

# cnm news

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# CSNM 11 years on

CSNM Update by Tim James - *Student Liaison, CNM*

Perhaps you were a Christian during your nurse/midwifery training? Do you remember what it was like the first time you saw somebody die? Those thoughts, feelings and emotions that struck you?

The first death I witnessed was a child during my first year of nurse training. I remember asking myself questions like: Why did God allow that to happen? Is that child in heaven or hell? How can I nurse patients as a Christian when I have no answers and feel so useless? Well, six years on and I don't necessarily have the answers, but through experience and a constant maturing relationship in Christ Jesus I have a peace. The questions that I asked and many similar ones are still being asked by Christian student nurses and midwives in training throughout our universities and hospitals today! In our day-to-day practice we come up against many painful situations and ethical and moral dilemmas. How as a nurse or midwife should we respond? But more importantly how about as a Christian nurse or midwife?

This is just one of the reasons why we need organisations like Christian Nurses and Midwives (CNM) and Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF). As Christians we need to support and encourage one another so that we will be spurred onwards in our relationships with Christ Jesus. Within CNM though, we come together as Christian brothers and sisters with the additional privilege of being nurses and midwives too. This was also the rationale behind setting up an organisation for nursing and midwifery students: **Christian Student Nurses and Midwives (CSNM)**, which started eleven years ago. Liz Capper who is currently on the CNM Council was one of the key people involved in setting up of CSNM.

## CSNM Aims:

1. To encourage and advise Christian student nurses and midwives in their faith and witness.
2. To help Christian student nurses and midwives think through the relevance of the Bible to the practice of nursing and midwifery.
3. To provide links with and support for Christian student nurses and midwives on a local and national basis.

CSNM is part of the CU Movement – the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), which works to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the UK student world. CSNM has been overwhelmingly supported by UCCF over the past decade, which has employed several staff workers to lead the work with student nurses and midwives.

Over the years, students have benefited from CSNM through a regular termly magazine, 'Face Value' with articles on many subjects relevant to nursing and midwifery. The annual national conference has always been very popular and widely appreciated and found to be encouraging and fun! CSNM groups have been set up across the country by students and meet in houses or church buildings for a meal, bible study, prayer or support weekly or monthly. Student representatives of the CSNM council have been appointed from different areas across the UK to support local CSNM groups and to disseminate information. A CSNM website is managed by UCCF ([www.uccf.org.uk/yourcourse/csnm](http://www.uccf.org.uk/yourcourse/csnm)), which holds a database with articles and bible studies, as well as carrying news of upcoming events.

In September 2004 Christian Medical Fellowship held its annual student leaders conference. Because of strong and closer links being formed with CMF, CSNM council members were invited to benefit from this training. CSNM gladly accepted the invitation and a few members of the council and I attended the training event. The weekend led to productive discussions and the chance to form links with student medics and the leadership of CMF. Nurses, midwives & doctors work every day as part of a multi-disciplinary team within hospitals up and down our country – this was a great way of instigating future relationships in the same context.

The Nottingham CSNM meeting is affiliated with a local student doctors' group. They meet together weekly as a joint nurses' and doctors' meeting (known as Christian Medics and Nurses). Because both nurses and doctors study together in the same university buildings they saw the need for their two organisations to work together and in February they organised a mission week holding 'grill-a –Christian' and other gospel events in the university refectory. God really blessed that mission. The unification of these two groups has had an outstanding effect, pulling resources together and allowing gospel events to be run. PRAISE GOD!!

If you are a regular reader of CNM News you would have read the article I wrote about last year's student nurses conference which was a great success – well worth coming to again! It was during the conference last year that I became more involved with the work of CSNM and CNM. Currently I am voluntarily coordinating the work of CSNM with support from Liz

support from Liz Capper and acting as Student Advisor to CNM council. I work full-time as a Staff Nurse within a busy Paediatric Intensive Care Unit. My voluntary role is not overseen by UCCF (despite some links), but I report regularly to CNM Council. Much of my working time for CSNM is put into helping to organise the national conference, whilst offering limited support and advice to students via email. Because I am not employed by UCCF this does make the ongoing student work difficult to carry out.

God has blessed CSNM since it began over a decade ago and the work of CSNM has grown, although at times it has hit rocky patches! Over the past eighteen months in particular it has hit another rough patch. Since 2003 UCCF has not been able to find a full-time CSNM staff worker, and due to developments within UCCF it has become necessary that those who are coordinating the current work of CSNM consider new options for the future.

I believe CSNM is vital to Christian nursing and midwifery students in this country. God's desire is that we will all grow and mature in our faith in Him, but this can be particularly tricky for our students in the 21st century healthcare setting where there are considerable pressures. They do not necessarily have the experience that we have as qualified professionals and we therefore have an obligation to support them in practice and as an organisation. The question is – HOW? Over the next few months, CNM Council will be considering very carefully how the work with student nurses and midwives should continue. CNM itself needs to become more stable structurally and financially. There are close links being made with the Christian Medical Fellowship, which could be fruitful.

To move forward we need to be praying and asking God to be at the heart of our deliberations and planning. We need YOU as CNM members to pray and consider the part you play in CNM. Perhaps you could become more actively involved and offer a few hours a week to the student work or you could be co-opted onto the CNM council? Who knows! – God Does!

Once again – keep praying and please feel free to contact me if you would like to talk about anything I've raised.

God Bless  
**Tim James.**

You can contact Tim via the CNM email or telephone number. ■

# Meet the Council

The CNM Council was elected at the last AGM on March 5 2005, and the members are:

*Elizabeth Capper – Chair*  
*Angela Thavaraj – Treasurer*  
*Steven Fouch – Secretary*  
*Tim James – Student Liaison*  
*Sally-Anne Foster*

Liz is a former senior nursing officer, now retired, and a member of the board of UCCF. She also heads up the Cardiff CNM local group, and helped set up the original London group out which CNM formed, and was instrumental in setting up CSNM.

Angela is a palliative care nurse, and currently works in Lewisham, South-East London.

Steve worked for several years in community palliative care and HIV in London. He now works for the Christian Medical Fellowship in mission mobilisation and

support for allied health professionals.

Tim is a paediatric nurse, specialising in paediatric intensive care. He recently took up post in PICU at Guys & St. Thomas' in London.

Sally trained as a nurse at St Bartholomew's hospital in London. After several years in clinical practice she spent four years as the student nurses and midwives staff worker for UCCF/CSNM. She is now the Women's staff worker for a West London Church. She is a founding member of CNM.

The CNM Council is responsible for organising CNM events, publications and organising our responses to outside enquiries, as well as offering support and advice (where we can) to individual members. We always welcome input, help and ideas, and if you feel that this is an area where you could give your time and energy, please let us know.

## Why be part of **cnm**?

In his 2001 book, "Bowling Alone", Robert Putnam argued that civil society was breaking down as we become more disconnected from our families, neighbours, communities, churches, etc. We just don't join anything any more, but instead get caught up in the pressures of commuting miles to work, shopping in large, out of town supermarkets and living in isolated homes where we do not even know our neighbours' names. Our main relationship with the outside world is through our TVs, radio and the Internet.

You only need to look at the regular church statistics to see how this sense of isolation and withdrawal has affected the Christian

community. Pews are increasingly empty, and those that do turn up are less and less likely to give time and energy to the life of the church. It seems that as a nation we are too busy, too individualistic and too preoccupied.

We can all relate to this in some manner. I am up at 5 most mornings, I spend three hours a day commuting, eight hours at work, and by the time I have got home in the evening, eaten and spent time with my kids, all I am good for is to watch the first half hour of Newsnight before collapsing into bed! And I do not have to contend with shift work, regular weekends and Bank Holidays, night duty, split shifts etc. I

am sure we can all tell similar tails. Where do we fit anything else into this kind of punishing lifestyle?

But is this the way that God would have us live? Twenty First Century living in the Western world is not really in harmony with the way most people in the world live, or indeed how we lived here a couple of hundred years ago. We are meant to live in community, meant to know our neighbours, be near family and friends, to share a common life together in some manner. This is the reason that Jesus never talked of faith just in terms of a vertical, one-to-one relationship with God, but also as a horizontal relationship with our fellow believers and with the wider world. Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness. The Church was created to allow us to share in that life together.

And we have a God who understands relationships intimately because He is three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit in an eternal, loving relationship. Individualism is, if anything a result of sin, rather than something in the original design of human nature.

## Why CNM?

So, having established that we are made to live in a common life together, especially as believers in Jesus, why then does CNM matter? Surely, if we have a local church, why do we need a special fellowship of Christian nurses? Are we not adding yet another meeting and set of commitments to an already over stretched diary?

I guess from my own experience the answer is quite simple. Much as I get a lot of encouragement and support within my church, the reality is that the church is not usually geared up to supporting people in the workplace. Because, if we face the facts, our workplace is where we have most contact with people, where we put the largest part of our time and energy. It is often the only place most of us come in contact with non-Christians on a sustained and regular basis. The pressures we face as nurses and midwives are also quite different from those most of our church fellows experience – we deal with illness, disability, death and dying, birth and pregnancy – real human joy, suffering and tragedy, on a day-to-day basis, in a way that most people in our society only see sanitised on TV screens. And we do this in an environment where the Christian faith is seen as at best a harmless irrelevance, and at worst as a danger to be marginalised at all times.

We need others who understand these pressures to stand alongside us, because this is where God has called us to be – this is our ministry to God, our mission field. Church meetings and events are often useful and valuable, but to be honest, how often do we see many non-Christians at a church event? It is at work that we are the most effective witnesses to Christ, not in Church. And at work, we have no chance to hide behind events and meetings; we are often the only Christian in our workplace, and we will be watched, not just for what we say or what we do, but who we are!

Francis of Assisi once said that he preached the gospel on all

occasions, using words if he really had to. I have heard it said that people often cannot hear what we say as Christians because who we are screams too loudly. In other words, how we live, our attitudes, behaviour, moods and reactions speak volumes for the God whose name we own. Let's be honest, that is an awful pressure to bear, let alone to bear alone. Yet I know of very few churches that seek to empower us ordinary believers in the workplace to be witnesses to Jesus. So often, the message we get from church, however unintended, is that our real Christian work and witness is within the four walls of the church, not out in the home and the workplace! But surely Jesus is Lord of all our lives, even (or especially!) our careers.

A CNM group, even if it only meets infrequently, is a chance to share with others who are in the same boat as us, to learn from those who have been there longer, to encourage others who are struggling, to create a brief, regular space where God can speak into our busy work lives and professional practice. Even if there is no local, group near you, the strength of the fellowship, especially in this modern telecommunications age, is that we can share over distances by phone, email, or through regular publications.

And for student nurses and the newly qualified, coming out into the unsheltered environment of work for the first time can be a traumatic experience (mine certainly was – I can recall vividly, spending most of my first year getting things wrong and being torn off a strip by my charge nurse – I can recall regularly thinking 'how can I ever say that I am Christian at work again?!').

CNM is now about to become a fellowship for graduates and students – partly because we believe that students have a lot that they can get from being with mature, Christian nurses and midwives, and partly because the energy and fresh thinking of students does a lot to invigorate and challenge us oldies! Tim James' article gives some of the other reasons and background to this change.

But for CNM to be able to provide this space to bring God into our professional practice, we need the energy and commitments of our members. We all have something to share from our own experiences as Christian nurses and midwives that can encourage others.

If you feel able to, we would love to hear your stories and experiences, and be able to share them through CNM News. We hope to have more talking points and issues for discussion in upcoming editions of the newsletter, and we would love to hear from you what issues are coming up where you work. Questions, letters, articles and ideas – all are most welcome. We are a fellowship; all of us, not just the CNM Council, and we all have as much to give as to receive from being a part of CNM. You are the life of CNM, and we need you!

**Steve Fouch**

*CNM Secretary*