

Introducing the Christadelphian Support Network

Charity number 1089965



From the beginning our aim is to come alongside brothers and sisters who are facing difficult and challenging times in their lives and to be there for them in their problems.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Cor 1:3-4 RSV

Through the individual skills and experience of brothers and sisters throughout the UK we are able to access resources, guidance and support on most aspects of pastoral care for individuals, their families and ecclesias.

1. Who we are

The Christadelphian Support Network was the re-name given in January 2009 to what had originally been formed as the Christadelphian Care Group in 1982.

We are a charity registered with the Charity Commission and everything we do is for charitable purposes and available for public benefit.

Further information about our trustees and accounts are available on our web site: www.chsn.org.uk.

2. Our Objectives and Activities are to:

- provide a confidential and caring service for anyone with a difficult personal problem by offering “a listening ear” and the opportunity to receive skilled support
- aid the spiritual well-being of those who are facing life’s difficulties
- encourage prayer for and with each other
- provide specialist support for elders, youth leaders and pastoral care teams who may not have access to particular areas of expertise
- provide a forum for the discussion of issues and difficulties with a view to raising awareness and encouraging compassionate care in our community and the population at large.
- develop an open access resource library covering pastoral care issues
- provide support for those experiencing, and the carers of those experiencing, loneliness, long term illness or disability by linking members who seek and/or offer support and practical help
- provide for other practical needs as they may arise

- treat everyone with equality irrespective of age, beliefs, disability, gender, race or relationship

The focus of our activities remains:

- the support of individuals, both members of our community, their families and the general public, who are experiencing life problems. This is primarily through the Help Line and Prayer Line and links with professionals and individuals with life experiences
- to encourage awareness of and the acceptance of the existence of issues affecting individuals within the Christadelphian community.

3. How we are organised

An executive committee of Trustees, made up of members selected from the membership, is responsible for the day to day running of the charity and overseeing the organisation of the services it offers and the events it organises. The Coordinator acts as spokesperson to the membership on behalf of the executive committee.

The trustees are accountable for ensuring best practice in all activities of the charity through ensuring sound governance as per guidance given by the Charity Commission.

All executive committee trustees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the guidance issued by the Charity Commission. Each committee member has an area of specific responsibility to project manage.

Committee membership is subject to being in ecclesial fellowship.

4. What we do

Underpinned by the faith we share, the CSN aims to:

- ✚ Offer loving support and guidance at difficult times of life
- ✚ Raise awareness of problems we face in life and encourage compassionate care in our community

We have been richly blessed with the dedication and support of so many brothers and sisters and this has meant we have been able to progress our aims of helping the hurting and increasing awareness in many UK ecclesias and further afield.

In particular we thank those volunteers who day in and day out cover the Helpline and Prayerline rotas. Without their valuable contribution of time, energy and expertise we would not have been able to achieve nearly so much.

We are very grateful for the increased financial donations from ecclesias which enable us to fund this work.

We are pleased that the work of the CSN is being increasingly accepted and used by individuals and ecclesias as a source of support and help. We are able to direct them to skilled brothers and sisters and web site resources which include guidelines and templates on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults.

We are being increasingly involved with confidential mediation particularly in areas of relationship breakdown, and couple counselling.

5. Why help may be needed

A brother or sister may be desperate for help and yet unable to approach someone in his or her own ecclesia to ask for help.

Calls have covered:

Bereavement, loneliness, illness, long term caring, depression, loss, guilt, personal relationships, family and marital breakdown, financial problems, crises of faith, difficulties specific to young people: the list is endless...

Arranging brothers may be faced with a serious problem in their ecclesia and feel that they do not have the necessary expertise to deal with it.

So where do our brothers and sisters go for help?

- The Citizens' Advice Bureau?
- The General Practitioner with possible referral to counselling?
- The Local Authority?
- Social Services?
- The Samaritans?

As a community we are blessed with brothers and sisters who have a variety of professional expertise and others who have had personal experience of particular problems. These brothers and sisters are willing to use their knowledge and experience to help others.

The CSN exists to bring together those who seek help and those who offer help.

6. Confidentiality

In a small, closely-knit community such as ours, the risk of loss of trust and breach of confidentiality is very real. The CSN committee has, as a matter of priority, always emphasised the need to be aware of, and to avoid, this danger.

Christadelphian Support Network members are committed to the principle of confidentiality. We are aware of the importance of confidentiality, and our concern is for best practice in helping each brother and sister in need.

Therefore, when calls for help are received, everything that is discussed will remain confidential, except on the rare occasion that there is a person or child at risk, when we are ethically bound to disclose information.

All CSN first contacts have the support of a suitably qualified supervisor who is a member of the CSN and with whom they may share case information (without identifying any individual caller) for support and to ensure that they are offering the best possible help.

Callers will be encouraged to make contact with their ecclesia for support but we stand by our assurance of confidentiality if that is the caller's wish.

7. Some frequently asked questions

How do I become a member?

Any brother or sister can be a member of the CSN by completing a membership form. We now have over 260 members across 36% of UK ecclesias throughout the UK. Members will have signed a confidentiality statement and will be included on our mailing list and database. They will receive newsletters and

invitations to our various activities.

How do I contact the CSN for help?

There is a national phone line **0800 9545 099**. The Helpline is manned by a rota of skilled brothers and sisters which we call first contacts; additionally there is a confidential e-mail account at **help@chsn.org.uk**. We would like to provide 24/7 coverage but this is not possible and so where callers are answered with a voicemail, then, if a message and call return number is left, the call will be returned as soon as possible.

Calls made to our Helpline number are directed to the duty first contact's dedicated CSN mobile phone. E-mail requests to the Help email address are managed in a similar way. We are very appreciative of this team whose work at times can be emotionally draining even stressful. We always welcome hearing from further brothers and sisters who would be interested to volunteer for this work.

Most frequently our first contacts comment that "the caller just needed someone to talk to in confidence," "just the sharing of the problem is a help", and "knowing there is someone there."

First contacts have access to our database of "second contacts" with a wealth of experience and professional knowledge and skills. With the caller's consent they will arrange an introduction to a brother or sister who can offer appropriate support.

There is a process in place for ongoing support and development of the first contact volunteers with training to give the knowledge and skills to deliver

consistently high quality support to callers. They will also be supported by enhanced contact with their supervisor in a mentoring and coaching role.

Contact information is published in the ALS Diary and on wallet cards and bookmarks which are freely distributed to all ecclesias in the UK.

How do I know the advice given is acceptable?

The CSN offers support. We listen. If counselling is thought to be of help then this is offered. Counselling has been defined as “one person helping another to help themselves”. As far as possible we avoid giving advice.

What if I have a complaint?

There may be times when brothers and sisters who use the CSN will feel unhappy or dissatisfied with the service we offer.

When we pick up the phone or send an email we may be feeling particularly vulnerable. We come expressing our needs and each has expectations of what we think the CSN is able to give.

Sometimes we at CSN may fail to meet those needs and expectations.

We would ask that in the spirit of Matthew 18 you make contact with us in writing.

The email link below is to the committee coordinator Phil Cox (and a second committee member) who will arrange for an investigation to be initiated.

Email: complaints@chsn.org.uk

An acknowledgment will be made within 24 hrs and you will be notified of the outcome within thirty days.

We promise our response will:

- Be written
- Answer all points of concern
- Be factually correct
- Be signed by the person responsible for the reply
- Contain details of the respondent

What is your data privacy policy?

The CSN will:

- Obtain and process information fairly as laid out in our privacy policy. The information consists of personal information (data) volunteered by members. Specific helpline call information is not held on computer.
- Keep it only for one or more specified explicit and lawful purposes. This is for providing information for support and care of individuals and for booking and providing news and invitations to CSN events
- Use it and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes. Access to stored data is limited to members of the CSN via password protected login.
- Keep it safe and secure. Data is stored in a Microsoft Access database on a password protected laptop. Data is backed up daily to a secure backup Cloud.
- Keep it accurate complete and up to date. Stored data is reviewed at least every five years by mailings.
- Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive

- Retain it for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
- Give a copy of his/her personal data to an individual on request.

What is the Prayerline?

The Prayerline has become an important component in this caring service.

In times of crisis or distress, prayer can often be our only solace - and we usually pray by ourselves, for ourselves. However, it is invaluable to know that others are praying with and for us.

By making one phone call, anyone in need will get the support and prayers of a number of other brothers and sisters very easily. Confidentiality, and even anonymity, can be maintained if preferred.

Five volunteers cover a rota to check for messages at least every 24 hours these are passed to the appropriate section leader who passes the message on to the group of brothers and sisters in their prayer team.

Please see the “Prayerline Leaflet” for more details. The Prayerline service can be accessed on **0800 9545 099** and by email prayerline@chsn.org.uk.

What other activities does the CSN Organise?

Praise & Fellowship Day

So many had said they wanted something “upbeat, uplifting and lots of singing” that we put in place our first Praise & Fellowship Day in October 2014. The aim is to bring together the spiritual side of God’s ways, linked with to the work of the CSN in reaching out to help those in need. The day includes a session providing information on the work of the CSN.

Fellowship Weekends

Residential weekends for quiet fellowship, support and encouragement are arranged in Staffordshire and Somerset. Set in beautiful countryside, these have an atmosphere conducive to worship and relaxation. These are arranged to support brothers and sisters who may be struggling with their faith or life problems, or who just want to benefit from rich fellowship together. Financial subsidies are available to ensure that lack of funds is not a reason for not being able to attend

Awareness Days

As part of our aim to encourage awareness of matters affecting our brothers and sisters, we arrange a programme of events around the country. These have included:

- Bridging the Gap (different age groups working together)
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable Adults Policy for Ecclesias
- Relationships in the Ecclesia
- Managing Conflict
- Managing Personal Finances
- Marriage Enrichment
- Mental Health
- Mentioning the Unmentionable – physical and sexual abuse, homosexuality and gender issues, drug and alcohol abuse.
- Needs and concerns of young people
- Parenting

- Pastoral helping skills
- Addictions
- Supporting the Aged
- Tackling Anxiety
- Children with Special Needs
- Caring for Others including Caring for Carers

Sisters' Days

These days are about sisters encouraging sisters in their journey to the Kingdom and by so doing enriching our relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and with each other. "We pray also, that we might reach out and lead other women seeking God to a greater understanding of His Love and Purpose.

Our Sisters' Days, therefore, are for all women – sisters, female relatives and friends of any age.

As our concern is with spiritual values and our individual walk with God we prefer to discourage at our meetings any negativity about ecclesias, or the role of sisters.

We pray for our Sisters' Days to promote an atmosphere of mutual understanding, acceptance, empathy and love for one another through an increased awareness of God's grace, and that our time together will enrich our understanding of the Word of God and its application in our lives to the benefit of ourselves and our brothers and sisters".

8. Our Publications.

We are developing a library of resource material covering pastoral care issues.

Our own publications include:

- Marriage Matters - a pre marriage preparation resource.
- Youth Matters - for youth leaders
- Youth Matters - Safeguarding Guidelines and Risk Assessment Templates
- Care Matters – Addictions
- Care Matters - Bereavement
- Care Matters - Leaving Home
- Care Matters - Supporting the Aged
- Behind the Scenes – Understanding and Resolving conflict
- Dealing with Depression.

9. Our Web Site

An important development is our web site with access to our growing resource library and links to helpful sites. This can be accessed at www.chsn.org.uk/resources. A number of publications are available for download.

An Events section gives information about our future plans including Awareness Days and confidential support by email is available at help@chsn.org.uk.

10. What future developments has the CSN in mind?

We do have a number of projects underway and, if the Lord will, more are planned for the future.

These include:

- Marriage enrichment and parenting courses
- Listening skills courses for welfare teams and others interested in this important work.
- Couple Counselling
- Anger Management Counselling
- Confidential Mediation in areas of conflict

Summary

Many difficulties presented to the CSN through the telephone service, in email or in letters are complex; to some problems there are no clear answers. Sometimes all it is possible to do is to pray with and for the caller, and to be understanding, non-judgmental and supportive. It is a case of sharing the burden, soothing the hurt and praying for strength and wisdom. In these circumstances we are all conscious of our personal inadequacy and our total dependence upon our heavenly Father. Other problems may be relieved by counselling from a skilled brother or sister, or regular support through a crisis.

We accept that any kind of care and counselling is, at all times, an interim measure. At best, we are no more than a link between man's need and God's

provision. Caring is one element in the commitment to discipleship, so that we all might “bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”.

The Christadelphian Support Network Committee

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This booklet can be downloaded at www.chsn.org.uk/csn-publications

We would be pleased to hear from anyone with ideas and suggestions for further publications and activities to involve the Christadelphian Support Network. If you would like to become involved in the work of the CSN or if you would like us to visit your ecclesia to tell you more about our work and to answer questions please contact our coordinator Phil Cox at phone: 01555 705099 or Email admin@chsn.org.uk