

## ***My Encounter with Clinical Pastoral Education***

**Nora Calvert (2006)**

It all began in about 1960 with Ian Wilson, who was the lecturer in pastoral education at the Theological Hall, Knox College, Dunedin. Ian had just returned from the USA, where he had done a unit of CPE with Ernie Bruder, one of the highly controversial, almost mythical, CPE supervisors in Washington, DC. Ian had also visited Britain to look at pastoral supervision there, and produced a report on these two visits; this report is probably the first NZ document that mentions CPE. At the time I was the first full-time professionally trained librarian at Knox College, busy classifying and cataloguing the valuable collection. I had just reached the point of deciding that I wasn't really a librarian at heart, and so I was a sitting duck for Ian's enthusiasm.

Then in 1961 along came Professor Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Theology Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was in NZ as a Visiting Fulbright Professor, spending a few months in Dunedin and some time in Auckland at Saint John's College. As well as teaching the students, he held a series of seminars with local ministers, in my library as it happened, and so of course I attended. A new light dawned in my consciousness. I had already been planning my OE in Britain, and immediately decided to take in a CPE unit on my way home. Seward Hiltner didn't think much of that, and instead offered me a place in his MTheol programme in Pastoral Theology, which would involve a year's study at Princeton Seminary. And so it happened eventually, and I didn't get to Britain until many years later.

During my time at Princeton, I did a CPE unit each semester at Trenton State Hospital with supervisor Ken Lee, a Unitarian minister. There were eight of us in the group, and I was the only woman. In his summer full-time CPE groups Ken would never take accept a sole female student, saying that it wasn't fair on that person, but for the seminary courses he had to take what they sent him! I discovered that my presence in the group was like putting the cat among the pigeons! New Zealand seemed to be ahead of the States in this respect, as I had never had too much trouble with being the only woman in theological classes in Dunedin. It was an interesting year and I learned a lot about myself. Of course I wanted to learn more and so I enrolled for a summer unit of CPE at St Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston, Texas, a large, highly-regarded programme with Armen Jorjorian in charge.

During this year I was in touch with Diana Goss who was a year ahead of me, doing a CPE residency at a state hospital in Connecticut. Some years later Jean Cotter spent several years at St Luke's in Houston. At one conference, I think in San Francisco, we were the only women supervisors-in-training and we were all from New Zealand!

After that summer I was accepted for a year's internship at Philadelphia State Hospital (psychiatric, with about 6,000 patients) then a summer at the Children's Centre in Laurel, Maryland (another enormous campus with several correctional schools and IHC institutions); then a job for a couple of years, after which I was accepted for supervisory training at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. There I had my first experience of the South, and began to learn the business of providing CPE. It was an exciting time. I had discovered something that I was quite good at, and that I really enjoyed. I valued the small training group under supervisors Pat Prest and Dean Williams, and was determined to get my certification. I did eventually. I didn't sail through with flying colours like Diana Goss, who impressed all the committees that she met, but I made it!

I worked for a couple of years as chaplain at a boys' correctional school in Virginia, then I was appointed to 'Care and Counseling', a big pastoral-counseling training Centre at St Louis, Missouri, with a small number of CPE units scheduled each year (by this time I had qualifications in pastoral counseling, as well as CPE). And there I stayed until 1978 when I returned to NZ. The director of 'Care and Counseling', Ed Stephens, was also a CPE supervisor, and together we ran part-time CPE units for local ministers, many of them Lutheran - some of them travelling up to 100 miles for the one-day-a-week group supervision; that is commitment! Of course many wanted the qualification for their D.Min studies at Concordia (Lutheran), or Eden Theological Seminary (United Church of Christ).

So what was CPE doing for me? Well it had brought me to a much greater understanding and acceptance of myself; it provided a wonderful variety of colleagues and students, and I discovered a branch of ministry that seemed to fit me like a glove. In NZ I had been a Presbyterian deaconess, but in the States such a creature had never been heard of! After some soul-searching and studies I was accepted by the Presbytery of New Brunswick as a student for the ministry, and was ordained at the Witherspoon Presbyterian Church in Princeton in 1967.

After nearly eight years at 'Care and Counseling' there were major changes afoot at the agency and my CPE job was dis-established. I decided the time had come to return to New Zealand, and to pay back some of the debt I owed for all my training by using what I had learned in my home country. I had had a wonderful experience in the USA and made many friends, but after fifteen years it was time to go home.

In New Zealand, I worked as a counselor at various Presbyterian Support Services, and was able to have CPE included in my job descriptions. When I retired to Dunedin, I was persuaded (in fact I was flattered to be asked) to run basic part-time CPE units with some theological students who were offering ministry in local parishes or hospitals; not as good as having everyone at the same hospital, but I was used to this pattern from St Louis, and it could be made to work. I did this for three or four years, and

was involved in the early stages of Storm Swain's supervisory training. When she was doing better work than I was, I decided it was time to stop!