

Greetings one and all,

Bellevue Hospital, New York City, was the setting for my first quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education in the summer of 1953. Fred Kuether, the CPE supervisor introduced us to story listening by not talking about story listening. He had us doing story listening with patients, staff, each other, and Fred himself. His listening model was called non-directive, Rogerian, developed by Carl Rogers. Being non-directive why should he tell us his supervisory theory was on story listening. Empathetic listening focused on the persons feelings being expressed. Our group of six decided Fred could outdo Rogers in this approach to draw out what the patients and what we ourselves needed to talk about.

Bellevue Hospital provided my first taste of chaplaincy. I went back for more training later with Al Hart as supervisor. For several summers I served as the night chaplain while the regular chaplain was on vacation. A Friday night with a full moon would bring in patients most of the night for all thirty beds in the Emergency Room. When they say, "Take them to Bellevue," I know what that means. Bellevue had a psychiatric hospital as well as an acute medical hospital. The TB Hospital became the chest hospital. Four medical schools trained there.

Story listening became my approach early on. I changed from Rogerian to Active Listening as the way of listening. Then in 1975 came the conversation with a patient whose way of telling his story changed my approach completely to story metaphor listening. Metaphor was already getting important support for the way language functions. Another history lesson for another time. Now I was building with the assistance of the Befrienders what Fred had taught through reflecting on our experience.

In 1978 at the National Chaplains Convention in Anaheim, CA, Charles Cedarlieff gave the Russell Dicks Memorial Lecture. Russell Dicks, an early hospital chaplain with clinical experience, established a chaplaincy program at Massachusetts General Hospital. He and Dr. Cabot wrote a classic book on *The Art of Ministering to the Sick*. During the lecture Cedarlieff did his usual maverick thing by saying, "Russell Dicks was not a good listener. Fred Kuether was the listener whose supervisory theory on story listening was ahead of his time." I almost fell off my chair. Twenty-five years later, doing story listening with the added feature of metaphor, I was learning more about who set this in motion. Fred was non-directive directive.

All three chaplains mentioned in the last paragraph had the same teacher/supervisor. Fred, Russell, and Charles had been trained by Anton Boisen. As a mental patient at the Massachusetts State Hospital he convinced the superintendent to let him train seminarians. That small beginning, along with others in different parts of the country, led to a movement in pastoral care where the emphasis was on Boisen's expression "study the living human documents." In time I came to see Scripture, others, and ourselves as "living documents." We are a people of the word/Word. Trialoguing our stories provides a healthy way of living out our Baptismal ministries.

Gathering as a community for daily chapel at the hospital, with the lectionary and prayers, the Befrienders, Rick Johnson, and I, became more Biblically oriented. Psychology moved to a secondary resource rather than primary for connecting and understanding. This was a shift from our CPE training and the gift of being an Anglican with the long tradition of the daily office. In retirement I miss our gathering for daily chapel with Scripture, discussion, and prayers. Our Morning Prayer service was informal with both a liturgical form and lively conversations. I have transitioned to keeping a journal along with the daily psalms for reflecting on Scripture and daily life. The Cathedral web site is a great help with the daily lectionary. You can have the computer read to you. Could we have some conversation about our Cathedral resource for Trialoguing?

Shalom,
Fr. Whitmer

More on Anton Boisen

http://www.acpe.edu/networks/boisen_bio.htm

The Cathedral daily lectionary.

<http://www.gnpcb.org/esv/devotions/bcp/>