

# cnm NEWS

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## The Vision Thing II



In November 2001 I wrote an article for CNM News called "The Vision Thing!" This laid out some of the thoughts governing how the CNM Committee of the day saw the future of the organisation developing and what principles it sought to abide by.

Since then a lot of 'water has passed under the bridge' and in early Spring 2007 a meeting was held in Cardiff to re-evaluate the CNM vision and chart a course for the future. At this "Cardiff Conference" were the present CNM Council along with some members of previous serving committees gathered to 'brain-storm' some of the presenting issues. It was my privilege - as a former committee member - to be present. I thought that it would be an interesting exercise to use my original article as a means to evaluate how that vision has developed and to chart a way forward.

The most pressing issue in 2001 remains our greatest presenting challenge in 2007; that is how can CNM connect with students of nursing & midwifery and help them to be Christian disciples in these fields? Back then those of us on the first CNM committee saw it as imperative to forge links with UCCF and affiliate as one of their "professional groups" along with CMF and the Christian Therapists Network (CTN). To that end we adopted the UCCF 'Statement of Faith' and indeed continue to abide by it. In the early years of CNM this gave us the priceless asset of having a student staff worker funded by UCCF assisting CNM.

That partnership has worked extremely well but UCCF has been refocusing its activities in recent years and no longer feels able to support students within certain vocational courses... like nursing and midwifery. Consequently CNM has now incorporated the Christian Student Nurses & Midwives group into its own orbit, and CSNM no longer exists as such. This rebalancing of Christian witness within these caring professions merely renews that

original need to forge links with the student world. Does this mean that we are on our own? No. The Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) have provided CNM with very generous practical and administrative support to help us through this transition. And many of you will already be aware of our joint enterprises with CTN. These alliances will continue but as an organisation we will need to be imaginative and proactive in forging meaningful relationships with student nurses and midwives, and the institutions within which they are taught. We need to work hard at raising CNM's profile.

This sort of initiative can only come from the grassroots; unlike NCF which had a 'top down' model suited to the needs of the time, CNM is more of a network. We will continue to support local groups where they exist and help establish them when there is sufficient demand. But CNM will not function through local groups; back in 2001 we recognised that "you all have busy lives with work and family commitments perhaps church responsibilities and professional studies to juggle. We do not want to add yet more obligations to lives filled beyond capacity, but we do want CNM to be a support to you as you seek to know Jesus and make Him known".

The other aspects of the original "Vision Thing" remain astonishingly familiar: "Nursing and Midwifery together form the largest single professional group in the UK. In some of the larger conurbations many hospitals are recruiting significant numbers of overseas nurses. If we were talking about a comparable people group or student body the church would mobilise to reach out to it. The problem is this body of people is very diffuse and difficult to reach, yet these professions impact on the lives of many millions of people in the UK and is therefore a very strategic group to reach for the gospel."

How can you help? Obviously, if you are not already a member, by joining us. Each additional member not only secures the financial viability of CNM but more importantly adds to our credibility as a voice within the caring professions. Praying for us and simply making our existence known at work and within your own church fellowship is critical to CNM's future.

After a pioneering phase in the evolution of CNM we are now in need of "settlers" - people who, over the long haul, can help consolidate what has been achieved so far, simply by helping out as and when they are able (without the pressure of feeling they have taken on another commitment). As we look to the future we need to define our core activities and discover how to make these sustainable in an increasingly challenging profession. ■

# Can Christians take Industrial Action?

In what we are told is an historic event, the RCN recently balloted 184,000 of its members on whether or not to ballot all its members on the appropriateness of industrial action over the latest pay dispute. Just under a fifth of those balloted responded, and were overwhelmingly (95%) in favour of the formal ballot. The issue concerns the government's response to the call for a 2.5% pay award for nurses in the UK. An independent Pay Review Body has recommended the 2.5% pay award, and nurses in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have been promised the pay award in full by their ministers. However nurses in England are only being promised the pay award in two instalments, which actually amounts to a 1.9% pay award and thus a real terms pay cut for nurses in England. The government has expressed that this is their final offer, so it looks like a formal ballot on industrial action will go ahead. The question for us as Christian nurses is, are we ethically bound to vote in a particular direction or not?

Fu-Jin Shih in her chapter in *Commitment and Responsibility in Nursing* suggests there might be three possible responses to the call to strike (admittedly one step further than the RCN is proposing):

Firstly to refuse on the grounds that patients are vulnerable and will suffer. However section 12.3 of the RCN's own guidelines states The Council will not authorise any form of industrial action unless satisfied that such form will not be detrimental to the wellbeing or interests of patients or clients. The RCN is proposing more of a 'work to rule' course of action which might involve such things as refusing to work unpaid overtime, to attend non patient related meetings or to complete data returns linked to health department targets. In this event nurses are being asked to conform to the letter of their contract, which is a perfectly fair request and is not promoting injustice. If patient care subsequently suffers as a result of a lack of staff being made visible through work to rule measures, then it sheds light on our government's failure to care for the weak and the vulnerable by making provision to employ adequate nursing cover. This is their responsibility under God, and doesn't affect the ethics of a Christian nurse choosing to work to rule.

Secondly it might be seen that a call to industrial action is to stand in opposition to those to whom God has given the authority to govern. In the public sector to strike is to oppose the government (as our employer) and so as Christians we might be concerned that we are disobeying the call in Romans 13:1-2 to submit to governing authorities. However, in the UK the government has issued guidelines for unions and employees concerning the parameters for legitimate industrial action. As long as the RCN follows these guidelines (and so far they are) then to take industrial action is a means of expressing our dissatisfaction that is permitted by our government, and as such is a perfectly acceptable course of action for Christians.

Thirdly she suggests that if there are no other alternatives to making our case then one might think industrial action justified. I think this response needs to be nuanced slightly for the UK since,

as we have seen, our government has written legislation on what constitutes legal strike action. We are not defying our government through properly conducted industrial action, however we might want to ask ourselves, over what issues are we prepared to campaign in this way. Is there an ethically demonstrable reason why Christians should be lifting their voices up in protest?

To take action over the latest pay award is an issue of justice. Nurses in England are not being treated fairly by comparison with other nurses in the UK; they are the lowest paid professional group in the public sector, and so are not being treated fairly by comparison with other professionals; and their pay request has been deemed just by an independent review and also by a large section of the public who were canvassed for their opinion. It is a biblical principle that workers should be adequately and appropriately compensated for their labours (1 Timothy 5:17-18), and it is a biblical principle that Christians should be actively concerned with the wellbeing of their neighbours and be seeking justice (Luke 10:27, Micah 6:8, Galatians 6:10).

For Christians to participate in legal industrial action to ensure fair pay for their neighbours is, I suggest, ethically acceptable.

Indeed, I think I want to push this issue as far as it will go. I think as Christians we should be far more active than we are in seeking to shape the future of our profession. What a tragedy if the only action we take is to support our colleagues by voting for, and taking part in, an industrial action called by those of this world to improve our own remuneration. It is an ethically acceptable thing to do, but it says something about the state of our hearts if this is the only thing we do.

Christians in nursing and midwifery should be a voice to be reckoned with when the NMC is seeking to re-shape our Code of Conduct, or when the Government is seeking to change the legal standing of euthanasia. We should be not only a voice to be reckoned with when those in the world are setting to agenda, but also we should be seeking to set the agenda ourselves. We should be the ones calling for an improvement in working conditions, or for an improvement in patient's experiences whilst in hospital, or for a proper recognition of spiritual care needs, or for help for families to prevent the cycles of abuse and improve relationships - and significantly we should be the ones offering solutions to these problems.

Man was placed on the earth to rule over it under God. That hasn't changed, but sadly what we tend to see in the UK today is either mankind ruling the world according to his own will, or Christians living under the rule of God but failing to exercise dominion over the world. Let's change that. Let's get active. Let's start with small things and move on from there. Let's start by seeking fair treatment over wages and then pick another issue. Let's work together to make an impact, to show the world what nursing and midwifery can look like and achieve if we work according to God's standards instead of the world's. ■

# Working Wisdom Conference

*On Saturday 3rd February 2007 I attended my first conference since joining CNM a few months before.*

The conference was held jointly between CNM, Christian Therapists Network and the Therapy Students Christian Fellowship. I didn't attend the whole weekend, but came for the day as I didn't quite know what to expect and I thought this would act as a taster. So, feeling slightly apprehensive, I arrived at Hebron Hall and was straight away met with a smile by one of the organisers.

The first session began by being commended to God with prayer and a few hymns. Hugh Thomson, a pastor from City Evangelical Church in Birmingham and part-time consultant, then gave the first of his keynote addresses on the subject of wisdom: wisdom for living in general taken from the first eight chapters of Proverbs. Following this the group had the choice of attending one of four different seminars. I opted for Sheena Tranter's talk on witnessing at work. This, like the other sessions, was presented in a highly professional manner, firmly rooted in the scriptures and giving eminently practical information. With the morning sessions finished we all trundled into the dining room for lunch.

The afternoon session started with the choice of another seminar: I attended Andrew Mortimore's talk on the future of the NHS which not only made me think about how health care was developing in Britain and its relationship to Christianity, but also about my thoughts about the NHS. The final session of the day was given by Hugh Thomson who spoke this time on wisdom for working which was again taken from Proverbs.

For me, the conference ended after an evening meal and helping to clear up.

Driving home to Swansea I couldn't wait to tell my wife about how good the day had been and of the many spiritual blessings I had received. The Lord knows the thoughts of men. He certainly knows mine because it seemed to me that throughout the day he had guided these speakers to reveal His truth to me about matters which I had been seeking answers for a long time. To conclude, the day was hugely beneficial providing much spiritual refreshment and encouragement and next year, God willing, both my wife and I shall be attending the whole conference .

# Philippines



*In February, I had the opportunity to spend some time with our fellow Christian nurses in the Philippines. Working with Filipino's in the UK is great, and visiting the country didn't disappoint one bit.*

Half an hour after arriving in Manila, I was met at my hotel by Phebe Pendon, the head of the Philippines "Nursing Christian Fellowship", and some of their staff workers. Their aim for that evening was to let me sample some authentic Pilipino food, an aim with which I was more than happy to comply with.

As I ate, I found out more about the Filipino NCF. Having so many contacts, they are not actually sure of their exact membership; however their aims and programs work out roughly the same as CNM's. Structurally, it is a wing of the Intervarsity Fellowship, known in the UK as UCCF. This gives the NCF good links with students, and consequently graduates too. The staff workers, much like the UK UCCF staff workers, are in training in areas such as theology while also being the facilitators and organizers of the NCF's many programs for Christian nurses throughout the country.

Many nurses in the Philippines have moved overseas to western countries. Because of this, nursing in the Philippines is a booming profession and has been for some while. It was said very seriously to me, that while nursing used to be the entry course to medicine, now medicine is seen as the entry course to nursing. Strange, until you realize that earning as a nurse overseas will bring a higher wage than a great many jobs in the Philippines, including doctors.

The Philippine NCF has grasped hold of the fact that their members will one day soon be traveling all over the world – if they are not already there. They want the Philippines to be a blessing to the world through supporting and encouraging their own Christian nurses to share the gospel wherever they go. Are you a Filipino nurse in the UK? Do you know any? Get in contact with CNM; we would love to get to know you.

I was only in Manila for the weekend. Had I stayed longer, I could have traveled with them to an NCF conference in the south of the country, where beaches and scenery are like paradise! Next time...

# noticeboard

## Upcoming Events

**Christian Nurses and Midwives and Christian Therapists Network joint conference 2008** will be on the 1st-2nd of February at Hebron Hall near Cardiff. The theme of the conference is Holiness under the title “Radically Different: Set apart for God in the workplace”. Contact Steve Fouch on [conference@cnm.org.uk](mailto:conference@cnm.org.uk) or 020 7234 9668 for a booking form and further details.

## Advanced Notices

**The Nurses Christian Fellowship International 50th Anniversary World Conference** will be held at Hill Station Hotel, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria from September 14 – 19 2008.

**“Strengthened to SERVE: a Christian response to global health needs”**

The Conference Objectives are to:

- Identify key global health issues
- Identify strategies to respond to global health issues
- Integrate Biblical principles into professional practice
- Reflect on the Past, Present and Future of NCFI

This will be a chance to meet with Christian nurses from across the globe, to learn from and encourage one another, to explore the challenges we face globally, and discover where God is leading us as individuals, as national fellowships and as a global movement of Christian nurses.

Contact David Parfitt at “Annandale”,  
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Further details at: [www.ncfi.org/nigeria08.php](http://www.ncfi.org/nigeria08.php)

## Resources

### CNM Pens & Posters

If you are looking for resources to draw in new members to a hospital or local prayer group, contact the CNM office and we can send you pens and posters for publicity purposes. Pens normally sell at 4 for £1, posters are free, and with space to put local contact details. Ideal for a staffroom or chapel notice board.

## Contacts

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### Nurses Christian Fellowship International

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### Journal of Christian Nursing (USA)

[www.ncf-jcn.org](http://www.ncf-jcn.org)

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### Healthcare Christian Fellowship

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### Christian Therapists Network (CTN)

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### Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF)

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## CNM News

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Please send any articles, letter or news items to CNM at the address below. We reserve the right to edit any items we receive.

### Feedback

If you want to contact us about anything in this newsletter or with feedback, enquiries or ideas for CNM in general, please contact us:

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