

## **NEXT SIG MEMBERS' MEETING**

### **Royal College of Psychiatrists Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group**

**Programme for Friday March 9<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**Venue: Royal College of Psychiatrists  
17 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PG**

### **'Suffering – What is the point of it all?'**

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| 10.15 | Coffee   |
| 10.45 | Preliminary Notices: <b>Dr. Sarah Eagger</b> (Chair)   |
| 11.00 | <b>'Why must we suffer?<br/>Dr. Andrew Powell</b>  |
| 12.00 | <b>'Suffering and the creation of meaning – tensions and dilemmas'<br/>Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg</b> |
| 1.00  | Lunch  |
| 2.00  | <b>'Beyond suffering'<br/>Brni. Sumati Chaitanya</b>   |
| 3.00  | <b>'Love, healing and happiness: in search of the flipside of suffering'<br/>Dr. Larry Culliford</b> |
| 4.00  | Tea and Plenary  |
| 5.00  | Close  |

**PLEASE NOTE – THIS PROGRAMME IS FOR  
SIG MEMBERS AND INVITED GUESTS ONLY**

## **Programme Information:**

**Dr. Andrew Powell**

### **‘Why must we suffer?’**

Suffering is the inevitable accompaniment of being born into the physical world. Metaphysically, its source lies in the separation of the soul from the Divine. Psychologically speaking, we cannot avoid multiple losses throughout life, of those we love, possessions we hold dear and, invariably, the health we cherish. What is crucial is whether we are left damaged and diminished by suffering, or whether we somehow find the way to growth and transformation.

The limbic brain does not readily accede to the spiritual vision of ‘the Golden Rule’, that tells us we are ultimately one. When wounded, the instinct is to fight back. Yet, only through forgiveness can redemption come about, individually and for all humankind.

The journey from homo innocens to homo sapiens is long and arduous. Is the human race still in its infancy? What is to be learned en route? The elevation of consciousness? The acquisition of wisdom? The advancement of the human soul? Perhaps all these things and more. In the words of T.S.Eliot: ‘We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.’

### **About the speaker**

Andrew Powell specialised in psychiatry and psychotherapy at the Maudsley Hospital, London. He was Consultant and Senior Lecturer at St. George’s Hospital, London for eleven years before moving to Oxford, where he continued to work in the National Health Service until 2000.

Andrew has served on the Council of the Scientific and Medical Network, is an Associate of the College of Healing and Founding Chair of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

His publications on spirituality and mental health can be found on [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/publications/index.htm](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/college/sig/spirit/publications/index.htm)

**Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg**

### **‘Suffering and the creation of meaning: tensions and dilemmas’**

The Talmud forms the background to all subsequent rabbinic thought. In a concise but enigmatic discussion, it addresses the question of the causes and meaning of suffering. An analysis of a short passage will provide a pretext for discussing how Jews and Judaism have viewed both the causes of suffering and what potential meaning, if any, can be created out of it. Does

suffering induce repentance and inner change? What does the Talmud mean by 'sufferings of love'? Is the meaning of suffering invariably subjective? Is there a difference between how we may interpret our own suffering and how we are entitled to view the suffering of others?

### **About the speaker**

Jonathan Wittenberg read English at Cambridge and after two years teaching and social work in Israel and England, took a PGCE at Goldsmith's College, London.

He became a rabbi in 1987, and since then he has worked as rabbi of the New North London Synagogue, taking a leading role in the development of the Masorti Movement for traditional non-fundamentalist Judaism in England. For five and a half years he co-ordinated the voluntary multi-faith chaplaincy in the North London Hospice and has now joined the chaplaincy team at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Jonathan has initiated a project to create a multi-faith secondary school, which was launched in the House of Lords three years ago.

His publications include 'The Three Pillars Of Judaism: A Search for Faith And Values' (SCM Press), 'The Laws Of Life: A Guide to Traditional Jewish Practice at Times of Bereavement' (Masorti Publications) and 'The Eternal Journey; Meditations on the Jewish Year', published by Joseph's Bookstore.

### **Brni. Sumati Chaitanya**

#### **'Beyond suffering'**

Everyone desires happiness and also puts in great effort to attain it, but have we found lasting happiness? What is this happiness? Where can we find it? Why do we suffer? How do we go beyond suffering? Why rush here and there seeking happiness? Those who seek happiness outside themselves will never find satisfaction. Those who find joy in their own Self alone are truly happy. Keep the higher Self in view every moment of life and go beyond suffering.

### **About the speaker**

Brni. Sumati Chaitanya is the resident Acharya (spiritual teacher) at Chinmaya Mission, UK. Inspired by the spiritual giant, His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda, Sumati Chaitanya, a young doctor in Bombay at the time, joined the mission in 1993 and has since dedicated her life to the Mission and spreading the knowledge of Vedanta.

In the UK, she conducts numerous spiritual activities both at the Mission Centre in Hendon and beyond, including lectures to camps and youth classes, meditation sessions and devotional singing, which are attended by people of all creeds and walks of life.

Sumati Chaitanya is known by all who meet her as a dynamo of unrelenting energy, spiritual service, practical wisdom and her ability to relate to all age groups.

## **Dr. Larry Culliford**

### **‘Love, healing and happiness: in search of the flipside of suffering’.**

‘What (people) have to hold on to is the idea of vulnerability as inherent in the very idea of a physical universe of the kind we inhabit...and what faith has to build on to this is the idea that this very vulnerability may be the instrument of redemption and hope’ (John Cottingham, in *The Spiritual Dimension*: CUP, 2005).

Larry will draw from the stories in his new book, *Love, Healing and Happiness* (O Books, Feb 2007) to explore these ideas and to describe a process of emotional healing that also results in spiritual growth. Not only hope may be renewed, but also contentment, the capacity for joy and much more.

### **About the speaker**

Larry Culliford trained in medicine at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge and Guy's Hospital, London. He works as a psychiatrist in Brighton, where he regularly also teaches a short course on ‘Spirituality and Health Care’ for students at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

Larry refers to himself as a universalist Christian. A churchgoing Anglican, he is open to the teachings and practices of many world faith traditions. He has studied with Buddhist teachers and has meditated regularly for over 20 years.

Larry has written several successful self-help books using the pen-name Patrick Whiteside (see: [www.happinessite.com](http://www.happinessite.com)). He is on the Executive Committee of the Special Interest Group, is a member of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland ([www.thomasmertonsociety.org](http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org)), the International Thomas Merton Society ([www.merton.org](http://www.merton.org)) and the Scientific and Medical Network ([www.scimednet.org](http://www.scimednet.org)). He is probably at least mildly addicted to golf.