 2010, the 'well-being agenda' has become familiar in the context of work with children and young people in the UK. There has also been a significant amount of research into the 'spiritual well-being' of children and young people. However, 'spiritual health' is still a relatively new area of research and practice, especially concerning the non-religious spirituality of children and young people. My paper presents a brief review of literature into definitions of children's spiritual health, followed by a summary of my relevant research and practice with children, young people and families. I explore the links between children's understandings of spirituality and spiritual health, across a range of settings in different countries. My research findings and practice support the view that wherever we work, we can enable children from all nations and backgrounds to become spiritually aware and healthy.

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Seed is an international educator who has supported children, young people and families since 1988, in several different countries. He has research degrees in community and youth work and education, specialising in spiritual development, and is currently based in Cardiff. A keen European, Mark was formerly Associate Editor of the politico-spiritual journal *New Humanity* and Vice-President of the European Social Action Network (ESAN). He is now a member of both the Alister Hardy Trust and the International Association for Children's Spirituality.

Jayne Timmins

How counselling training, being a counsellor and neurobiology have deepened spiritual awareness - a personal journey

Training to be a counsellor, and subsequently researching deeply into neurobiology for my therapeutic practice deepened my faith and sense of spirituality and this in turn enables me to receive and respond to a wide range of client spiritualities. Learning about neurobiology - how the brain functions on a modular level, how and why emotions are created - increased my capacity for compassion. The knowledge gained from these studies gives me a deeper understanding of human nature, and enables me to be a better, more rounded therapist, and - surprisingly - deepened my sense of spirituality and connectedness. In my talk I will explore this process.

BIOGRAPHY

30 year experience in nursing, 20 years as a counsellor, 25 years practising Nichiren Buddhist. Currently running the counselling department for Dyfed Powys Police and teaches at Coleg Sir Gar on the Foundation degree and BA in counselling.

Professor William West, Chester

Counselling and faith: allowing religion and spirituality to have a place in the counselling relationship

In this presentation I will reflect on the potential role of the client's faith in the counselling process and outcome. I will consider the implications of the attitude of the individual counsellor to faith and the possible challenges faced by addressing issues of faith within the counselling process in relation to spiritual experiences; meaning making and values. I will also explore the connections between faith, mental health and wellbeing.

BIOGRAPHY

Professor William West is a Visiting Professor to the University of Chester and Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Counselling Studies at the University of Manchester, where he was most noted for his interest in counselling and spirituality and for his work with doctorate and PhD students. William has written 34 academic papers, 22 book chapters and 35 professional articles. He has (co-) written/edited 6 books, the most recent one being *Therapy, culture and spirituality: developing therapeutic practice*, co-edited with Greg Nolan and published by Palgrave 2015. William remains passionately interested in the overlap between counselling and religious pastoral care.