



**CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE)**

*TO KNOW GOD AND TO KNOW SELF*

Study Leave Report from

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for

The Southern Presbytery

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The logo reproduced here is the logo of the New Zealand Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (inc). The image depicts 'reading the living human documents' so emphasised in CPE.

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## Introduction

Since completing an initial CPE programme over the 1998-99 summer I had always intended to complete a second programme. The first time I found CPE to be by far the single most important aspect of five years of preparation for ministry, a second CPE I believe would build on and embed the benefits of the first. In this report I outline the history of CPE, its current operation as practiced in New Zealand, and the learning goals, outcomes and thoughts on my CPE experience.

## CPE Roots

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) began close to a century ago in the USA in the 1920s. It came about when the teaching methods of Richard Cabot, met the experience and passion of Anton Boisen.

Cabot was himself a noted Boston physician and part-time teacher at Harvard Divinity School who developed a way of training theological students based upon methods used in training doctors. Cabot had been inspired in this by his acquaintance with Anton Boisen a minister of the Presbyterian Church who had suffered a mental illness and underwent extensive periods of hospital care. During this time Boisen realised that his colleagues in ministry were by and large ill-equipped to be of any real help, despite the fact that his illness had many aspects which were spiritual and faith orientated.

Regaining his own health Boisen began to develop a programme of pastoral education that took into account his discoveries and from this beginning was born what we now know as CPE. From the beginning this was an action-reflection method of education which took seriously the need to read the 'human document', especially the need to know yourself before being able to help others, and to ensure that knowledge of God and self was understood and that our pastoral actions were consistent with that knowledge.

Today even greater emphasis is placed on these matters as our understanding of holistic health has developed.

For Boisen and his friends, CPE was a process of theological education which offered space and time for people to grow and change in their understandings of the nature of being human, to develop themselves as people who are also pastoral ministers. Such growth, they believed, occurs within a community formed by a group of students who interact and then reflect on who they are and what they have experienced. Together and individually they make theological and personal meaning of their experience, plus consolidate and integrate their learning.

In 1930 the Council for Clinical Training of Theological Students was established in Boston. The Council aimed at bringing the minister-to-be face to face with human misery in various institutions, and there, under competent supervision, to accomplish three things:

1. To open the student's eyes to the real problems of men and women and to develop in him methods of observation which would make him competent as an instigator of the forces with which religion has to do and the laws which govern these forces;
2. To train him in the art of helping people out of trouble and enabling them to find spiritual health;
3. To bring about a greater degree of mutual understanding among the professional groups which are concerned with the personal problems of human beings.<sup>1</sup>

## CPE Today

CPE educators believe that the CPE process should be minimally prescriptive, thus allowing each participant to shape their programme and set their goals in such a way as to best meet their individual needs and reflective of their unique character.

The Australia and New Zealand Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ANZACPE) does however describe CPE and its supervisory processes in this way:

CPE is (professional) education for pastoral ministry, involving personal and pastoral identity development. CPE takes place in a setting where a student exercises a pastoral ministry which becomes the focus for learning. Under the supervision of an accredited supervisor the student contracts to enter a self-directed learning process, involving an action-reflection model<sup>2</sup>.

Supervision in the context of CPE is one expression of the Gospel's call to set people free and takes place both individually and in small groups. Supervision:

- *includes the development of the use of self and the acquisition of professional skills and the integration of both in the art of pastoral care*
- *emphasises the creative use of interpersonal relationships by attending to all dimensions of learning and growth: spiritual, cultural, psychological*

CPE is an action-reflection method of learning pastoral care under supervision which:

- *integrates pastoral work and theology, with relevant medical, psychological and behavioural sciences*
- *engages participants in reflection about what happens before their eyes*
- *develops better pastoral relationships by bringing together personal experience, spirituality and theology*
- *is professional education for ministry, designed to establish and improve ministry practice*

The general goal of CPE is to assist participants to begin (or enhance) the development of their personhood and the skills of pastoral care. This includes beginning to understand, or to consolidate and expand, the connections between their experiences in life, ministry, faith and theology<sup>3</sup>.

## CPE in Aotearoa - New Zealand

CPE is offered in various centres, but Auckland is the only place to currently offer a full-time summer programme.

A 'unit' of CPE consists of 400 hours of supervised learning, frequently spread over ten-eleven forty-hour weeks. Each week involves 20 hours pastoral work, in a setting of the participants choosing. In my case this meant being seconded by my parish to St Giles, Te Atatu South, Auckland where I provided summer supply. This proved to be a win-win-win situation in that

- I had a pastoral context for the CPE programme
- St Giles received consistent ministry involving extensive pastoral contact, teaching and leadership, and
- My parish received some financial compensation for my absence.

In addition to the 20 hours of pastoral work per week participants take part in 10 hours of group work, 1 hour of personal supervision, and 9 hours of personal writing, reading and reflection.

'Part-time' courses are also offered at various locations; these also consist of 400 hours, but are spread over a longer period of time to accommodate people who are unable to give full-time attention to their training.

## The Cost

The cost of my CPE course was \$2000, while this was more expensive than options in Australia, travel and accommodation were considerably cheaper. I was also helped as my accommodation was gifted to me in exchange for house, dog and bird - sitting. Thus my only significant other cost was travel to and from Auckland. I am grateful to the Knox Centre for the allocation of a grant that covered my course costs and to the Best Travel Fund which helped with travel expenses.

## My Goals

During this CPE I had a few overarching objectives that if achieved would enhance my pastoral ministry, my interpersonal relationships, sense of call, and my awareness of self. In essence these follow Augustine's prayer: 'Lord, that I may know Thee and that I may know myself'. The following goals were designed to help me hear this prayer answered.

Goal	Actions	Obstacles	Resources	By the end of CPE
<p><b>PASTORAL</b></p> <p>Develop skills and comfort in pastoral encounters across cultures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will commit to mingling with the MM families.</li> <li>• I will engage with 6 people or households per week.</li> <li>• In pastoral encounters I will:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Be attentive to God's presence.</li> <li>b. Be aware of my agenda and baggage that may be influencing the relationship.</li> <li>c. Seek to listen to the non-verbal message.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• I will seek pastoral opportunities beyond St Giles.</li> <li>• I will take part in at least 2 worship services where I will be the minority.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My tendency to avoid potential embarrassment</li> <li>• Conflicting priorities</li> <li>• Enough available pastoral opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collegial modeling and insights</li> <li>• Parishioner interactions &amp; verbatim</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Other ministers</li> <li>• Holy Spirit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will be more adept at listening to both the words spoken and the message conveyed</li> <li>• I will be comfortable in my role and aware of my own internal motivations and story.</li> </ul>

Goal	Action	Obstacles	Resources	By the end of CPE
<p><b>Personal</b></p> <p>To develop a more measured pace in my life allowing appropriate space for the spiritual, the physical, the social, family, and self, in the midst of the ministry.</p> <p>To be comfortable in my pastoral role and looking forward to future ministry opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will seek to listen to God; taking some time of quiet with God every day.</li> <li>• I will claim the space I need for myself.</li> <li>• I will maintain boundaries around the time I spend doing <u>administry</u> (the thing that distracts me) and the time I put into ministry in total.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tendency to avoid the depth with God</li> <li>• People pleasing</li> <li>• Conflicting priorities and demands</li> <li>• Past experiences and relationships that continue to impact negatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripture</li> <li>• Prayer</li> <li>• Lectio Divina</li> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Beaches and parks</li> <li>• Collegial modeling and insights</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Holy Spirit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will affirm God's presence, forgiveness and approval.</li> <li>• I will be relaxed and have developed better patterns of self-care.</li> <li>• Relationships with family and friends will be enhanced.</li> <li>• My physical fitness will have been maintained.</li> <li>• I will look forward to ongoing ministry opportunities.</li> </ul>

## Books

An important aspect of CPE is reading extensively, both academically and more generally. In practise I found that the novels read had much to teach me on matters of pastoral care and spiritual insight. Books either read in full or dipped into included...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting</li> <li>• Grief, the toothache of the soul</li> <li>• Loss and Grief</li> <li>• Right Relationships</li> <li>• The Grand Weaver</li> <li>• The Insatiable Moon</li> <li>• The Shack</li> <li>• The Wounded Healer</li> <li>• Towards another Summer</li> <li>• Transforming Communication</li> <li>• Understanding Difficult People</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larry Crabb</li> <li>• Kindrah Greening</li> <li>• Megan Gressor with Dr Geoffrey Glassock</li> <li>• Tom Marshall</li> <li>• Ravi Zacharias</li> <li>• Mike Riddell</li> <li>• Wm. Paul Young</li> <li>• Henri J.M. Nouwen</li> <li>• Janet Frame</li> <li>• Richard Bolstad and Margot Hamblett</li> <li>• Iris Barrow</li> </ul> |
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## Outcomes

CPE has enabled me to refresh and practice my pastoral skills and to discover greater comfort in diverse pastoral situations. I am confident that skills and self-awareness within pastoral situations have grown considerably. In the process greater self-awareness has resulted thus there will be some ongoing goals which I will be taking to my supervisor.

Skills developed relate to my ability to listen to the actual words spoken along with the rest of the message that comes in tone, pace, gesture, eyes, body etc. However most importantly I have become more aware of myself: my pet phrases, my vulnerabilities, my needs, my agenda, and my limitations.

The stuff I will take to ongoing supervision is a tendency to control and force pastoral conversations in an effort to meet my own needs.

CPE has provided the space to develop a more measured pace in my life, allowing space for the spiritual, the physical, the social, family and self, in the midst of ministry - now it will be up to me to ensure it continues. Again this is something that I will be sharing with my supervisor seeking to have her help in maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

During CPE it has been a joy to discover a passion for pastoral ministry that had become swamped in routine, administry, and guilt over mistakes made. While as a pastor much of my work is about administry, leadership and preaching a significant aspect of my work needs to be about getting alongside of parishioners, and others.

The relationship with St Giles has been interesting in that I was specifically invited to come and offer: Leadership, Pastoral Care and insight - while the first and last of these are not areas of particular interest to CPE they did shape my relationships with the elders and to a lesser extent the congregation. In these roles I have been given incredible freedom and invited into many homes and had many share their lives: joys and sorrows with me. I have found a congregation hungry for a listening ear; at times this has been overwhelming.

Along the way I have also experienced a number of frustrations and sad situations: relationship difficulties, illness, loss etc., yet the more painful experiences were in seeing some of the 'unhelpful' ways I operate at times. While not wishing to 'beat myself up' over these matters I am grateful for the enhanced awareness of myself and the consequent actions I can now take to ensure I be the minister God would have me be.

Thus CPE has enabled significant personal reflection; at times this process has been painful as it has touched deep hurts, regrets, unforgiveness and vulnerability. Yet it has been here, in weakness that God has challenged me to be the pastor he calls me to be. To come in brokenness - humanness and from there serve by God's grace and Spirit. The most significant insights for me have been the acceptance that some things I cannot change, but I can, and need to move on. Also where others are involved the acceptance that I can do only what I can do and that my responsibility to mend relationships, or to make choices for life, end with me. I cannot be in the business of making decisions for others, nor can I continue to modify my ministry based upon my perception of others reaction.

Throughout this time God has been for me a constant presence, prime cheer-leader and encourager. At times I have sensed his disappointment in choices I have made but even then I am reminded that tomorrow is a new day, I can start again, and I can do so in God's strength, grace and forgiveness.

## Conclusion

I have enjoyed walking with the self-disclosing God who created me for relationship, a God who has revealed himself in Scripture, creation and most fully in Jesus. When I look closely I am blown away, lost in awe for all I see is love, creativity, joy, fulfilment and invitation. Yet I know my God is a jealous God who is grieved by my choosing other priorities and is saddened by the careless, and at times deliberate choices I make: thus I do seek to live to please God, to bring a smile to his face, and I seek to encourage others to know God's love and to discover the freedom, purpose and future there is in Jesus.

As I conclude this CPE course I can say that the experience has been self-affirming, ministry enhancing, and life enriching. It has helped me know God, to know self and to understand how God can use me in his name in pastoral ministry.

I will always be grateful to my parish at Kaikorai, the Southern Presbytery, the Knox Centre, the Best Travel Fund, the people of St Giles and my CPE group (Amy, Lyn, Matai, Meg, Pramod, and Roy) for helping me along the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Stokoe, Rodney J.R., *Clinical Pastoral Education*. The Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin, February, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cpe-nz.org.nz/handbook1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cpe-nz.org.nz>