

## THE WORK OF THE SAMARITANS

The Samaritans have 101 centres, some as far afield as Austria and Hong Kong but many in large cities in this country. There are 9 in Central London and that in the crypt of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, is open from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. and is manned by shifts of 6 who are there to see people, answer the telephone and if necessary, go out in cases of emergency. At night the doors are closed and 2 people man the telephone. The Samaritans have nothing material to offer to the "dead-beat" off the street, and those in need of material help are handed on to such bodies as the W.V.S. or the Salvation Army, the latter being splendid at finding accommodation.

The Samaritans were formed to help people who have reached the end of their road, life being so difficult and impossible for them that there seems no point in trying to struggle on. Not all are potential suicides but a number have come to the point of suicide and do not know to whom to turn. As suicide is no longer a criminal offence the police are not interested and so sometimes people just wander in off the street and sometimes they are "regulars." In the hours of darkness when loneliness is at its most insupportable the telephone does not stop ringing from 10 until 4 when things often ease off. Sometimes the Samaritan has to deal with a dozen calls, sometimes only two or three but sometimes the calls go on for two or three hours—it is always the caller who puts the telephone down, never the helping Samaritan who is just befriending some stranger, being a crutch for him to lean on during the period of his acute depression.

What kind of thing starts off suicidal feelings? There are two kinds of depression, one is known as endogenous and is due to mental illness about which the speaker did not feel qualified to comment and for which the sufferer is usually undergoing treatment so that the Samaritan just serves as a "second string"; the other type is exogenous and is due to extraneous circumstances.

Samaritans are not experts, just ordinary people from all walks of life and in various occupations, who want to help other people and they can do that best by listening, as their callers are the essentially lonely. Although they may be surrounded by business associates, friends or family they are spiritually lonely and can talk best to someone who does not know them and although they can spill out their feelings to an anonymous voice they often would not want to meet the Samaritan.

The Samaritans never tell anyone what they should do unless they are asked. Their function is not to give advice; theirs is to give the comfort needed by sympathetic listening.

Sometimes there are emergencies as when someone has taken pills or cut their wrists and then realise they do not want to die. There are always two other Samaritans on call, prepared to answer the telephone and to get up and go wherever needed. Often the overwhelming impulse to suicide can be talked down, the caller must be kept talking — if drugs have been taken they must be kept awake by talking until help arrives; if they should fall into a coma the police are called and the Samaritan always asks for the caller's number so that they can be called back if money and time in the call box runs out. The telephone operators are very understanding and often put through callers to the Samaritans if they sense the need. The Samaritans also work in close

conjunction with Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anon., Gamblers Anon., etc.

The exogenous type of depression often results from the breakdown of personal human relationships. The very young feel things very deeply. One night a boy of seventeen telephoned. His girl friend had left him and he felt an impulse to fling himself into the Thames. The Samaritan kept him talking and got him to tell of other girls he knew and after twenty minutes he said he did not feel like suicide any longer. He could not confide in his parents but had been helped by realising that someone cared about his troubles.

Many callers are homosexuals. Fortunately the fear of blackmail for consenting adults has been removed by recent legislation but there is still the feeling of being social outcasts. These callers are always befriended by women Samaritans for obvious reasons. Homosexual relationships never give basic happiness and there is always the realisation that the relationships cannot last. Often parents and children troubles are brought to the Samaritans. In the speaker's experience parents tend to suffer more than the children if family relationships break down. Widows are prone to depression, particularly if they feel they are not getting enough attention from an only child. Sex perverts need expert help and advice — the Samaritan gives them sympathy if they really want to accept the necessary help proffered. Drug addicts often ring up. There are not enough drug addiction clinics and centres and they are only open until 10.30 p.m. and the Samaritan talks to the frantic sufferer until it is time for their next "fix" or to help them to resist taking their next shot if they are trying to abstain and are suffering the agonies of withdrawal symptoms.

So many people ring up in the lonely darkness — the miserable compulsive eaters who can consume a whole loaf at a sitting and suffer not only from the addiction but from the effects of obesity on their general health — the people who "just do not know the answer," here sometimes advice is given which brings a happy ending. One night a poor little man rang up weeping bitterly. He was a junk merchant and for many years had hired a horse called Annie. One day he was deprived of his equine friend and given a rotten horse and he was told he could not have Annie any more and he felt he could not work, or indeed live, without her. Free legal aid was sought and it was found that he had been illegally deprived of Annie's services and companionship and the two were re-united. He turned up at the centre full of thanks. Annie was his life, irrespective of the availability of a wife and four children!

Answering questions the speaker said that there were no boundaries to a centre's activities. Often sufferers preferred to call a centre where there was no chance of their being known. The members are widespread and are prepared to travel long distances. The Samaritans telephone number is in all telephone kiosks. People wishing to become Samaritans are carefully screened and attend a course of 6 training lectures where they are told what they may expect and what they must avoid. They must be detached and yet sympathetic. They must never get emotionally involved. Their clients have increased enormously over the last 2 years. The Samaritans are an entirely undenominational body and are called upon much more in the impersonality of the large city where the pace of life is faster than in rural communities which are closer knit and more neighbourly.

How do the Samaritans get money for their work? All the helpers are voluntary and the Society has generous friends and receives sundry donations. There is also a small income from investments. St. Stephens is owned by the Grocers' Company who charge no rent for the facilities given to the Samaritans and allows them free light and heating. They also receive a small grant from Mental Health Flag Day.

M.O.

(The above is a report of the talk given by a Samaritan, Miss D. Fisher at the Annual Review of Stewardship. It will be remembered that Miss Fisher was handed a cheque for £10 as a practical token of St. James's recognition of the splendid work of the Samaritans.—Ed.).

### WHAT HAPPENED AT ST. PAUL'S?

The Dean, the Very Reverend Martin Sullivan, told us this at a Ruridecanal Conference meeting last November. He wanted to know what the man in the street thought of this imposing building; so he asked groups of youth and others. Did they go inside? "Oh no, wasn't it reserved for special occasions and ceremonies?"

Martin Sullivan wanted to get all kinds of people to enter through the great doors of this inspiring yet forbidding place and actually to make use of it. So he called together representatives of about 140 youth organisations to gather ideas and to see what could be done. Ideas there were, and youth would be glad to co-operate; but on one condition, that there should be no interference in how they did things. They wanted to manage things themselves. The condition, with all its risk was accepted and for those times outside the established services, over a period of six months youth organisations would get simple approval for their projects and carry on as they desired.

The cathedral was used in two kinds of ways. On the ground floor there were happenings involving activity, like plays and music. But static things like exhibitions, and also group discussions happily fitted into the crypt. The events usually worked out better than expected and allayed apprehensions. A young organist wished to have the communion service to modern jazz music; he proved most competent, and the Agnus Dei was described as electrifying. Two men produced an oratorio called "Joseph and his Great Coat." The Dean eyed a Rabbi in the audience: what would he think of this modern interpretation of the Old Testament, and he tackled him nervously afterwards. "Why, this is authentic," was the reply. Other times the pop musicians pursued their delight in this great building; the effect was excruciating, and what a relief just to get outside!

In the crypt young artists came and went unimpeded, setting up their creations. The place was ideal for discussions. They had a "Hot Seat" whereon people of distinction sat and agreed to answer, fairly and honestly, questions fired at them by largely schoolboy gatherings. Many of the answers were grist for the press. The Governor of the Bank of England admitted his belief that there would always be unemployment. To the question, "What is it like to be old?" Malcolm Muggeridge thoughtfully replied—that you ceased to care about putting the world to rights. A notable surgeon asked, "Do you ever kill children?" said that in hopeless cases they died of pneumonia. They asked a psychologist if there was anything wrong with pre-marital sex; sex was more precious if pre-marital relations were eschewed.

The six months ended. Did a deacon say, "At last we can get back to normal?" Perhaps. So what have we learnt? Church people,

in spite of their professions, are not in fact strongly concerned with non-church people. Do we not declaim to young people for instance, when we might do better by listening to them, even seeking their opinions and ideas? What do youth really think of Remembrance Sunday, for example? What of Jesus Christ and of God? Young people will not get involved in talking about the war or the depression, for they have missed out on these experiences. This does not mean that they do not feel for the world's pain. On the contrary; and hence they are passionately involved in demonstrations. We should be profoundly glad of this interest.

For the future the Dean hoped to involve more people in using the cathedral. The weekday evening services are now held in the crypt. A coffee machine installed here would be a helpful amenity. He considered St. Paul's was not a place for regular parishioners but suited to the needs of the stranger come to London. There was great potential. St. Paul's was a giant asleep. L.M.

## THE WILD WEST PARTY

### P.C.C. 007

"At 19.30 hours on Saturday, January 10, I was proceeding along Windmill Road, Hampton Hill when I stopped and questioned an armed man of "hippy" appearance. Detainee deposed that he was a Red Indian of the Plains on his way to the Wild West. Having reason to believe that he was not speaking the truth I therefore asked him for his name, occupation and address. Detainee alleged that his name was Rupert Brunt, his occupation Clerk in Holy Orders and his address The Vicarage. My suspicions being aroused I was examining aforesaid weapon, namely a rifle, when a cow-girl also armed (pistol and lariat, passed by in company with a woman whom I judged to be of dubious morality. On being questioned suspect admitted that she was a bar-room floozey and deposed that her destination was the Wild West. At this juncture I remember nothing further until an hour later when I regained consciousness in the M.O's office . . . . ."

### Young Red Indian Lady:

"It was a lovely party. I liked the games. I missed the game we played last year when we all had to dress up in night clothes and light a candle. I thought there was a bit too much dancing but that's only because I like games . . . especially the one when we all had to . . ."

### Small cowboy of tender years:

"Please could I possibly have some more Baked Beans? Well, actually I've had two sausages already but I could eat another if you're sure there's enough to go round."

### Saloon Girl:

All the homesteads gathered together in the barn by the saloon at Hampton Creek on Saturday, January 10 and a good time was had by all. Buggies brought guests from the farthest outposts of the territory. All were welcome and, to the alarm of some of the respectable matrons preparing the pork 'n beans and other victuals, some villainous characters rode into town. An exotic touch was added by the Mexican Indian who bore a remarkable resemblance to you know who. However, law and order was maintained with the firm hand of the sheriff and his deputies and the impressive presence of the military, booted and spurred.

Games and dancing followed each other fast and furious and many

citizens bravely joined in the square dance which everybody agreed was 'mighty fine.'

### **Cow-Girl — a Stranger in These-Here Parts:**

It was a wonderful evening. I felt ten years younger at the end of the evening. I haven't laughed so much for ages. How hard a lot of people must have worked . . . the decorations were grand . . . Whoever made the wigwam and the enormous totem-pole in the entrance? . . . the swing doors of the Saloon? . . . the high bar with its shiny black top and "mirror backing?" I liked the idea of the looped lariats and cactus plants on the walls, and where did all the "Wanted" notices come from? . . . and doesn't everybody join in with a will — no-one could have felt lonely or out of things . . . my husband didn't want to come but when we got home he said, "I am glad you persuaded me, I did enjoy it."

### **Prospector with Enormous Moustache (member of Social Committee):**

"Well, that's that for another year. It all went off very well I think. In fact, I think it was the best yet, but then, I say that every year."  
J.D., M.O.

## **LENTEN ARRANGEMENTS**

We had hoped to have a course this Lent on "Prayer and The Spiritual Life in the Modern World," but the speaker we hoped would come was in the end unable to do so, and it has been found impossible to find a substitute. We now intend, if we can, to have this course in 1971, and this year we will fall back on our own resources. There are various possibilities open to us, and there will be discussion about them after the evening Communion service on Ash Wednesday. Most likely we shall agree to study one of the new religious paper-backs: the Liturgical Committee will consider the matter and make recommendations.

The ecumenical Upper (or is it Lower?) Teddington—Hampton Hill Fraternal has also met snags in arranging its programme for this area, and has had to change its plans several times. At the moment, events have been arranged for four consecutive Wednesdays, at 8.00 p.m., as follows:

February 25: The passion play (performed on a number of occasions in our parish in past years by the Hampton Council of Churches Drama Group, now to be presented by the young people of the Baptist Church) "Christ in the Concrete City" (Baptist Church Hall, Teddington).

March 4: A distinguished Methodist theologian, the Reverend Gordon Wakefield, will preach in the Methodist Church, Teddington.

March 11: A leading Roman Catholic layman, David Wilson, will speak on "Christ in the Space Age" in the Roman Catholic Church Hall.

March 18: A modern Passover Meal (the Parish Hall of SS. Peter & Paul, Teddington).

## **LOCAL CHEMISTS OUT OF HOURS DISPENSING SERVICE**

Week Beginning:

Feb. 1.—Mrs. E. James, 205 High Street, Hampton Hill.

„ 8.—H. Hall, 62, High Street, Hampton Hill.

„ 15.—F. G. Martin, 28B, Priory Road, Hampton.

„ 22.—Mrs. C. T. Lea, 193, High Street, Hampton Hill.

## SOME DATES TO NOTE

- Feb. 2.—Presentation of Christ in the Temple: 9.00 a.m. Holy Communion; 8.00 p.m. December Declaration on World Poverty: Signatures presented to the Members of Parliament for the borough at Kew Road Methodist Church Hall, Richmond.
- „ 3.—2.30 p.m. Mothers' Union (W); 8.00 p.m. Meeting about the proposed Day Centre for elderly people (Congregational Church Hall).
- „ 4.—8.00 p.m. Whist Drive (W).
- „ 6.—10.30 a.m. Editorial Board (34, Burton's Road).
- „ 8.—5.15 p.m. St. James's leads service at Laurel Dene.
- „ 9.—8.00 p.m. Liturgical Committee (90, Ormond Drive).
- „ 10.—8.00 p.m. Tuesday Club (W).
- „ 11.—Ash Wednesday: 8.30 a.m. Holy Communion (St. Anne's Chapel, L.E.H.S.); 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (Laurel Dene); 8.00 p.m. Holy Communion in church, followed by short meeting for study at Wayside.
- „ 18.—8.00 p.m. Parochial Church Council (W).
- „ 21.—2.00 p.m. Young People's Fellowship: Jumble Sale (Hall).
- „ 23.—8.15 p.m. Properties Committee (31, Wellington Road).
- „ 24.—Saint Matthias: 9.00 a.m. Holy Communion; 8.00 p.m. Tuesday Club (W).
- „ 25.—8.00 p.m. Christ in the Concrete City (Baptist Church Hall, Teddington).
- Mar. 18.—7.45 p.m. Reception, followed by ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING (Hall).

## BAPTISM

On December 28:

Lisa Marie Stairs, 12, Sanders Close.

## MARRIAGE

On December 24:

Roger Kenneth Scott to Georgina Elizabeth Leary.

## BURIALS & CREMATION

On November 25:

Mabel Julia West, 23, Holly Road, aged 76 years (at Teddington Cemetery).

On November 26:

Cecil Leslie Edward Hutchins, 12, Edward Road, aged 67 years.

On November 27:

Alfred Percy Girling, 1, Links View Road, aged 71 years (at South-West Middlesex Crematorium: ashes to be interred in Churchyard Garden of Rest).

On December 5:

Eliza Harding, Teddington Hospital, and formerly of 34, Westbank Road, aged 90 years.

On January 24:

Alice Emily Elizabeth Fraser, 68, Norwich Road, North Walsham, aged 89 years (interment of ashes in family grave).