

## **ARE YOU UP TO HOSPICE STANDARDS? -**

### **A response with a positive outcome.**

One of the (many) good things about being a member of AHPCC, and especially attending the Annual Conference is being able to take the good ideas and experiences of other Chaplains and adapt them to our own situations – there is no commercial rivalry amongst Chaplains! I was pleased to find that I could also learn from someone else's bad experience.

It was autumn before I had an opportunity to look at the AHPCC Summer Newsletter, and when I did I was very saddened by the article "Are you up to Hospice Standards?" Creative work of all kinds is a major part of the Day Therapy Centre (DTC) where I am the Hospice Chaplain and patients' work is often displayed not just in DTC but also at special exhibitions in the community. However, the article made me realise that it had never been displayed in the Chapel.

DTC is open four days a week with up to twenty different patients each day. I 'commissioned' them to paint a triptych to be displayed in the Chapel from the date of our Light up a Life Service in the first week of December through to twelfth night. I tentatively suggested that it might not only be enjoyable to do but it would be like a corporate act of worship, their gift to God. I was thrilled by the response. With great enthusiasm three different pictures were drawn and painting began. Almost everyone took part regardless of their religious beliefs (or lack of) or level of skill, and those who didn't have the motor skills to hold a pencil or paintbrush played their part in helping to choose colours or with general encouragement. To see one very frail and generally very quiet gentleman talking animatedly with the patient who was sitting next to him about whether he should colour-in the Wise Man's robe to match his crown was a delight. The work produced serious discussion amongst patients and staff about their beliefs regarding Christmas as well as humorous Christmas stories from their childhood.

Eventually the work was completed, framed and displayed on the Chapel altar in time for the Light up a Light Service, where it remained until recently. The triptych was photographed and produced as a card for each of the DTC patients to take home and show off to their families. The response from hospice staff (many of whom never set foot in the Chapel, but went just to have a look!) has been so enthusiastic that it has been decided to reproduce the triptych as a 'Hospice in the Weald' Christmas card for 2009 – a decision which has thrilled the DTC patients.

Was the work of the highest standard? An art critic would probably say it wasn't. But it was done with love and "a desire to do the best for God" even by those who weren't sure that they believed in Him. Thank you to AHPCC for giving me the idea in the first place.

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