



President's Letter

by Denise Dolff, M.A.

There is a great deal of 'behind the scenes' activity in ACTheals these days. The International Conference Committee is busy with final details for 2016 in Toronto, Canada from September 22-25. If you have not already done so, mark your calendars, update your passports, and begin to check flights. We have a great line-up of speakers and workshops, and you will certainly be blessed!

At the Board and Leadership level of ACT, we are seeking God's "now" word for ACT. What is God's call for us in 2016-17? We know that God's word never changes or loses meaning, and the "Redeem my people" foundational prophecy is as relevant today as when first given. As the face of healthcare has changed remarkably over forty years, so too, must our integration and fulfillment of this call. For those of us who have been long-time members, this inevitably means letting go of some of our traditions to make way for God's 'new' and 'now',

whatever that may be, knowing that our vision and mission remain intact.

This inevitably begs the question "What is ACTheals", and "Who do we say we are"? Ultimately, **we are an organization of healthcare professionals and ministers of healing who both know and believe that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and source of all healing.** Through our membership we become useful instruments of that healing. This is the truth which draws us to ACT, and which propels us to share the good news. It is not about what tangible benefits we get from our membership, whether or not our region has meetings and retreats, or how fit we are for travel to the international conferences. Rather, it is about the opportunity to stand and witness to the world that God is alive, and Jesus' healing work continues today.

In order to do this effectively, it is **imperative that our focus be outward, rather than inward.** "Redeem my



Denise Dolff
ACTheals President

people" is a missionary call. It is about evangelization. As members, have we been too satisfied with our own healing, to do outreach? We are in a time of pruning, - the ultimate purpose of which is to become more fruitful. The challenge is to accept this pruning as a blessing, to seek God individually and discover personal blocks, so as to enable moving forward into mission. As your President, I am personally committed to doing this. Can I count on you to join me?

Blessings
Denise Dolff
May 2016



"...it is imperative that our focus be outward, rather than inward"

- Denise Dolff, ACTheals President

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The vision of ACTheals is to be an international, ecumenical association of Christian healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates equipped and extending the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ to their patients, clients, colleagues, and institutions, under the power and guidance the Holy Spirit.

The mission of ACTheals is to provide resources and support to enable healthcare professionals, clergy, and associates to: 1) Personally experience the healing power of Jesus Christ; 2) Integrate their professional skills, spiritual development, healing ministry, and theological understanding; and 3) Extend the healing presence, heart, and mind of Jesus Christ through their work and ministry.

We invite your comments/suggestions, written thoughts, or submissions. We reserve the right to edit submitted articles without notice. Your name can be withheld by request in *InterACT*, but must be included with a contact phone or email when your article is submitted. We also request that a current digital "headshot" photo of you accompany your submission.

The next deadline for *InterACT* is
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Spiritual Ecumenism

by Susan TePas

Susan TePas is a long time member of ACT and presently serves as co-chair of Spiritual Life. Her father was a Catholic and her mother a Presbyterian, so Susan has long had a passionate heart for ecumenism.



Susan TePas

“What does “Spiritual Ecumenism” mean?”

This phrase was a startling new concept for me. Ecumenism had meant - a focus on understanding and valuing each other's doctrinal differences. The notion of “spiritual ecumenism” was a hopeful change of emphasis, and seemed to provide a new lens for looking at relationships between each other.

The phrase was first used by l'Abbe Paul Couturier (1881-1953) in referring to a deeper conversion to Christ as the foundation for working toward unity. This teaching was expressed in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism. St. John Paul II re-emphasized “spiritual ecumenism” in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* as the spirit in which all ecumenical activities should take place.

Is there a new perspective that Pope Francis brings to the notion of “spiritual ecumenism”?

Father Peter Hocken, a member of the Doctrinal Committee of the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services, believes Pope Francis sees the Renewal with Baptism in the Holy Spirit as a gift for the whole church and for all Christians. Therefore it is inherently ecumenical. The baptism in the Spirit is a gift that deepens “spiritual ecumenism.”

When Pope Francis is with other Christians and discerns their commitment to Christ, he discerns their openness to the Spirit in prayer. He stated, “If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy

Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us.” St John Paul II also taught that ecumenical dialogue is not just “an exchange of ideas, but also an exchange of gifts.” So as Christians of various denominations come together we must first ask, “What is the work of the Holy Spirit in each?”

In the past the criteria for ecumenical relationships have been doctrinal and structural. Pope Francis has added yet another scale: “yieldedness to the Lord Jesus and openness to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.” He emphasizes the creativity and newness of the Holy Spirit, a source of great diversity, but a reconciler of diversity achieving a deeper and richer unity!

Reading the article about Pope Francis and spiritual ecumenism energized my spirit and gave me hope that **we in ACTheals can make significant progress in our ecumenical journey by focusing on the Spirit-given gifts of one another.**

This was a review by Susan TePas of Father Peter Hocken's article on “Pope Francis and Ecumenism,” in Spirit, by Southern California Renewal Communities (SCRC), Jan/Feb 2016.





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Father Bob Sears, SJ

“A Trinitarian View of Prayer As A Response To The Creative Love Of God”

Steve and Sandra Long, Co-pastors of Catch the Fire, Toronto, Canada.

“Healing Is In The Heart Of The Father”

J. Brennan Mullaney, MSSW, Author of Authentic Love, Theory and Therapy.

“Love Therapy: The New Model That Heals The ‘Insanity’ of the Mental Health System.”

Workshops include:

Dr. Mary J Chakkalackal - An Approach to integrate Christian Spirituality to the emerging Medical Model(Bio/psycho/Socio/Spiritual) in a Primary Health Care setting with religious plurality.

Stephen Wise, M.A., M.Div., LCPC - A Christian Model for Building and Healing Communities.

Frederick Schubert, ofs – The Divine Mercy Revelations of Power.

John Lambert, LCSW & Jordan Wyns, MS – Emotionally Focussed Forgiveness Prayer in Psychotherapy.

Please visit ACTheals.org for more details.



Interview of Neal Lozano (Part I)

by Anna Pecoraro, Psy.D.

Anna Pecoraro, Psy.D. is a licensed psychologist, psychotherapist, and associate professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences of Divine Mercy University, Arlington, VA. In August 2015, she interviewed Neal Lozano, the originator of the Unbound Model of Ministry.

How did you and your wife Janet, get involved in inner healing and deliverance work?

In January of 1970, I had an encounter with the Lord and I was filled with the Holy Spirit. From that point, I desired to give away what I had received, which set me on a path of evangelization. The focus was to help others experience the Lord personally and surrender their lives to Him. This turnover is life-changing as it brings great inner healing through deliverance. We did this for years and noticed that people always needed more. We didn't know what that "more" was, but as people came in for prayer, there were many dramatic encounters with demons. I never felt really comfortable with the process, nor with the long-term results, and so, I chose to pray for one's inner healing--and for deliverance only when absolutely necessary. We learned many things about both inner healing and deliverance during those years.

It was not until about 1996 when we learned more about deliverance. There was a man from Argentina, Pablo Bottari, who ran a deliverance tent for big crusades in Argentina. He came up to Philadelphia to teach deliverance. Pablo had a ten-step model of how to pray for people. What I learned from him primarily was how to pray for deliverance in a way that made the person the central focus, not demons. Of course, Jesus is the center of the work. But at times, the focus often is put on evil, instead of the person receiving prayer.

He also taught a lot about entryways, which is something that I understood; but I had never understood how to shift the focus and remain with the person and avoid manifestations. So from that point on, we began to practice what

we learned and integrated it with the lessons over the years. In 1998, we went to Poland, and we taught for a whole week on deliverance. When we returned home, we felt that God had really given us something that was important. We had taught and prayed all day for people, and we saw really magnificent things happen. Upon my return home, I began to write, and to format the Five Keys and Unbound.

The book *Unbound: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* wasn't published until 2003, but it was written a few years before that. We had to wait for a publisher. I reduced the approach to Five Keys as a guideline for how to pray for people.

1. Repentance and faith. By that we mean calling people into a relationship with the Lord and inviting people to surrender to the Lord; we want people to meet the savior because it is the savior who delivers us and brings us through and sets us free. We help people repent of things that perhaps haven't been confessed, or things that have been confessed but not truly repented of. Sometimes, people confess, but they do it in such a way as to justify, excuse, or blame somebody. In Sacramental confession, God's forgiveness is offered to us, but sometimes it is not appropriated because our hearts are not disposed to receive by true repentance. So sometimes we will lead people to repeat, in a sincere and heartfelt way, the expression of repentance that they've already begun. The Five Keys work together. Sometimes, if a person misses one key, the person doesn't experience liberation. But, if you put all the keys together in the right



Neal and Janet Lozano

way, led by the Holy Spirit, the person is often able to experience a release of inner heaviness which had not been previously felt.

- 2. Forgiveness.** Almost everyone who comes to us needs to deal with issues of forgiveness. Many people have forgiven, but it is normal for forgiveness to be incomplete and for the Unbound session to be an opportunity for it to go deeper.
- 3. Renunciation.** This is where we take up our identity in the Lord and the authority that we have as children of God, and say, "In the Name of Jesus, I renounce hatred. I renounce revenge. I renounce resentment." It could be any number of things; anything that someone is struggling with, or is in bondage to as a habit that they can't get free of, or things that they confess over and over again. There is power in the Name of Jesus. And there is power in expressing our will because God respects our will. He waits for us to make that expression of will, to take hold of our freedom.
- 4. Authority.** Know that you have authority as a child of God, in Jesus' name, and that you can give verbal expression to that authority by saying something like, "In the name of Jesus I command every spirit I have renounced to leave me now."

“...the power is theirs in the Name of Jesus.”

– Neal Lozano

5. **The Father’s blessing.** Call on the Father to speak into the hearts of his children the things that they long to hear.

The enemy’s work can be narrowed down to two tactics - that of attacking one’s identity and one’s destiny or life purpose. The means to quell both of these attacks is to establish a relationship with the Father. So when someone comes for ministry, we begin with listening. We train people to listen according to the Five Keys. In listening, we take note as to whether the person a) ever experienced the Love of Jesus in a personal way, or, b) needed to forgive someone more deeply, or c) needed to renounce something. We also note what expressions were used to describe their personal life. For example, ‘I have always been lonely, and I am so lonely now.’ ‘I have been isolated, and now I am still living in isolation.’ Such expressions indicate that darkness has taken hold, and when identified, such a person can be led to take a stand against it.

We then ask permission to lead the person through the five keys. Most people we pray for have already read “*Unbound: a Practical Guide to Deliverance*” or heard the teaching, so time is not expended to teach them in the session. This is ideal. At other times, we need to take time to explain our approach so we can lead them through. We will say to them, “Now, you just have to repeat after me, I’m going to give you words based on what you said, to help you say it succinctly. If I say something wrong, you can change it.” We do this to remind them that this is their work and **the power is theirs in the Name of Jesus.**

God has given them the authority and power. Sometimes, people change it, but most times they don’t because we

are just leading them to say what they already revealed and agreed to in the interview. We might put our hand on their arm or hold their hand. We touch them in a way that is comfortable for them. Then we begin by asking the Lord to set them free. We lead them through repentance, forgiveness, and renunciation. At the end of that time, I ask them to be quiet and aware of any thought that comes to their mind. Then, I place my hand on their head and say, in a very calm, matter of fact way, “In the Name of Jesus, I break the power of any spirit that ____ has renounced, and I command it to leave.” I don’t raise my voice. If the repentance, forgiveness, and renunciation have taken place effectively in the person’s life, any bondage to evil spirits is broken by that simple pronouncement.

The authority is given to me by the person who comes to be ministered, such that we do it together. People find it very helpful to hear words spoken with faith. At that moment, I say, “I just want you to be silent within yourself. I don’t want you to pray. Just be aware of any thoughts that come to your mind.” Quite often, thoughts come to their mind, amazing kinds of thoughts. Oftentimes there are images of freedom, like a meadow, or they might just feel lighter. Or they might say that they feel like something left. Last week, somebody said, “I see smoke going out of a chimney.” I said, “What color is the smoke?” They replied, “Dark grey.” They were visualizing something leaving, some change. Other times people will say that nothing is coming to mind. One reason for that could be unbelief. I had one woman who said, “Nothing’s coming to my mind.” She convinced me that nothing was coming to her mind. And at the end of the interview, I prayed the Father’s blessing. Then she left the conference. Later,

she said, “All the way home, the word ‘freedom’ came to my mind, but I didn’t want to say it because I didn’t want to believe that it could be so simple. However, all the way home in my car, I sang a song about deliverance.” She really experienced liberation.

Often, layers are revealed at that point. When you give the command, something comes up. For example, “I’m thinking of my brother.” So you go back to the interview and say, “What is it about your brother?” They might say, “Well, we always have trouble.” We do a brief interview about this relationship and help them to respond by having them repent, forgive, and renounce, or whatever combination seems appropriate. I then give the command again. And maybe something else comes to their mind, or something deeper. So it can be a process by which you clear away what’s obvious, what they are aware of living with, and then the deeper thing comes forth.

After the command, what we do is to lead the person in a time of thanksgiving. The thanksgiving is very important because when somebody gives thanks aloud, it becomes real to them. For example, “Thank you, Lord that I forgave my uncle for molesting me. Thank you Lord that I have victory over self-hatred. Thank you Lord that I’m no longer living in shame.” These are all things that were covered in the session. Thanksgiving often gives an awareness and recognition of being really free because one hears and feels the response.

Other times, you will be going through, “Thank you Lord that I have forgiven my dad...” and “Thank you Lord for... this... or for that...”, and then you get to something, and the person being ministered says with noticeable

“When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

(John 8:36)

difficulty, “Thank you Lord that I have.... forgiven.... my... brother,” The facial expression indicates a change. So during the thanksgiving, you observe whether their emotions line up with their words. When emotions don't line up with their words, you ask them about it. You say, “How did you feel when you said that about your brother?” They might say, “Well, I'm not really sure that I want my brother to be free...” or “I'm not sure that...” Then you go back, and you go through the keys, and you see what can be uncovered and dealt with. From the very beginning, you want to make sure that the person wants to be free; so you say, “Do you want to forgive him?” They might say, “I don't know if I feel like I forgave him, but I do want to forgive him.” Then you have permission to lead the person to forgiveness. When that is done, you can move to the Father's blessing.

Unbound isn't really so much a technique or a method as much as it is a way of cooperating with the Holy Spirit. So we expect - for anybody who comes and is seeking healing and freedom - that the Holy Spirit is already at work in their heart. We know that Jesus wants to set them free and lead them to the Father, because it is in the Father that their true identity is restored and where their true freedom lies. In Scripture it says, “**When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**” (John 8:36) When we share in the son-ship of Jesus we are free to be the children of God; it is through the indwelling of the Son that we know the Father.

In the overall process, we listen for the areas of darkness where Jesus has not been permitted to come and bring

salvation, whether it's just embracing Jesus as Lord, or humbling oneself before the Savior, or the existence of a deep resentment or bitterness, or affinity with idols. Sometimes, we might have somebody renounce independence, self-reliance, or self-sufficiency. Now for some people, these might be good words, especially independence; but for others, it has become an idol. “That's how I manage my life. I'd rather be self-sufficient and take care of myself and never need anybody.” All of those things are expressions of pride, which can hold a person bound. It's not until they renounce those bondages that they're ready to receive more deeply from the Lord and be humble before the Father and receive his love. *(To be continued)* 🙏

Resources

Heart of the Father Ministry website: <http://www.heartofthefather.org>

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Lozano, N. (2010). *Resisting the Devil: A Catholic Perspective on Deliverance*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor.

Lozano, N. (2015). *Abba's Heart: Finding our Way Back to the Father's Delight*. Ada, MI: Chosen Books.

Lozano, N. & Lozano, M. (2011). *Unbound ministry guidebook: Helping others find freedom in Christ*. Clinton Corners, NY: Jubilee Studio.

ACTheals Members Recently Passed

Theodore P. Conlin

Member

Passed April 2016

Dr. Bernard Klamecki

Former President

1989-1990

Passed March 2016

Dr. Helen Cordero

Bethel Ph.D

Former President

1998-1999

Passed March 2016

Martha A. Maloney, MSW

Lifetime Member

Passed January 2016

Dorothy “Dottie” Collins

Thomson

Longtime Member

Passed March 2016

Songs from “Transforming the Ashes”

by Pamela E Clark, Ph.D.

Pamela E. Clark, Ph.D. is acting regional coordinator of the Los Angeles region of ACTheals, and active in prison ministry. She is presently at Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology while also an adjunct research professor at Catholic University of America.



Pamela E. Clark,
Ph.D.

These “Songs from Transforming the Ashes,” collected in 2009, evolved from a trip to Ireland as part of intergenerational healing and a search for Pamela’s roots. This included extensive interviews of a broad cross section of family members on both sides.

Don, Part 1

Bury me in the Creggan.

That’s who I am.

That’s where I belong.

It’s the source of my being,

Where I learned to live and to love.

Where the world opened up to me.

Bury me in the Creggan.

There is no more beautiful place for looking out into the universe

Than from the top of Creggan Hill on a dark, starry night.

There are no more beautiful journeys than the walks
around the Creggan.

What more could a man want?

Bury me in the Creggan.

Yes, I deeply love and cherish the people from the community of
my birth.

Yes, many of my friends ended up on the run branded
as dangerous terrorists.

I may not agree with the decisions they made.

I may not embrace activities they were involved in.

But, I cannot bring myself to reject them.

Because, I know if we’d been born into a fair and a just society

They would never have ended up in the grave or in prison.

Bury me in the Creggan.

Don, Part 2

Those who don’t walk and talk with the poor don’t understand.

I remember the extreme poverty in the Bogside and the Brandywell,
in the Creggan Estate where I was born.

I still remember my parent’s insecurity,

The utter terror in my mother’s eyes when a red letter would come.

The courts threatening when bills weren’t paid.

My parents were very honest and honorable people who believed in
paying their debts.

But sometimes found themselves in a financial cul-de-sac.

Those who don’t walk and talk with the poor don’t understand

Seeing people being arrested, physically injured, even killed,

Taking part in the civil rights movement,

I felt very much in the gut.

That’s something that academics
who live in the top 3 inches of their bodies
can’t understand.

Those who don’t walk and talk with the poor don’t understand.

I saw the same thing in Brazil.

I could understand why priests underground were taking very radical
stands.

I could see their utter frustrations with documents and encyclicals
coming from Rome

Again written by people living in the top 3 inches of their bodies
Trying to understand reality from pieces of clean white paper with black
print on it.

You can’t do that.

Those who don’t walk and talk with the poor don’t understand.

And I have very little respect for intellectuals

Who encapsulate themselves in sanitized environments and don’t go into
the field,

Who don’t walk with the common people, who don’t eat with them, or
sleep with them.

How can academics understand what’s in their hearts or in their minds?

You just can’t do that.

Those who don’t walk and talk with the poor don’t understand.

The work of intellectuals derived only from official documentation,

Is infinitely inferior to the work of those who have walked in my
moccasins.

Psalm of a Scientist

by Pamela E Clark, Ph.D.

Psalm 1: Joy

God... Thank You for waking me with bird song this morning. Or was that an alarm clock? I felt Your presence as such a joyful sound. You were present to me as I slept, leading me gently through dreams, our inner journeys. You are so gracious to me, as I humbly seek You in me.

I've been meaning to tell You... I love the way the light and shadow fall on the mountains outside my window, the patterns changing cleverly as the sun crosses the sky. The morning's coolness, the green world's dew carpet, are a source of endless delight to me.

When the sun is shining, I think of You, who sent Your son to Earth for me. (Playing on words is a talent You inspired in me.) But then, I think of You also when the sky is cloudy, because in those times I must walk in shadow, I know You are there.

What inspired You to create the many shades of green for the sheltering trees and shrubs, and covering grasses? And the riotously hued flowers and mottled rocks? You must really love this world.

Have I told You how much Your rainbows mean to me, Father? No more beautiful sign of Your covenant is possible. For that matter, the entire electromagnetic spectrum is a most magnificent accomplishment: Gamma-rays to sound waves, with visible light in between. Vision is incredible by itself. With the gifts You have given us, we have built an array of instruments to observe this entire range of energies. We can explore so much of Your creation!

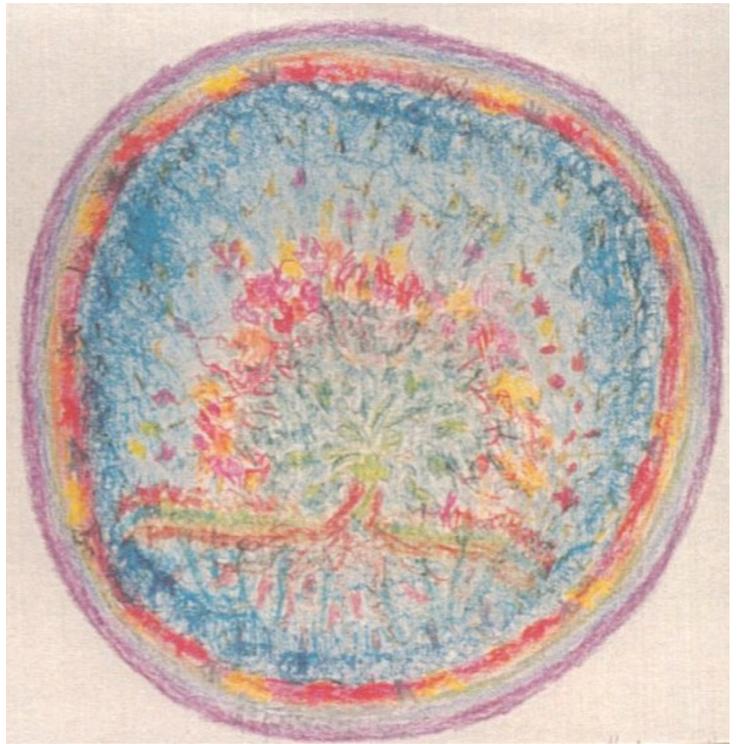
By the way, Lord, I give You highest praise for the way the universe is organized. Nucleogenesis (the creation of elements), what we understand of it, is awesome, particularly the supernova processes. How like You to plan that spectacular supernova for the birth of Jesus. Our solar system alone is breathtaking. You know my fondness for the terrestrial planets: Mercury, Venus, the Moon. I would still like to explore Mars in person.

How wonderful is the entire biosphere of Earth: all of the ecosystems, especially deep forests and rocky coasts. I am overwhelmed at the minute complexity and grand simplicity of Your design, where the genetic code shapes all living organisms, and plate tectonics shapes the continents. What an idea!

I feel unimaginable gratitude that You have given me the privilege of working for the space program, participating in the exploration of creation. While exploring the universe, I have found You. Thank You for the challenges, the obstacles, the many tasks, for work and play. Exploring is play, as any scientist knows, as You know. That's why You created it.

By Your splendid gifts of the light and the darkness, especially by the color of the sky when twilight becomes evening, I know Your love, and I raise my voice in praise.

Casa de Maria, Santa Barbara, California, 1987



The Holy Spirit in Clinical Practice

by Douglas Schoeninger, PhD



Douglas Schoeninger, PhD

Douglas W. Schoeninger, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and President of the Institute for Christian Healing in Coatesville, PA. An ACTheals member since 1977, his private psychotherapy practice integrates spirituality and prayer as healing resources within an intergenerational perspective. He has extensive training in Contextual Family

Therapy with Ivan Nagy and Barbara Krasner, as well as family tree healing experience with Kenneth McAll.

Narrative Therapy in Christian Counseling

This is an excerpt of an article, "Christian Worldview and the Use of Narrative Therapy in the Christian Counseling Setting," by Dr. Dominick Hankle of Regent University, being published in the Spring/Summer 2016 issue JCH 32-1. I am grateful to Dominick Hankle for his work on this topic and for sending his paper my way, to ACTheals, JCH.



Dominick Hankle

Narrative Therapy is developed from a collection of philosophical ideas describing how stories can be used for therapeutic work. Through a number of interventions the therapist directs the client in retelling his or her story to facilitate psychological health and growth. According to this approach, sometimes individuals create dysfunctional stories causing psychological distress.

The personal myths and narratives people tell themselves, organize and shape perceptions, understandings, behavior and experiences, and is a key factor for therapeutic

interventions (Lukoff, 1997). It is even suggested that narrative not only describes and communicates experiences (Goodson, 2013, Dunn & Burcaw, 2013), but actually forms and constructs the self. From a psychological perspective it is the emotional and evaluative ingredients of the story that link past experiences to the growing sense of self. This growing sense of self provides a framework to appreciate the present and to anticipate the future (Hardcastle, 2003).

The narrative becomes the means for coherence of self and makes sense of experiences for the individual. By continually reflecting on the present happenings in relation to the past occurrences, individuals may recompose their life story. If the story is the catalyst for developing a sense of self, the stories are also constructing individual identity.

The idea that a story is shaped by multiple sources and can be interpreted in multiple ways from multiple perspectives is important. These characteristics of narrative allow for a reconstruction of the story from which the client's reality hangs (White & Epston, 1990). This is an attractive element of narrative therapy for the Christian, because historically the Gospel message has been enculturated around the world. This enculturation has allowed it to be an important influence in the story of many people. Because of the fact stories are collective in nature, the Gospel narrative has been sustained by people sharing the story with other people maintaining what is true yet allowing the narrative to adapt itself to the culture in which it finds itself.

An illustration of Christian Narrative Therapy

Initially Sarah came for counseling because she was diagnosed with major depression and was experiencing suicidal thoughts. Sarah was married to a man who ministered to a large Christian congregation. They were together for about seven years and are the parents of one male child about three years old. Her husband recently asked for a divorce and moved Sarah out of the family home. She was not permitted to participate in church activities and had limited visitation with her son. Sarah was also served legal papers keeping her from interacting with her husband and child and being in the vicinity of the church. In short, Sarah went from living her dream life as a supportive wife, loving mother, and

continued on page 14

"The narrative becomes the means for coherence of self and makes sense of experiences for the individual."

Ecuador Mission Trip

by Mike MacCarthy.

Mike MacCarthy is the former Editor of *InterACT* and has recently published **Maiden General: How 17-Year-Old Joan of Arc Saved France at Orleans—A True Story**. Mike's book has also been selected as a finalist in the Historical Fiction category of the 2016 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. For more info: www.mikemacCarthy.com.



Mike MacCarthy

In 2013, after much prayer and thought, wife Kathy and I decided to step out of our comfort zone and travel. We wondered silently how dangerous the “unexpected” would be in Ecuador having heard of kidnappings off the streets for body parts and high-dollar ransoms. However, as we left Los Angeles, we were at ease in being accompanied by our friend Katie, who had made this journey annually for the past 10 years. Upon landing in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador, we immediately encountered our first “surprise”—customs. Two hours later, we discovered that the priest who had promised to meet us was still waiting. We had no way of alerting him about the long, slow lines as our US cell phones did not work in Ecuador.

Week One: Father Patrick Joseph Hughes (P.J.) greeted us with his infectious laughter and warm hugs. This priest—admittedly in his early-50s—proceeded to load our luggage - three huge bags each of about 50 pounds. These were stuffed with clothing, art and medical supplies, and countless small gifts for the poor and sick and bundled into the long truck bed of the four-wheel drive king-cab pickup. Father P.J. manhandled the dozen bags or so like a New York City stevedore accustomed to hard physical labor.

Once out of the airport and onto the streets of Guayaquil, another surprise awaited—most drivers there are stark-raving mad. They were like New York City taxi drivers on steroids—lane markings, posted speeds, traffic lights and signs, pedestrians, and common courtesy held no meaning for these people. Buses, ten-wheel rigs, SUVs, taxis, mini-cars, and motorcycles—some carrying four or five people—honked and zig-zagged lane-to-lane like drunken teenagers, all the while shaking fists. Everybody was screaming, but no one could hear above the din as they all lurched in every direction spewing still more thick exhaust into smelly, polluted air.

Father P.J. was no slow-poke, either. Driving north from the airport, he averaged 10-20 mph over the posted speeds on a six-lane street, but one would have thought he was “Miss Daisy” going to church compared to the others. Actually,

he had a name for them, which he repeated in his charming Irish brogue after most close calls. Also surprising on our journey to P.J.’s house was the amount of litter along the side of the roads, contrasted with the beautiful tile work that adorned the columns and walls under almost every overpass in the city.

Soon we approached a huge new prison facility on the right—about nine football fields square. Father slowed his pickup to a crawl in the middle lane, and turned left (west) opposite the prison’s “Guard Tower Number 8” onto a two-lane dry dirt road. He then downshifted to a much lower gear. Nobody was driving fast here—especially the trucks and buses. They couldn’t. If they did, they’d break an axle on the half-buried rocks, abandoned cement debris, and deep ruts left from the rainy season. Wispy clouds of dust hovered above the road as Father inched his way around abandoned vehicles, meandering dogs, clucking chickens desperate for food, young families on foot, and rotting garbage. He suggested we un-strap our seat-belts. “If you don’t, you could easily hurt yer shoulder, ya know.” He quickly followed his own advice. “I did it once ma-self—took forever to heal.”

As Father bounced along, rows of cane, wood and partial cement block shacks dotted each side of the road, down steep valleys, and up rugged hills in all directions as far as the eye could see. Most huts measured less than 15 feet square and had a flat tin roof nailed at a slight angle on top of four cane wood corner posts to provide rain drainage to the rear of the lot. The tops of the roofs looked as though a volcano had erupted and deposited a thick layer of dust and debris. These homes had limited access to electricity and polluted city water was distributed through a hose that ran by their house. None had access to a city sewer—just out-houses, and many families slept on a dirt floor.

No words could describe what Kathy and I felt, but it was well beyond a “roller coaster” ride. I’d never seen so much merciless poverty in such a large and heavily populated area—even in Tijuana. Father told us that his parish served

“In five years Father had only raised enough money from around the world (including San Diego) to build two small churches;...”

more than 20,000 people, and that six of his fellow priests from the Society of Saint James in Boston, served other parishes in Guayaquil totaling in excess of 200,000 people. **In five years Father had only raised enough money from around the world (including San Diego) to build two small churches;** one larger church was under construction, and two were in existence when he came. His Sunday Masses began each Friday night. It was the only way he could serve so many as he was the only priest in his parish.

After about ten minutes on the bumpy road, we stopped in front of a church property with the name JesuCristo Pan De Vida printed on the bright red front gate in big white letters. When the people recognized Father’s maroon truck, one of them opened the gate, and we drove inside and up a steep hill past an elementary school toward Father’s home. As we passed, the children from inside the school fences blew kisses and waved, shouting, “Hola, hola,” over and over.

Inside Father’s modest stucco 3 bedroom house, a hot roast beef feast awaited us. In Ecuador, the big meal is in the early afternoon; the evening meal is like lunch time in the USA. As Katie, Kathy, and I had been up for over 32 hours (with a few catnaps on the plane), we all decided after Father’s delicious meal that a long nap was in order before Sunday night Mass. Kathy and I slept like babies inside our mosquito netted double bed. In Ecuador, one never leaves home without sun screen or bug-repellent.

Sunday night Mass with Father P.J. would, by itself, have made the whole trip something to remember for the rest of our lives—a delightful surprise. Father had gone down the hill ahead of us to “get things organized.” The church under construction (adjacent to the new elementary school), was a huge rectangular cement block building with no pews, windows or doors, and only a roof structure. By the time Katie, Kathy, and I arrived, the place was packed—we were lucky to find seats in the back as within a few minutes of our arrival it was standing room only. The room had been filled with plastic chairs—part of Father’s “getting organized” was having them brought from the school to fill the church.

As we entered the church the Rosary (in Spanish) was being prayed by the congregation and several school children.

It was led by a nun who helps run the school. Everyone in the room participated in the prayers—the 4 year-old-girl in front of us louder than anyone else. As Mass began, a college student with an acoustic guitar began playing and immediately the whole congregation—men, women, children, young, old—began singing, clapping, and stomping; no one needed song books except us.

The whole building vibrated with joy and excitement as Father made his entrance onto the make-shift altar where he picked up to lead the singing. Soon three older children walked to the pulpit for the readings, after which the last reader intoned the “Gospel Acclamation,” followed by more singing, clapping, and stomping. Father then read the Gospel and delivered an impassioned homily about the importance of understanding how much God loves us all. (Everything was in Spanish. Fortunately, Kathy speaks passable Spanish and acted as my translator for the whole trip). After the homily, the rest of the Mass proceeded with virtually non-stop singing and clapping.

Just before the end of Mass, Father thanked everyone who had helped with the setup in their “new” church. He then took a moment to introduce us as his “good friends from San Diego” and pointed to where we were standing. A thunderous round of applause filled the air and, after Mass, many in the congregation treated us like rock stars. Wave upon wave of children and adults came to shake our hands and give us big hugs, all the while saying, “Mucho gusto,” “Bienvenido” and “Ciao.”

One large family of children and adults insisted that we pose for at least a dozen photos with them. We would learn later that the head of one of the households was a woman in her late thirties named Adrianna, mother of four, ages 12, 8, 4, 2. Adrianna didn’t stay for photos, but the oldest two joined the extended family in posing with us.

A few days later, Father arranged for us to go into the elementary school and teach English to some of the students using guitar music we had brought. He suggested we keep it “simple.” We

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Starlight

by Ping-Tak Peter Chow, Msc, RMT

Ping-Tak Peter Chow, MSc, RMT resides in Toronto, Canada with his wife and three daughters. He is presently establishing a model for "Wholistic Massage."



Ping-Tak Peter Chow,
Msc, RMT

On board KLM from Amsterdam to Kano, Nigeria, 1979, I was 22, young, energetic, supported by family and friends, had no particular belief or religion, but was guided by principles. I was given the opportunity and freedom to leave home to pursue a career and expected a fruitful life ahead of me.

When the airplane landed, I walked down the stairs and inhaled my first memories of the misty air in the new country. I heard a language that I did not understand and the new faces and features added to the awareness of being in new territory. People were running towards the terminal. Old buildings were prominent and resembled those in the classic movies. High ceiling fans swinging away seemed to create large sounds. As there were no signs on the wall and no directions as to where to go, I just followed the crowd. I was entering a new world.

Security guards and soldiers armed with guns pushed me forward to check points. Suddenly, at the back, someone said in English with a rhythm, "Are you Mr. Chow, Mr.?" There were only three Chinese in the line. "Yes" we replied. "Follow me," he said. Without a minute to think, we followed this man. He walked through people, pushing them along. He knew everyone there and finally we came to a place where our baggage was dropped. "Wait here," he said. "Is that yours?" "Everyone, got it?" "Here we go." "Give me all your passports." He talked continually and took all our passports. Perplexed, I followed him closely, as I did not know if it was right or wrong. He just waved the passports to someone who seemed like an officer. I saw him put something together with the passports. It did not take long to come out of the crowd while other people were still shouting and pushing at the terminal. A car was waiting outside for us. After two guys helped us load the baggage to the car, we departed.

My heart was racing and I was anxious. What if I entered a wrong car and where was I going? So many questions flew in my head. Anyway, I was so tired and decided to close my eyes to rest. "Whatever." I said to myself. The car sped, 3 to 4 hours up and down hills as it passed through a tree lined landscape and then to barren land while the wind kept blowing strong outside. Finally it stopped. "See the manager." the man said. We left all the baggage and entered an office.

A Chinese man with a Shanghai accent, and barely spoke Cantonese said, "Welcome, all of you. You will be taken to the room where you can rest. You will start work on Monday after the weekend. Take a rest, and in the meantime give me all your passports. We can only get temporary work permits for you which we have to stamp every three months. I will keep it for the years while you stay here." "What? My heart murmured. "Surrender my identity?" I was taken to the compound where I had my room with a bed, a table and a chair in a two-room apartment with a common washroom. I turned on the water tap, and brown muddy water flowed out. "Gosh, it is not so good." I said. I already missed my family, my friends, and even the dream I hoped for. Seeing nobody here and nobody to hear me speak, I cried very loud. I felt betrayed, abandoned and insecure. Darkness and fear surrounded me.

This was my first job three months after my graduation from the Hong Kong Polytechnic. Three years in Nigeria converted me personally and spiritually. It seems like yesterday because this first experience lasts forever, - like your first love. What I learned on this very first day was this. I thought I was prepared but was not. **I thought I could handle everything but could not.** I thought I knew but did not. I was just a lamb following the line to be slaughtered. My education in Hong Kong did not teach me to exercise my rights before making any decision. How did I take up a

"I thought I could handle everything but could not."

*“...not just the star but the light shining,
leading and drawing me with appreciation.”*

job without knowing the working conditions? Also, I did not receive any contract, or terms of negotiation. I did not even know how much I would be paid. There I was putting myself into a very risky situation as I recall it. Recently, I watched the movie, “Twelve years in slavery”, where the black man suddenly lost all his identity and almost could not come back. I felt the same. The fear within me triggered until recent years.

I was picked up at 9 am to head to the factory on the first day of work. The factory was huge and it took about 15 minutes to drive around to the manager’s office. The Chinese Manager greeted me. “Welcome, you are assigned as the supervisor of a shift on the weaving factory. The foreman speaks English, but most of the workers do not. They are in the middle shift from 3 pm to 11 pm. I will introduce the foreman to you when you come back at 3pm. You can walk around now and go for lunch. One more point, the shift rotates every week. So next week you will be in the night shift from 11pm to 7am, and the following week you will be the morning shift from 7am to 3pm.” My head started spinning. I met the day shift local foreman who oversaw all the shift foremen. “You will get along well with them,” he said. “I work hard,” I replied. He laughed. It was not too bad apart from the bad feeling when the first day arrived. There was no way out, but to accept this and live. This was my attitude.

During the first few months at work, I was thrown into rotating shifts every week. From 7 am to 3 pm, 3 pm to 11 pm and 11 pm to 7 am. I realized that I had to work non-stop 7 days. There was no choice. The weather was difficult as the sand storms had just started blowing from the desert. There was also no rain for a while. Day time high temperatures were around 48 degrees Celsius and at night it was down to freezing temperatures. The river bed was dried. When the tap was opened, only muddy water flowed. All water needed to be filtered before bathing and it had to be boiled for drinking. The food was not appetizing at all. In addition, shift changes prevented the workers from sleeping during the day time, and it was too hot such that they could not survive the all-night shift. All this added to my confusion. “Is it the day shift?” “Am I to go to work now?” I woke up with all the illusions, panic, and anxiety. I felt I had a mental problem with sleepless nights. Soon I became a workaholic. Anyway, I just came here to work and I did it.

The power supply was water driven running through a dam build by Italian Engineers. Absent any rain meant power shortages. Thoughts ran through me “No power tonight at home” “No power in the factory”, “Call the Chinese technician to start the generator”. I screamed. “What am I doing here?” “Is it the work?” One day, I just walked through the factory with a moon face. “This is what I am paid for, be present and supervise them as the owner.” I gradually began to understand my role as a Chinese Supervisor of the weaving factory. I wrote everything in my journal at the end of my shifts. I barely survived as I was dead tired.

“Ask and you will be answered.” I was on the night shift one day and unhappy. Several months had passed and I had only received a few of my father’s letters. I read them repeatedly every day. “Where are my friends?” I started feeling very low and emptiness overpowered me. I needed some fresh air. It was 3am with excellent weather outside and a clear sky. Though I was alone and had all the freedom, I was not really free and no one cared about me.

That night in Nigeria, faced with the overpowering feeling of emptiness in a new and unknown country, I walked down from one end to the other outside the factory and cried out, “God, show me if you are here.” In the stillness of the night, I looked up and noticed a star shining as though God was lifting me in my loneliness. I gazed and wished I could reach it and then started to recite the only prayer I knew. It was the Lord’s Prayer which I had been reciting every day at St. Paul’s High School assembly. Over the years educated in a Christian school, I did not feel God’s presence and did not realize that God loved me. I did not have a personal relationship with God. However, it was only in this low moment that I appreciated the glow of the star facing me on that clear night sky. I recognized and I knew that it was **not just the star but the light shining, leading and drawing me with appreciation.** As I repeated the prayer, the melody came from nowhere and I started to sing. I truly felt that God answered me by my noticing HIS presence in creation in the star. I was filled with joy and a sense of not being alone. That contrasting experience of the lift within me at a time I felt down in the depths has held on with a closeness to Him for years. Alleluia. 

co-minister of a local church congregation to being alone, ostracized, and legally kept from all she loved.

Sarah began to tell her story allowing the therapist to make note of key themes and meanings expressed in the narrative. It was obvious she was experiencing a traumatic change. First, Sarah believed God always rewarded those who were faithful and punished those who were not. She saw a direct cause and effect relationship between her misfortune and some sin she could not identify but believed she obviously committed.

Secondly, Sarah believed divorce was most always the fault of the woman because of the narrative of the fall described in Genesis, and St. Paul's admonition for women to be obedient to their husbands. This led her to believe that sin comes into the world through the disordered passions and emotions of the female sex. Lastly, Sarah believed that if she fell from God's grace and lost his favor there was no need to live. She had developed a narrative of guilt and hopelessness because what she was experiencing conflicted with the narrow narrative she used to shape reality and give it meaning.

After drawing these themes from Sarah's story and helping her recognize the impact they were having on her, Sarah was open to exploring how they may need to be reworked and connected to a clearer understanding of the Gospel narrative. Sarah was helped to understand how the Gospel narrative speaks of a God who delights in creation, not merely judges it. Additionally, within salvation history there is a theme of failure but also one of redemption.

The interventions up to this point were meant to challenge her experience of God as merely a judge and her idea that failure was something alien to Godly people. Additionally, she began to experience the Gospel characteristic of redemption, something she was underemphasizing in her narrow narrative. This helped Sarah understand there is such a thing as hope and she is empowered to change her situation whenever she is ready.

Sarah's new narrative recognized that what happened to her was the result of a multitude of sins. Yes, some of these were her personal sins yet some were based on the fact that we live

in a fallen world, surrounded by fallen people and that all of this contributes to the pain and suffering people experience. She may be somewhat culpable for what happened to her, but so was her husband, child, and other members of the church she served. While she was not ready to forgive these people for the pain they caused her she no longer held herself as the only individual responsible for her pain and suffering and was comforted by that fact. God became bigger than the source of judgment in her life and more reflective of the God revealed in Jesus Christ. Secondly, Sarah was now able to see that even though things were awful right now, her experience was temporary. Her new narrative gave her a perspective that saw a future emerging from the present situation. Sarah now felt empowered to rewrite her story.

Ultimately by using narrative therapy as a framework, clients can be helped to integrate revealed spiritual truths into their lives, thereby guiding them to begin to transform their situations. In Sarah's case, it proved to be helpful.

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used the song “Father I Adore You”, and it was a big hit. Kathy translated for them so they knew what they were singing. Again, we were treated like “rock” stars—all this outpouring of sincere affection could easily become habit forming.

After the music lessons, Katie pulled white T-shirts out of her big travel bag for each student to decorate with colored fabric markers—as they chose. (The T-shirts and markers had been part of our eight 50-pound pieces of luggage) The results ran the gamut: some were decorated with words of love about God and Jesus and Mother Mary, often in both Spanish and English; some were about their favorite national or international soccer (fútbol) players complete with uniform numbers and facial features; others put their own name on the shirts—front and back; some even put our names; some drew the most beautiful sunsets or landscapes. But the most amazing were those who drew breath-taking renditions of rosary mysteries or the Virgin Mary’s various apparitions. Bear in mind, these children were 7th grade or younger.

Toward the end of our class period, the children were invited out into the play yard to “shake” their T-shirts dry. They couldn’t wait to put them on and strut around, showing off their new creations. We all took turns taking pictures with them. These children were so happy you’d have thought we just bought them a completely new wardrobe in an expensive store. They all wear uniforms to school.

Two days later, Father P. J. decided he wanted us to experience riding on a local bus. So after our classroom activities, with him as our leader, we flagged the bus down, got on and off where he told us. We then walked wherever he led—we had no idea where we were going. He stopped to buy a huge bottle of soda for a house gift and led us down a side street where he knocked on the door of a cement block house. Adrianna answered the door surprised, but welcomed us with incredible grace and warmth. She introduced her four children (one of them still had on his new T-shirt) and

discussed how she and her friends were working little by little to complete her family’s cement block house. The first floor was the only part of the house complete enough to entertain; the upper stories had no roof and several walls were in various stages of completion.

I noticed a picture of a young girl on the wall across from where I was sitting. She appeared to have fair skin and be around ten years old, with facial features closely resembling that of our hostess. She saw me glancing between the photograph and her face, moved beside the picture as tears filled her eyes, and cleared her throat. “That was our Ruth,” she said looking at me. “She died with drowning in the river four years past,” she added in broken English.

She had no way of knowing that I’d lost a daughter (an adult daughter from a previous marriage to cancer 9 years ago), and it was all I could do to stop from tearing up. No matter what happens in life, a parent never forgets or gets over the death of a child. I could tell that Adrianna was doing her best to keep her composure. I bit my lip and looked away. The room turned silent.

She then began to explain, in Spanish now, how she realized back then—and now as well—that when tragedy strikes, we all have to keep going. That nobody goes through life without tragedy, and that it has been her faith and Father P.J. who have always been there for her.

She wiped her eyes with a tissue. Father cleared his throat. “Ruth was my first funeral after I got here,” he said softly and looked down. As she looked lovingly over her children, Adrianna said, “We just do the best we can every day. They’re here, and they need me. Ruth is with God and He’ll care after her until I get there.” Katie, who had met Adrianna during previous visits, now came to her side and gave her a big hug as did the rest of us. When we left, her kids were all still holding her and each other. More surprises..





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Editor's Note

Dear InterAct Readers, Subscribers and Advertisers,

Welcome to *InterAct Summer 2016*.

Though toxic rhetoric fills the air waves now as our nation searches for a *new chief servant of the people*, there is a contrasting message of relief and hope shared by ACTHeals members.

One can take soothing step-stones to know of the peace and unity with Spiritual Ecumenism, the healing through Narrative Therapy, the unburdening and renewal offered in the Unbound Model of Ministry, and then appreciate generational healing in Transformation of the Ashes. There is more. You can also join a mission trip to Ecuador, and then tread through the immigrant experience in Starlight.

I hope that you would enjoy this issue and share the message of ACTHeals - that those who seek comfort and healing can find it in the Light of Christ.

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed these articles, and to those who intend making a submission, please note that July 14th 2016, is the deadline for the next issue.

Peace,

Alphiene Anthraper, Editor, *InterACT*

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