

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

Number 51

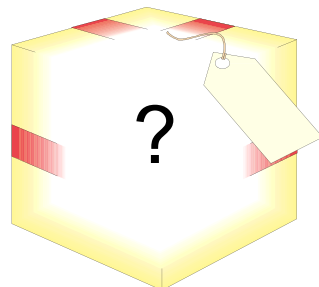
January 1997

This Newsletter is issued by a growing association of people who are, in conjunction with the Foundation for Community Encouragement of the USA (FCE), committed to developing community building in Britain beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum'.

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A special gift edition



From the Editor

Firstly, can I apologise for being later than I planned with this edition? This is partly due to holidays (my family had a wonderful time in Gran Canary over Christmas, and my printer also had a family time away), and partly due to waiting for a number of contributions. I do hope this has not inconvenienced you too much, and that you at least enjoy and find valuable what we have managed to include.

I am particularly sorry for the delay to those who have placed advertisements with us, as some of their events are happening very soon. When approached I thought it would not detract from the value or integrity of the newsletter to include advertisements about other types of activity as long as they are broadly congruent with community building, or of interest to the readers. All I have asked is a suitable donation, but if any of you think this policy is inappropriate please do let me know.

General Meeting

You will notice that plans are now well under way for a General Meeting of those involved with CBiB to be held in June. There will be more details in future editions, but please put the dates (26-29th June 1997) into your diaries. I understand that costs will be kept to a minimum, and that people can join in from either the Thursday evening or the Friday evening. I am certainly planning to go, and look forward to a productive and enjoyable time.

The London scene

There is more on the situation in London later in the newsletter, but things are in somewhat of a flux in the capital. I do not know of any ongoing groups that are currently open to new members, and people to help organise CB events are being sought as Tom Deevy, who has sponsored several CBEs and CBWs, is taking a well earned break.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a personal statement of gratitude to Tom for the energy and commitment he has put into events and ongoing groups over recent years. For many of us our first real experience of

community has come through an event that Tom organised, and we have much to thank him for. We wish him much blessing in the coming months. Meanwhile if anyone is willing to help publicise, or cosponsor, a London event then Suzy (01734 478653) would love to hear from you.

Accounts

The following are the accounts for the newsletter (network support) activities in 1996. (If you have any questions do please ask me):-

Income

Subscriptions 1996/7	882.00
Prepaid subscriptions 1997/8	57.00
Interest	6.17
Sales of Resources	<u>100.00</u>
Total Income	<u>1045.17</u>

Expenditure

Printing	239.23
Postage	230.98
Stationery	55.62
Other expenses	<u>25.14</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>550.97</u>

Building Society Account

Balance at beginning of year	421.64
Plus Income less expenditure	494.20
Less Contribution to CBiB expenses	<u>50.85</u>
Balance at end of year	<u>864.99</u>

Net Assets

Balance in Building Society	864.99
Less prepaid subscriptions	57.00
Less allowance for 2 editions paid for but not yet produced	<u>137.99</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>670.00</u>

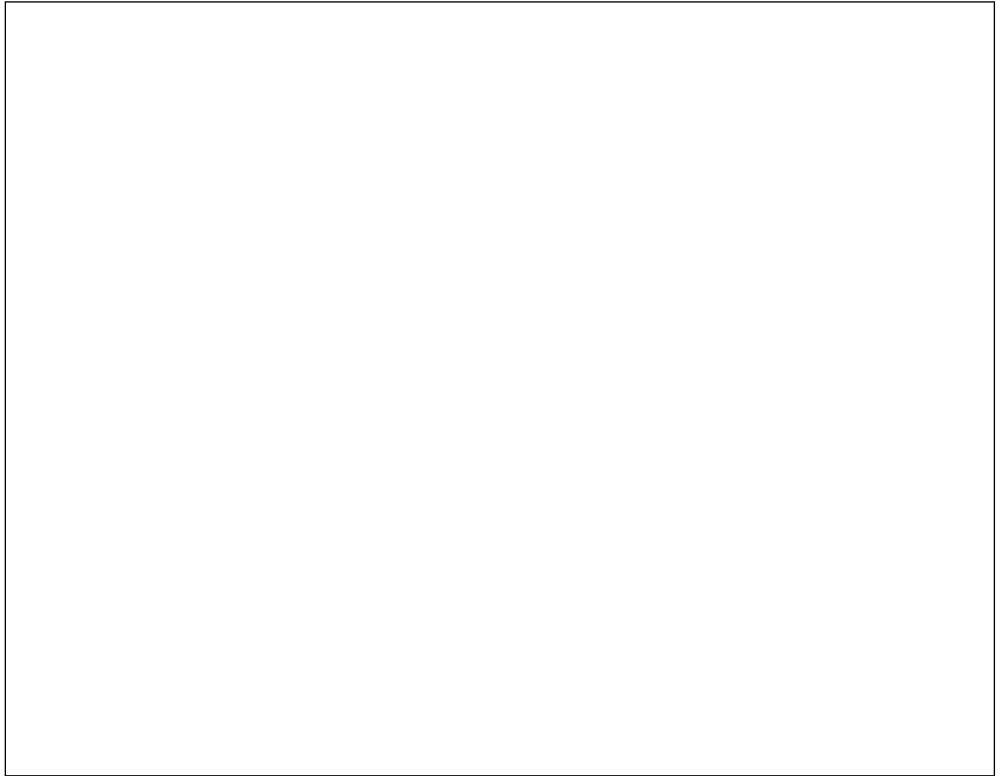
New Year

You will find something about subscriptions, and an opportunity to comment, later in this edition. Thanks to those of you who have already given me some feedback.

Do remember the special focused editions coming up - see the note on a later page. It would be really good to have a good breadth of contributions.

Finally I look forward to meeting many of you at an event or at the general meeting in 1997, or being in communication with you in some other way, and I wish you all a very

Peter Cooper (details on back page)



Note that several UK events for 1997 are in the planning stages. In America there is a Community Building in Organizations Conference in May, and a Community Building Skills Seminar (CBSS) in June.

When Peter asked me if I would like to help him edit a “special issue” of the newsletter, and suggested a variety of topics, the one that grabbed my attention and felt ‘right’ for me was about Community Building and Relationships. He recently sent me various pieces on the subject that he found on the Internet. As the time for this special issue draws near I wonder about what I have to say on the subject, what is my story, what is the role of Community Building in my relationship with my partner.

I met Debbie at a Community Building Skills Seminar in London almost four years ago. It was the second event for both of us. And during the first couple of years of our relationship we often went to CB events together: we joked with friends that it was cheaper than couple therapy. Life in the relationship wasn’t easy: we almost split up many times. We did finally split up - and then decided to get back together. That was a major turning point: we started seeing a counsellor together and the relationship has improved enormously. And the role of Community Building is changed to something I am involved with and committed to - not a place where I go hoping that the feeling of ‘community’ at the end of the workshop will solve all our problems.

Change

As I write this I am starting to realise that my ability to ‘be’ in a Community Building circle has changed and improved as I have learnt to relate more fully and clearly to Debbie. Or perhaps as I have grown and changed, thanks to the love and support that I have received from Debbie, from my therapists and from all sorts of people in CB circles.

At the joint meeting a few weeks back I volunteered to help Anthony Kirke in revising the Community Building Insights booklet that is given out at the end of workshops, and that forced me to think more about how to verbalise my insights, as well as giving me the opportunity to read what other people had suggested. And the thing that struck me the

most, the change that felt most important to me is about the ‘stages’ of community building, and the statement that ‘community is the goal’. I know that in my relationship with Debbie I find it hard to accept that life together is not a ‘Walt Disney’ movie - that there is no ‘...and they lived happily ever after’, that no matter how hard I try to keep hold of the moments of warmth and closeness (by attempting all sorts of spiritual/emotional acrobatics), we will drift apart and disagree and row. Community Building has given me a vocabulary to express the trust that we will come back together again, that as long as I am honest and clear on where I am, then it is possible for us to create a space to communicate openly and to trust that in that space the Universe will work its ‘miracles’ with all the imagination and creativity of the Spirit. And I have come to realise that all the acrobatics I do in the attempt to hold on to the closeness - hiding my feelings so she won’t be upset, denying what I want so that we won’t disagree - are what clouds my mind and my vision and stops me from communicating with the openness (‘emptiness’?) that I need.

Experiences

I have changed and grown in the past few years and Community Building has been very important in the process. Saying that I try to apply community building principles to my life and my relationship feels misleading. I still don’t trust that I have a clear insight on any particular ‘principles’. What I know is that my experiences of the process of building community in the circle ritual have helped to come to terms with my internal process: seeing my pain mirrored in other people words, my fears revealed through their stories, my openness shining in other people’s eyes have helped me to make them real for myself. I still don’t accept them as easily as I would like to. I don’t trust half as much as I would ‘want’ to. And, on a good day (or minute) I can trust that I am on the right track and I can thank the Spirit that has allowed me to find my path to where I am. Then again, when it hurts I swear, when I’m scared I run and when I panic I make

Contributions for the next newsletter are due by 28th February 1997.

All contributions for the special (April 1997) edition on community building and personal relationships to
Armando Magnino 21 Aylesford Street,
Leamington Spa CV31 2AL
tel h: 01926 337409; tel w: 01926 318028,
or to the editor.

A gift to all of us.
Put these dates in
your diary!
June 26-29th 1997.
Some time to be
together and have a
'general meeting'.
New thinking, new
energy, new vision ...
and fun!

Anthony Kirke, Cliff Jordan and Ruth Goffe met in Newbury for the day on 6 January to catch up with each other on progress.

This was our first holding group meeting following the Meeting held last October open to facilitators, holding group members and others with energy for taking CBiB forward, and we approached several agenda items in the light of that. We tried to reconnect with the energy that came out of that meeting - reflecting and evaluating, and sharing news of any known progress made by various focus-groups arising from it.

Anthony has been coordinating and developing arrangements for the General meeting in June. Cliff has been busy with a Constitution for CBiB. Personally I have been intensely active on another planet since that meeting.

Cliff (who I think has remained on earth) felt that a strong sense of empowerment immediately afterwards had dissipated: he feared there had followed a long gap of inactivity since. The group that was that Meeting did not take on responsibility for a future of its own: no date was set for a next meeting. I am keen to hear from participants in the October meeting to discover where they are now.

We hope to learn from this experience and set in place ways to sustain and carry the energy forward when it comes to the General Meeting being planned for 26/29 June.

TRAINING: Cliff has for a while been a contact and holding interest in this area, but recently has been very busy instead researching a Constitution proposal. He holds a (thin) file with written queries re training, but has no energy at present for this. Various ideas and enthusiasms arose out of the October meeting, including an initiative from Armando Magnino and Matthew Dodswell to meet with people interested in a self-development group geared around support in extending CB skills. Their meeting planned for December had not taken place (Cliff would have gone to it) and we had no news of any further developments on this but hope at a less frenetic time it will become reignited [*editor's note: see Matthew's note elsewhere in this newsletter*]. Peter Laxton, Alex Sharratt and Nick Ratcliffe, along with Jean Hadley from Israel, have attended an FCE training course recently, and have returned very enthusiastic about their experience. Further feedback awaited eagerly. We in the holding group very much hope that a focus, by those interested, for creating training opportunities in this country, whether to include bringing the American training here again, or/and developing an ongoing home-grown programme, will occur *before* the General Meeting. We will encourage and support, but no capacity to initiate.

GENERAL MEETING arrangements have been moving forward. Unstone Grange, Sheffield, now booked for arrival Thursday evening 26 to departure evening Sunday 29 June 97. Publicity is in hand, and Anthony will be the bookings contact. **Help is needed to coordinate/organise our own catering.** A variety of accommodation is available from camping space outside to beds inside. Anthony would like to invite FCE cultural exchange, ie a participant from FCE. I (Ruth) urged care not to inhibit whatever things we in CBiB need from the General Meeting as a result of an FCE related presence, and also caution over estimating numbers and income from participants and therefore what money may be available to support this idea. And I will be interested to hear how others in the organising group, some of whom have attended FCE Community Continuity Conference events, feel about this idea. We looked at bare bones of information Anthony has been working on to go into the publicity leaflet about the General Meeting, which Ian and Sharon have offered to create.

HOLDING GROUP Cliff was in a reviewing mode, and encouraged us, and anybody involved in CBiB, to review where they are now, where they have been, and where they feel they are going in relation to their involvement in CBiB. For Cliff in relation to the Holding Group, he did not see clearly beyond the General Meeting. For Ruth and Anthony, each are very motivated to provide continuity to people carrying on with work, although workload in the holding group is becoming a critical issue. See further discussion below.

CONSTITUTION Cliff and Richard Benzie are working to develop a proposal to set up a Company limited by guarantee to carry out specific functions, ie many of the tasks at present carried out by CBiB, which would give us limited liability where we provide a service to the public/financial risk. Some possible consequences were aired (growth/dilution of CBiB; possibly redundancy of existing structures, who can be paid, who would hold decision making authority, relating paid to unpaid energy). Cliff likened how he saw the process of adopting a constitution in CBiB as a kind of lego/bizzie-lizzie hybrid. Instead of slow unhurried organic growth, to pursue this path might involve genetically engineering CBiB to be a different organism. It may not be possible to totally express CBiB through the structures available to us, like trying to make a bizzie-lizzie out of lego. [Becoming a charity would be a distinct and not-yet-intended step.]

MONEY We await Erica's summary/analysis of 1996 transactions.

FUNDING OF FACILITATION TRAINING GROUP We considered Erica's proposals: (1) that FTG receive 10% of each event's proceeds (based on approx £1000 FTG expenses out over last year, and in the region of £10,000 income from events to CBiB). (2) £1,000 a year to FTG from CBiB funds. (3) - favoured by Erica who would be making the transactions - FTG expenses come out of the CBiB main account as needed to a limit of £1,000 a year. We are happy to agree to Option 3 *conditional on* clarifying understanding through the FTG making a written statement of what it commits to provide to CBiB, and this being acceptable to HG (eg including as a prime ongoing collective responsibility to discern and support facilitators for CBiB sponsored events, and generally protecting the integrity of the facilitation delivered). There have been various reports and statements at times in the past, but we are not sure that all involved in the FTG, or in CBiB, understand what the FTG's basis for operating is. We agreed that in principle, CBiB providing ongoing funding for the group known as the Facilitation Training Group should be attached to a clear statement that all members of the FTG have concocted together, understand and agreed to, and which is also understood and agreed, for CBiB, by the holding group.

EVENTS

London No statement of accounts received yet for Sep 96. London April 97 not proceeding as Tom not got energy to organise it on own. Suzy Adderley has been putting in a lot of effort searching for a suitable London venue. Since the September 96 London event, a few people have expressed interest in involvement in some way in organising further London events. Ruth will do some phoning and help connections between these people.

Othona Sep 96 Ruth is dealing with outstanding request for fee return by non-attender.

Othona would like to include a CBW in their 97 schedule of events, 17/19 October.

Market Harborough, Christians, Oct 96: having now received money from Peter Laxton, CBiB

has subsidised this event to the tune of £330 on providing facilitation, not including our other admin costs supporting the event. We understand that Peter has paid many of the organising expenses personally.

Peter has proposed further events at Cardiff, Feb 97, at Market Harborough March, June, September, December 97, and we applauded his enthusiasm. However, for the earlier dates, our experience is that not enough participants would be forthcoming for as yet unpublicised events so soon as February and March. Viability is a necessary consideration for CBiB events and we therefore cannot agree to CBiB supporting events as soon as February and March in view of the lack of time for producing publicity and a realistic booking period for participants. Unfortunately, the date for the general meeting now clashes with Peter's proposed June date. We encourage him to work towards a well attended event later in the year, rather than several events so soon and in quick succession. We do require sponsors to work to budgets that demonstrate viability, or to guarantee contracted payments to CBiB themselves, for future dates.

Monkton Wyld, Dorset, Residential 7/9 Feb: Cliff is in contact. There are still places left.

Braziers, Oxon, Residential 3/5 May: Anthony to be link person.

Leamington 21/22 June: Cliff to be link person.

CBiB General Meeting, Unstone Grange, Sheffield, Residential 26/29 June: Cliff and Ruth to be available to support Anthony who is taking on main contact role.

HOLDING GROUP, cont: SIX MONTH PLAN We agreed that we would prepare a report to present at the General Meeting of Holding Group work since Hebden Bridge. We also did some work towards creating a six-month plan, to focus ourselves on particular areas and goals between now and the General Meeting, drawing up the beginnings of a provisional list. Although this came at the end of our time together, it was a distillation of where we were with all the work we covered during the day. *Some topics for six month plan:*

Report, overview or review, from holding group to General Meeting.

Agenda for General Meeting.

Constitution/Limited Company - reach a clear proposal to set it up, or to abandon idea.

Training - encourage and support (but not initiate in next 6 months).

Finance - become acquainted - at this stage not redesign. Consider whether in longer term it would be worthwhile doing more detailed accounts - Anthony might input on this.

Induction process of people willing to take active role in CBiB.

Reevaluate and state personal commitment and commitment within group.

Keeping up energy after meeting. How to do it. Prepare post-GM meetings/support activity/network. Incorporate in strategy for General Meeting. As a different job to holding agenda items.

NEXT MEETINGS:

Sat/Sun/Mon 15/17 Feb at Cliff's, Malvern Holding Group

Mon 14 April Holding Group

Early June (probably 14) General Meeting preparatory meeting

26/29 June CBiB General Meeting

CONTACT DETAILS OF HOLDING GROUP MEMBERS:

Ruth Goffe, 0181 675 4388, 11 Veronica Road, London SW17 8QL

Cliff Jordan, 01684 540138, "Glen Lea", Upper Colwall, Nr Malvern, WR13 6DH

Do you live near London?
Can you help with publicity for
events?
Could you co-sponsor an event?
If you might be able to help,

Anthony's ad

Armando wrote a piece last newsletter on setting up a group for exploring the process of community building:-

- making it more explicit to ourselves and others
- exploring the 'living from emptiness' model further than is possible in a workshop, and
- bringing to consciousness the skills, principles and attitudes that we use/practice in a workshop.

I feel that in the community building process I can find some way of living the dream of authentic communication, but I find that the dream fades after a while. One of my hopes for this group is to understand what makes the workshop experience so special, and how I can carry that on.

We've got a location and a date for the first meeting, even if we haven't got a name yet.

Armando and I have booked an apartment at Wormhill nr. Buxton in Derbyshire. The tentative plan is to have a short session on Friday evening, continuing Saturday and Sunday morning, finishing Sunday afternoon. The cost will be between £12-15 per person plus shared food.

So if you're interested and feel some energy for this, get in touch with myself or Armando as soon as possible, as the accommodation is limited. We've got 6 places immediately, and can take another apartment if there is demand.

*Armando Magnino 21 Aylesford Street,
Leamington Spa CV31 2AL
tel h: 01926 337409; tel w: 01926 318028
Matthew Dodwell 28 Walesby Court,
Tirshill, Leeds LS16 6RX
tel h: 0113 230 1998 tel w: 0113 251
3560*

Drama into Writing

One day workshop

- ~ an opportunity to explore ideas through drama, which can free us to write more spontaneously
- ~ a chance to make connections and reconnections with self and others, using drama as a springboard for writing in whatever form flows
- ~ using a variety of strategies - voice, movement and writing games, storytelling and character development - to help us write from intuition, rather than from intellect

Sunday 2nd March

10.30 am -5.30 pm

Subscriptions for the new year starting in April are now being received. You can just send a cheque payable to CBiB, or use the attached form. You can use the form if you want to give another subscription as a gift. There is also space for any comments or suggestions you would like to make. In the next year we have some special 'focus' editions - on Community Building and relationships, and where Community Building fits in with other approaches. We will also keep you informed of events and happenings, report on the General

Subscription Renewal

To Peter Cooper
Editor CBiB Newsletter
1 Evergreen Close
Woolmer Green
Herts SG3 6JN

From

Post code

Tel:

Please renew my subscription to the CBiB newsletter until March 1998. I enclose a cheque payable to CBiB for £8 for each UK or European Union subscription (£12 for non-EU).

Cheques payable to 'CBiB' please.

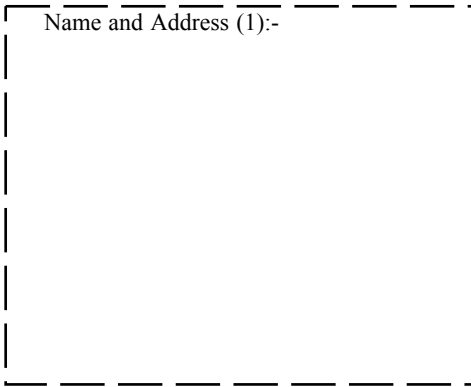
Please use this space to add any comments or suggestions you would like to make about the newsletter, to notify a correction to your address, or any extra requirements. (If required, please add £5 for each copy of the Booklet on On-going Community, and £4 [£6 non-EU] for each extra newsletter to the same address.)

Gift Subscriptions

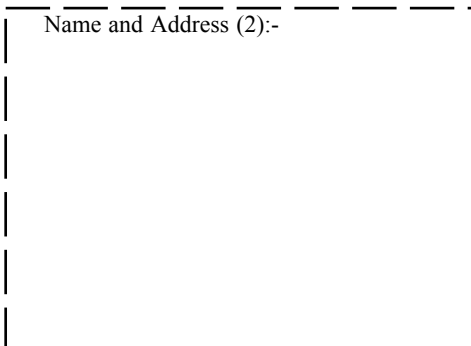
To Peter Cooper
Editor CBiB Newsletter
1 Evergreen Close
Woolmer Green
Herts SG3 6JN

Please send gift subscriptions of the CBiB newsletter from March 1997 to March 1998 to the following people. I have added £8 for each UK or European Union subscription (£12 for non-EU) to my cheque.

Name and Address (1):-



Name and Address (2):-



Meeting and other CBiB meetings, and offer a platform for anyone to share about their personal experiences, or to debate issues. 'On-going groups' are a particular concern and opportunity, and we expect several items about these over the year.

The subscription is once again being kept down to £8 for the year (UK and EU), and £12 for non-EU addresses. Why not add on £5 to your cheque and receive a copy of the booklet about forming and maintaining an on-going group? (Some have even obtained several copies for use by group

The purpose of this book is to provide information about ongoing community formation and maintenance. It gives basic hints on how to do it along with some ideas and sources for additional information. This book comes primarily from my own experience with small groups that started in 1973 after my training as a Yokefellow leader. Since then I have been a member of and started a number of groups, and have studied how groups work and do not work. I don't have all the answers but I do have some. I have tried to cover a wide area in this book.

I look at community as an attitude that you can continually develop. If I haven't experienced much of it, I will need to grow in it for some period of time for it to become an integral part of my life. Community takes time and commitment and caring about each other. The community of deep sharing and friendships are not built overnight or even in several weeks. It usually takes months for a new group of people that have never met with each other to develop close relationships.

This section discusses how to form a small community - support group. For those that have not been exposed to such groups, their purpose is to share each others life in an increasingly more intimate way. They often have other purposes such as spiritual or personal growth. They should have interesting tasks but the purpose should not be to accomplish a task over sharing. Some groups meet to change themselves and perhaps know that in some way they might just change the world. Groups often meet in homes, public places like churches or in apartment recreation rooms. "Large" community groups are not

When starting a group I try to get agreement of all members to meet once a week for a minimum of 12 weeks. It takes that long to just get started. I prefer "closed groups" but know that "open groups" are needed for many people. Closed groups tend to form closer relationships and deeper sharing of self, resulting in closer friendships and deeper self-awareness. Generally, open groups do this less successfully mainly because the trust level is usually lower.

The best approach to forming a group is to have all members attend a Community Building Workshop. This allows group members the opportunity to bring down many barriers fairly quickly and form a deeper level of trust. This has one disadvantage: deep community is often experienced in these workshops and when that doesn't happen in the ongoing groups immediately, members sometime panic. This is normal. People are so used to faking it in pseudocommunity they quickly return to their comfort zone. It often takes eight weeks or more to get back to the

discussed nor are communal living groups¹ but most of what follows would apply to such groups.

Community groups are not just "lonely hearts" groups. They are not just philosophy groups. Community groups are different in that people may learn to really share their lives, their whole lives. When this takes place, that deep longing for intimacy often feels complete, at least for awhile. You can come away from a meeting feeling that someone really heard and understood what you said. You may find that some of your burdens are left behind which

facilitates having more joy in your life.

1. Decide on size of the group.

Twelve is considered ideal, with 8-14 workable for most groups. One way to determine size is by how much time each person needs to talk in each meeting. In two hours, 8 people get 15 minutes each, but 14 people get only 8.5 minutes each. I have been in groups of only five, but these groups generally do not do as well as those with 12. I have also experienced a group of 18 and one of 28 and these did not work well unless the meeting time was increased proportionately.

2. Invite people to attend the first meeting.

Invite several more than you want for the group. It works best if the group members have something in common to talk about to start but diversity sometimes is the spice of life.

Examples:

Same age bracket

All single or all married

From the same workplace

All have children within an age bracket

Belong to the same organization, such as a church or civic club

A common purpose such as saving the atmosphere, protecting animals, etc.
just an interest in community and sharing each others lives

3. First meeting guidelines.

It is important for your new community group to get off to a good start in the very first meeting. If the group is formed out of a Community Building Workshop, you can save most of this for the second meeting. What follows are organizational tasks that help get the group going in the right direction. It is important that each person knows that the first meeting will be about organization. Don't let this meeting drag out without some time for fellowship. See the Model Meeting for guidelines.

a. Sit in a circle if possible so everyone can see each other.

b. Make introductions as appropriate. Now what is appropriate? Well, for first meetings it

is usually "pseudocommunity" descriptions such as where you work, what your interest are, and mostly "comfort" talk. There are some suggestions for starters later in the book.

c. Briefly explain your purpose for this group. Ask what questions people have about the group. Stress that the group needs to be what the group wants by consensus, but at this point the group may not have the skills to develop consensus. That may have to evolve later as the group matures. Sometimes its wise to ask the group what their expectations are and how they will contribute to achieve the outcome. The first meeting is not the time or place for a great deal of discussion. Keep a good comfort zone for the group

d. Tell what the group will do in the next several meetings. Explain that it is a time for each person to get to know the others better.

e. Stress that no one will need to do anything they do not feel comfortable with in any meeting.

f. You might try an exercise to let people feel the warmth which can be generated by talking about their own inner needs (see Ideas for Group Starters).

g. Have refreshments such as coffee, cookies, cake, etc. Hand out the meeting guidelines.

4. Plan meeting times and duration.

Some groups meet once or twice a month and some once a week. With once a month meetings, close bonding is more difficult to achieve. A minimum of three hours for a meeting is best to develop community, but this is often too long for most people after a long day on the job. You can start with two hour meetings and move towards three hour meetings later as commitment builds. Some groups that meet less than once a week, meet on a Saturday or Sunday for up to 8 or more hours.

5. Talk about a task.

Most groups do better with a task.

The task needs to be secondary to sharing or at least complement the sharing. A true community group is about sharing each others

lives, the joys and sorrows while learning respect and caring for each other and for the group. It is also about personal growth. A good task is to plan sponsoring a public Community Building Workshop some time in the future.

6. Stress that community requires time

.. and commitment and some risk.

Explain this means attendance at each meeting and being present emotionally and being honest about your life and your feelings. Ask for a commitment of not less than 12 weeks to try out this group.

7. Explain the concept of “a group of all leaders”

.. and that soon this group will evolve into a group of all leaders. (In practice, people tend to look at the organizer as the permanent leader.) [The concept of a group of all leaders is discussed in depth in the book, *The Different Drum* by M. Scott Peck] Talk about the responsibility of each person taking leadership of a meeting. You also need to discuss sharing the cost of refreshments and having the meetings in several homes. It can become a real burden to have your house cleaned up every Tuesday night for the meeting for a year. On the other hand, there is greater trust in familiar surroundings.

8. Talk about confidentiality.

Stress the importance of it in building trusting relationships.

9. Follow-up after the first meeting.

Call each person in several days to answer any questions. Tell them they are important to the group. Do a second follow-up call the night before the next meeting to remind them what you will be doing and try to generate some excitement about the group (but keep it honest).

(The full booklet is 48 pages long)

Resources Available

via Peter Cooper (see back page), cheques payable to CBiB

Book: “Ongoing Community” by Jerry Hampton - £5 inc p&p

Past copies of the CBiB newsletter, and index

Book lists and other FCE material on the internet

“mv2spk” on-line community

World-wide web page (<http://members.aol.com/petercbib>)

FCE and ACE newsletters

Paper: “Adventure Education: Two Approaches” by Armando Magnino

I am also trying to see if the following can be made available in the UK VHS format:

Video: “Searching for Community”

David Clark, the founding editor of what is now 'Christian Community' looks back, and ahead to 'the redemption of institutions'.

The magazine 'Community' (now 'Christian Community') was not given birth in some idyllic rural setting, nor in a place resonating with the majestic mystery of an Iona, nor in some place of monastic solitude and prayer, but in the heart of London. To be precise, its home was West Greenwich, an urban neighbourhood where at that time (1971) many cultures met. On the Heath above lived the immensely affluent, down by the River in derelict tenements lived the immensely poor. On the hill were those who had 'arrived', below were those who would never arrive.

'Community' began because I was searching. For what? As a minister who had just moved to take charge of a church which had once been a cathedral of Methodism, but whose membership was now under fifty, I could see only too clearly that the glory had departed. Even though a courageous remnant was ready to move across the road to form the first united Methodist-Presbyterian church in England (it's still going), the 'great days' were more than over. The search had to begin again, not only in West Greenwich but across London, indeed across the country, for new forms of Christian community which could once more become the living cells of the a church passionate about making the Kingdom a reality for generations to come.

That search for 'a new way of being church' brought me immediately into contact with the communes movement which was in the late sixties and early seventies exploding onto the North American, and then English, scene, sparked by disillusion with the lethal nature of institutions (Vietnam) and an unjust society (civil rights). It was a 'bottom-up' movement driven forward by risk-takers who believed they could turn the world upside down.

So why not contract-in not only for the sake of the kingdom, but for the sake of the church? For was it not true that throughout Christian history - from Christ's band of twelve to the early monastic movement, from the followers of Francis and Dominic to the Reformation, from Wesley's 'class meetings' to General Booth's small companies -that the small committed group had lain at the heart of Christian renewal?

So began for me quest which took me across the length and breadth of the British Isles, and beyond, in search of new forms of Christian community. We ate in hostels for the homeless and houses for those with severe mental handicaps. We talked to the pioneers of new co-operatives and met those caring for stressed-out single parents and terminally ill children. We slept in baronial castles, where part of the lands had been given over to new forms ofcrofting, and in run-down city communes. We witnessed those trying to make reconciliation work in Northern Ireland, and those striving for racial justice in the heart of English cities.

'Community' was meant to enable people to share their stories - their 'successes' and 'failures', their joys and their sorrows, their inner peace and their anger. It enabled many more to take heart at what God was doing through the multitude of small attempts to be true to the heavenly vision here on earth, and a very earthy earth at times.

Twenty-five years on, have we arrived? Have we found the answer to a society (and a church) caught between captivity to an incestuous tribalism (of the rich as much as anyone else), and being adrift in an anonymous global wilderness. Of course we haven't. We are only just at the beginning of the journey into a new age, a new era, which could become a wasteland or a promised land. Which it will be depends on not only on the God of the travellers, but on our faithfulness to the quest

for the Kingdom community.

But one thing is certain. This new community, this quality of life which we must find if we are to survive as a species, cannot remain confined to the margins or within the cracks of our social life, even though the first shoots of a new way of being human may be beginning there. What is learnt about true relationships and true living writ small, will sooner or later have to be transposed into new institutional forms if it is to be the means of real transformation. Small acted parables are so important if we are to discern the signs of

things to come. Yet, somehow, the communal imperative must be acknowledged wherever people live and work, from the village to the city, from the school to the factory, from the hospital to the prison, from homes for the elderly to the council chamber. The leaven is no use unless the whole is transformed through its dynamic vitality.

Only when 'Christian Community' tells as many stories about institutions redeemed as about caring relationships and social justice on the margins, can we be sure that the promised land is on the horizon.

Booklet for Sale
Ongoing Community
(Small Share/Support Groups)
Formation and Maintenance

Fourth edition June 1994 By Jerry L. Hampton - 48 pages

Includes

How to start an ongoing group

Model Meetings

Guidelines for meeting conduct

Ideas for group starters

Group maintenance

Ongoing groups and their characteristics

Why some groups fail

Forming groups in a workshop

What now? - After the CBW

Books on community

Study Guide - 'The Different Drum'

Copies available now from Peter Cooper (address on back page)
for only £5 including post and packing. Cheques payable to
'CBiB' please.

Jerry Hampton (who has had a long association with community building in the
USA) has licenced me to sell copies of his guide, which is now in its fourth
edition, and I am making copies available at cost because of the importance I
attach to nurturing ongoing groups.

Imagework, Creativity and Empowerment

Early Spring workshops

- ~ drama games to access and unleash creativity
- ~ imagework to tune into individual and collective inner wisdom
- ~ paint, clay and words to express our dreams and desires

Sundays February 9th and April 27th

Taunton: Contact Julia Forse 01823 257371

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409.

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 2301739.

North West England (including Darlington): First Sunday in the month. Road Less Travelled support group. Contact Indi Garcha 01325 468881.

Durham: Long established Road Less Travelled group. Fridays fortnightly. Contact Pat Watson 0191 388 8951.

General Enquiries

about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

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Newsletter

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*Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by **28th February 1996**.*

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