

## ***My Participation in Clinical Pastoral Education:* Evan M. Sherrard (2006)**

I started my career in agriculture, a field I enjoyed greatly. Despite advice that I did not have the expected background, I applied for a Government Cadetship and was selected for six years of inter-woven farming and academic training. I qualified for a BAgSci in 1959, the year I married Isabelle - two fundamental experiences that shaped my life.

Half-way through those six years I experienced a "call" to the ministry while patching chaff bags on a mid-Canterbury farm. After eighteen months' confusion I applied for training as a Presbyterian minister and was granted release from my government bond and admission to study at the Presbyterian Theological Hall, Knox College, Dunedin. Those days of agricultural study, with its hands-on-experience and practical application of scientifically, pragmatically-based theory and knowledge with down-to-earth people has underpinned my ministry ever since.

Beginning in 1960, I gained an excellent theological education in Dunedin, but I finished the three-year course not really knowing what it meant to be a minister nor how to be a "minister of the Word and Sacrament" with people, other than how to construct sermons of biblical exposition and how to preach and conduct liturgy based on the Book of Order. Coming from an agricultural scientific background with no university-level study of any classical subjects that were the norm for theological training for the Presbyterian ministry (such as history, philosophy or languages), I was excused from taking Greek or Hebrew and took substitute subjects instead. As a result, I did not qualify to graduate with a BD degree as did many of my fellow students.

During our courtship, I had promised Isabelle, that as soon as we had saved the necessary money, I would take her to meet her extended family of origin in Northern Ireland in order to find her roots and to gain knowledge of her mother, who died when Isabelle was a young child. To deal with his grief, Isabelle's father had refused to talk about her mother. Through hard work we had raised the money by the time I finished at the Hall. However, the Presbyterian Church would not give their approval to go. Had I been going to Scotland it would have been different. I pushed ahead and arranged for parish experience in Northern Ireland. Yielding to my insistence, the Church begrudgingly gave me permission to go "providing you do more study while overseas to justify your holiday." The difficulty for me, as far as we knew then, post-graduate studies in the UK required at least a BD for admission. Ian Wilson suggested that, on my return-journey to NZ, I undertake practical studies in pastoral care in a three-month course at the Institute of Religion, at the Medical Center, Houston, Texas. Reluctantly, for I had no desire to go the USA, taking up this idea seemed a compromise by which I could submit to the discipline of the Church which, in those days, I felt constrained to accommodate.

While in Northern Ireland, I had some sense of being at home (Northern Ireland being also part of my roots a generation further back). In contrast, Houston, Texas was an enormous cultural shock. The course of study at the Institute of Religion was like nothing I had ever experienced and blew me away. Here I was, a good Kiwi farm-boy, rather emotionally illiterate, being asked to examine my feelings and to recognise how they influenced my behaviour as a chaplain in a charity hospital still displaying the 'Whites Only' and 'Coloreds Only' signs; and then being asked what my theological thinking and biblical justification for that thinking was! My world was turned upside-down and inside-out. I was even asked to examine what influence my parents might have had on all that thinking! It was radically life-changing. For a while even my wife did not know me.

Now, it must be remembered I was not undertaking a CPE programme as we would understand it today. In the early 1960s, CPE did not exist as a recognised formal method. It was only after I completed my training in Houston that the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) was established, and CPE, as a discipline, became formalized and unified. Prior to that several groupings in the USA were conducting their form of CPE, however they called it, and it took some hard work to bring these often competing, even rival, training establishments together to initiate the ACPE in the USA. However, each establishment in their own way had been loyal to the vision and practice of Anton Boison, the founder of CPE, whose emphasis had been on developing effective pastors-in-ministry by having theological students study the 'living human documents' (rather than extant documents) in clinical contexts under intensive supervision, and using means such as the Cabot case-conference method to bring an interdisciplinary dimension to the students' experience.

I graduated in 1965 as a supervisor in Clinical Theological Education after completing a full course of training at the Institute of Religion in Houston, training that was endorsed by the Council of Southern Theological Seminaries (COSTS), a coalition formed by the five major seminaries of Texas. To graduate with this qualification, I was required to achieve a Master's Degree. I was granted special admission (given my lack of a BD, but having a Bachelor Degree and a Diploma in Theology from Knox College) to pastoral studies at the Perkins School of Theology at the Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, Texas. This involved travelling from Houston to Dallas once a week for a semester to undertake on-campus courses. My study at the Institute of Religion was the bulk of my extra-mural study. I had to rewrite, my thesis on CPE as a method of theological education, finishing this rewrite back in Northern Ireland after my USA student visa expired and while we awaited the birth of our first child, Susan, in August 1965. I eventually graduated with a STM in pastoral care.

So having gone to Houston for the northern summer of 1963 for only three-months study on route back to New Zealand, I fell in love with Texas, my fellow students, the staff at the Institute, the medical center, the town and country

folk of Texas and, above all, my CPE studies - so I stayed as long as I could! At last what I was to do as a minister was becoming clear; now being a minister of the Word and Sacrament with people meant something. I wrote up my new understanding in my thesis, which now, on re-reading, makes me cringe - it is so patriarchal and sexist. In those days, in Texas at least, pastoral studies and theology was a male preserve, and at the Institute of Religion a Protestant preserve. In less than five years that situation began to change dramatically.

Again, through the influence of Ian Wilson, I received a "call" to join the ministry team at the First Church of Otago, Dunedin, specifically to set up a counselling ministry to the inner city of Dunedin. I had received a good introduction to pastoral counselling in Houston and was ready for the task. I was ordained and inducted to the position of Associate Minister in August 1965. The team there was excellent and in 1967 we opened the *Cameron Centre*, a new building and service which, with a shift in location and restructuring of administration, is still serving Dunedin today.

CPE had given me a way of thinking about and dealing with human situations that had become both an integral part of me and how I lived my life. However I did not have much to do with formal CPE at the time, except indirectly. In those days in Dunedin the Presbyterian Church had appointed on a short-term contract an American CPE Chaplain Supervisor, Herb Hillebrand, to conduct pastoral care studies for the Theological Hall students. Isabelle and I found we had a natural affinity with Herb, Eleanor his wife, and family; we gave each other considerable mutual support. When Herb returned to the USA there was a gap in pastoral training in the Hall. The Presbyterian General Assembly following the recommendations of a special committee on Theological Education, on which I was the junior minister representative, decided that Pastoral Theology should be added to the Hall syllabus of studies and that a professor be appointed.

Incidentally, my activity in the special committee caused a stir. Following the methodological thinking in which I had been trained whilst in Houston, I kept asking questions e.g. what is our vision of the output of the educational enterprise we are commissioned to review; what sort of a minister are we preparing? In one way or another, I kept pushing this point until ruled out of order by the chairman. I believed that we were simply re-arranging the deckchairs on a Titanic that would slowly sink; but, we were going to get a professor of pastoral theology.

To fill gap created by Herb's departure, Graham Robinson was hired in the interim and was nominated for the professor's position. Graham had many innovative ideas. He was on the staff of Dunedin Teachers' Training College and knew how to build an educational curriculum. He employed me to supervise some students for their practical assignments and to run seminars of theological reflection for groups. He was very close to CPE methods. At the General Assembly a surprise nomination for professor was made from the floor and carried. Ian Dixon, a lovely man, scholarly, gracious, but without any idea or experience of how to educate students in becoming pastors, was appointed and the history of CPE in the Presbyterian Church took a turn into the outer reaches. As a church we went back to studying extant documents written about humans. CPE then became an enterprise of individual supervisors setting up CPE programmes that were sometimes given a nod from the Churches, yet not one of the Churches ever fully embraced the method as part of the process of training men or women for ministry.

Meanwhile I had reached my limits at the Cameron Centre. Whilst I had a very good foundation, the demands for service outstripped what I had learnt in Texas. I had not been able to find adequate supervision in Dunedin. I had set up a network of people in various professions with whom I could consult on specific difficulties, but there was a shortage of trained or experienced clinical supervisors. I approached Doctor Basil James, Professor of Psychological Medicine at Otago Medical School, who had a residency programme for psychiatry students; I asked him to give me supervision. He and his consultant team were overstretched and could not fit me in. Yet I came away strangely affirmed by a comment from Doctor James: "Why haven't we been using you as a resource?" and he began sending me referrals. It was more than I could handle, I needed more 'grunt.'

Back in the USA, Herb Hillebrand, now in a new position as head Chaplain Supervisor at University Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan, heard on the grapevine that 'Evan was going to be in America' (it actually wasn't me but rather Evan Pollard, a New Testament theologian, who was going!). Herb sent me an urgent cablegram asking me if I could arrange to juggle my trip so as to spend three months with him supervising in the summer CPE unit (June-August 1969), as one of his supervisory team could not make it, and having accepted all the students he found himself in a desperate position. To shorten a long complex story, I went. By now the ACPE had been established and my credentials needed to be formally recognised. I met with a special meeting of the Certification Committee of the Midwest Region but, given my lack of actual CPE involvement whilst in New Zealand, was granted only Provisional Supervisor status on the basis of my Texas certification. However it was a successful summer for all of us. I had another urgent meeting with the Certification Committee at the end of that unit to review my status. As I had not been able to do justice to the expected standard of paper work required for completion, it was a mutually acceptable decision for me to remain a Provisional Supervisor of ACPE.

Back in Dunedin: it had been a difficult absence for Isabelle and the children, so it was a relief to settle back into regular life at First Church. I had been greatly stimulated by my trip with many new ideas for the Cameron Centre but still not the 'grunt' that I believed I needed. In early 1970, I was surprised to get a formal job offer from the Ann Arbor University Hospital. A position had come up for a chaplain supervisor at the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, and on the basis of my summer work there the job was mine for the taking. Again to shorten a long and complex story, I took it. As a family we immigrated to the USA where, for the next five years, CPE was the major part of my life and work, four CPE units a year at all levels, at one of the busiest and biggest CPE training centres in the USA. Herb Hillebrand was

the Department Head, and Noel Brown was one of our residents-in-training and later a staff member. After my first CPE unit there, and as a full staff member with the opportunity to adequately prepare, I gained full status as a CPE Supervisor in the ACPE. So emerging from my Cameron Centre experience, I had gone back to the USA with a full agenda for personal development to make good my deficits. In my spare time in Ann Arbor, I availed myself of many intensive and extensive learning opportunities. Isabelle, also, undertook major career development.

After five years in Ann Arbor we both felt we had come to the end of our need for personal development and decided to return to New Zealand, rather than somewhere else in the USA. We came and settled in Auckland at the beginning of 1976. I immediately took up filling a vacancy at Middlemore Hospital chaplaincy on an interim basis while searching for something more innovative. I was urged to do a repeat of establishing a Cameron Centre style project in Auckland, but I did not want to duplicate any already existing venture, including CPE. Instead I was very happy to join Gordon Hambly and to share in running the CPE programmes he was offering through the LifeLine-Interchurch Counselling Service. Some of our students from those early joint programmes went through the full CPE journey to become some of New Zealand's early home-grown supervisors e.g. Joan Dallaway, Marie Pollard and John McAlpine. Gordon gave me a very warm welcome, appreciating that with my full status in the American ACPE, our programmes could carry more weight. This was not to be the case for long.

ACPE had graduates all over the world, many of whom kept active their membership status and professional accountability with their American origins. Eventually, within ACPE, it was realized they could not do justice to this accountability outside the jurisdiction of their territorial boundaries. A delegation from the USA came to Australasia to tell those of us with USA ties that our days of being members of ACPE were coming to an end and that we would have to develop local ways of being accountable for running CPE. The indefatigable Ian Wilson, now of the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy (IHC), and who had introduced CPE as the vehicle for training and certifying those qualifying for ecumenical chaplaincy positions in the public hospital system, prevailed on the Anglican Archbishop Johnson to call a national conference to address the situation of NZ training in pastoral theology, and CPE in particular. I agreed to be secretary to a work-group charged with implementing the conference outcomes.

The agreement was that CPE, being a worthwhile educational enterprise, and a whole variety of other pastoral training pursuits (e.g. various types of chaplaincy, counselling, and group-leadership training) could be bundled together. The various seminaries in New Zealand expressed interest in having their pastoral theology departments become involved in a co-operative way. It was an ambitious vision, but would have involved finance and commitment from major ecclesiastical administrations, all of whom had competing interests. The project never got off the ground. We CPE supervisors languished, cut off from any significant church/denominational support base until we ourselves acted to constitute our own local New Zealand ACPE equivalent, and anticipated some connection with Australia. The various independent NZ CPE supervisors running their own programmes came together and mutually recognised each other's status and competence. The New Zealand Association for CPE (NZACPE) came into being.

My involvement in New Zealand CPE lessened with the arrival of Noel Brown and his family to work as my colleague in Presbyterian Support Services, Auckland. Noel's forte was CPE. Upon his arrival we divided up the workload: Noel would attend to both CPE and the strengthening of connections with the pastoral theology activities of local and national churches, whilst I would give more attention to the secular world of psychotherapy, in its broadest sense, taking a covert pastoral focus and Christian values with me. 'Covert' because anything too explicit would have made me unacceptable and reduced my credibility with many in that world who saw the church as contributing significantly to the social and mental ills of the day. I would have to convince by proven results rather than by resorting to any claims of competence in the field. The covert action which gives me most satisfaction was when Joan Dallaway and I were involved in the planning and implementation of the pioneer course of formal training in psychotherapy at tertiary level within the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). There we were given the opportunity to design the educational methodology of that professional training programme; and we knowingly and consistently constructed the course on the CPE model.

So, although I have been overtly inactive in CPE for a couple of decades, apart from continuously supervising CPE supervisors, I have been engaged in a covert secular form of CPE i.e. clinically based, experiential education with a holistic perspective involving the whole person of the student in learning to care for and heal wounded others.

I love the CPE method; it is hands-on, down-to-earth, agricultural, ecological, redemptive, healing, transforming and spiritual; and it is part of me!