

A yak in the fridge
Life and work in Nepal
John Dickinson and family

- Xulon Press, 2016, £13.15 Pb 228pp, ISBN 9781498461221
- Reviewed by **John Martin**, CMF Head of Communications

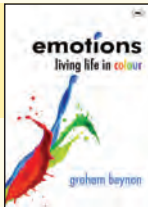
The title alludes to the author's research into altitude sickness, involving storing yak hearts in the kitchen refrigerator. It's one episode in a compelling account of a medical career devoted to Nepal. The author and his family went there in 1969 with BMMF (now Interserve) to work with the United Mission to Nepal (UMN).

It's a lively, often humorous, account of expatriate life among the poor, spiced with comments. Lots of quirky incidents as West meets East: stresses and lifestyle plusses. The story continues after UMN with work as an army doctor and consultancy.

Dickinson insists it's not a 'missionary' book; no accounts of church life, missiology or cross-

cultural issues. Nevertheless there's a profound underlying mission narrative. In 1969 there were just 500 Nepali Christians, with conversion and evangelism punishable by imprisonment. Today Nepali Christians number 800,000. As in China, a persecuted minority learned to share the faith and grow the church with little outside help. UMN did no visible missionary work; its contribution will only be known in the annals of eternity.

A case study for the western health professional considering service long-term in a resource-poor context: learn the language, be flexible, do research and get it published, acquire networking skills and, most importantly, love the country and its people.



Emotions
Living life in colour
Graham Beynon

- Hart Publishing, 2011, £8.99 Pb 176pp, ISBN 9781844745890
- Reviewed by **Everett Julian**, Consultant Psychiatrist based in Ayrshire

Emotions are 'unimportant' or so I once famously remarked as a somewhat naive medical student, probably in reaction to what I perceived as excesses in the opposite direction. God soon disabused me of this notion through a variety of interesting circumstances, but this book would have been really helpful at the time. Emotions may not be everything, but they are certainly not nothing.

Graham Beynon's easy and accessible writing style is matched by biblically-balanced content to help us think through the important issue of our feelings. Through ten chapters he establishes some basics about

emotions, leading on to a consideration of various practical issues. In addition to focusing our attention on Jesus as the perfect man, with feelings as God intended, he also addresses areas such as depression, and emotions in worship.

He seeks to help us liberate and celebrate the God-given emotional aspect of our lives, that we might become redeemed, whole people with integrated thoughts, feelings and actions, and that we might respond to God with all that we are.

I found this book very useful in addressing some of my unbalanced theology, and encouraging in helping me to regard feelings in a more positive and God-honouring way. I recommend it.



The amazing technicolour pyjama therapy
Emily Ackerman

- Muddy Pearl Books, 2014, £9.99, Pb 224pp ISBN 9781910012123
- Reviewed by **Lizzie Croton**, GP based at Selly Oak, Birmingham

Emily Ackerman was working as a doctor when she developed ME and switched from physician to patient. Her story is humorously told through prose and cartoons (which are very funny, by the way). This book aims to help those facing life-changing illness to fight back and draw close to God through their suffering. It uses biblical truth (the stories of Joseph, Daniel and Jesus) combined with reflective questions and helpful quotes from both secular and Christian sources.

By the end I felt greatly inspired by her warmth and humour. Emily tackles challenging topics often glossed

over in books of a similar ilk, including grief, social rejection, chronic pain and how faith has helped her cope. The section on grief was particularly helpful, as many myths and social expectations still exist.

Although written from a Christian perspective, it will appeal to readers from all backgrounds without compromising on Christian truth. There's also a small evangelistic section in the first chapter. Even if you are lucky enough to be healthy, Emily's story will help you understand and walk with those experiencing chronic illness. It's a fantastic book to recommend to patients and friends in our wider social circles.



The worry book
Finding a path to freedom
Will van der Hart and Rob Waller

- IVP, 2011, £9.99 Pb 188pp, ISBN 978184474543
- Reviewed by **Alex Bunn**, CMF Student Staffworker

Jesus told us not to worry. But many Christians do, and then feel guilty as well. This excellent book offers practical tips for sufferers. Written by a sympathetic pastor and psychiatrist, it's full of helpful illustrations and biblical application. For instance, do you recognise the rocking chair of worry, which goes nowhere, but seems preferable to an unpalatable task?

They distinguish two types of worry from Matthew 6:34; the solvable problems of today, and the free floating 'what ifs' of tomorrow. Helpfully, they warn against guilt-inducing inner policing, 'taking captive' every thought (2 Corinthians 10:5). Instead they question the 'worry

themes' that sustain anxiety, such as the false belief that excessive worry about family must be a sign of care.

Much worry arises from discomfort in uncertainty. Faith trusts in what God has provided and does not put God to the test. They emphasise retraining rather than instant healing, as we learn to trust a God who wants our spiritual muscles to grow.

Contemplation has been suspect in some Christian circles, but they give a helpful description of a practice to detach from negative thoughts, and 'give your entire attention to what God is doing right now' (Matt 6:34, The Message). A very readable and therapeutic book.



Rediscovering a ministry of health
Parish nursing as a mission of the local church
Helen Wordsworth

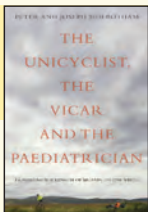
- Wipf & Stock, 2015, £16.00 Pb 208pp ISBN 9781498205955
- Reviewed by **Steve Fouch**, CMF Head of Nursing

The role of nurses as part of the ministry of the local church is not a new idea. It has been practised in the UK in one form or other since the start of the church and later by 'Bible Nurses'. However, with the advent of the NHS, the UK church has largely neglected its ministry in the health arena.

This book, adapted from the author's PhD thesis, is by the founding director of Parish Nursing Ministries in the UK. It explores whether parish nursing (as it is now most commonly called) actually has any impact on the mission of the local church.

Her research shows that while parish nursing itself may not be evangelistic, it does open the doorway for sharing the gospel, greater engagement in social action by the whole church and an integration of all areas of mission. It is one of a number of ministries of the local church, and one that needs to be rediscovered.

While some aspects of the book are quite academic, the historical context and key findings make interesting reading for anyone concerned to see the local church become more effective in its outreach.



The unicyclist, the vicar and the paediatrician
Peter and Joe Sidebotham

- Troubador, 2013, £8.95 Pb 144pp, ISBN 9781780885155
- Reviewed by **Sarah Maidment**, Trainee GP based in Oxfordshire

As a Christian doctor, a keen cyclist and having previously ridden the 1,000 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats, I felt adequately qualified to do this review. The book is written by a Christian Paediatrician, Peter Sidebotham, who tells the story of his 16-year-old son, Joe, as they ride together from Land's End to John O'Groats on a unicycle.

The opening chapters recount their less-than-perfect training and preparation for this epic adventure. Joe and his dad are by no means 'seasoned cyclists'. Joe would probably describe himself more as a 'stunt man', having found his way into unicycling via circus skills workshops.

Spurred on by pledges of sponsorship (for charity), an exciting challenge and Joe's enthusiasm, the unicyclist [Joe,

on one wheel], the Paediatrician [Peter, on two wheels] and the Vicar [60-year-old David, on a three-wheeled recumbent tricycle] begin their journey from Land's End.

Even the best travel authors and most highly-acclaimed cycle-tourists at times struggle to captivate their audience, as they write about what can become a fairly mundane trip from A to B, ticking off the miles. Peter's account is interspersed with snippets from Joe's audio-blog, telling their story from different viewpoints. Their journey is interspersed with mishaps and unfortunate events, which make a compelling read. I was disappointed by the amateur style of writing but could not help feeling impressed by their efforts, with a real sense of 'good for them', for what they had achieved.



Openness unhindered: Further thoughts of an unlikely convert on sexual identity and union with Christ
Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

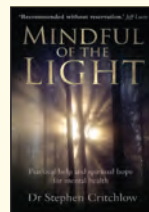
- Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015, £6.65 Pb 209pp, ISBN 9761884527999
- Reviewed by **Trevor Stammers**, Programme Director in Bioethics and Medical Law, St Mary's Twickenham

This book certainly lives up to its name as a former lesbian activist turned Christian author, homemaker, mother and wife shares her life experience and wisdom with a remarkable balance of openness and integrity.

She comes across as honest without being in any way sensationalist as she writes about issues relating to Christian and sexual identities, the meaning of repentance and conversion, the importance of our terminology and how it can unwittingly mislead more than we realise – she has some very interesting insights into the use of 'gay Christian', and she is

very sober in her appraisal of gay therapy.

This caution springs from her conviction that living in community as the body of Christ is the most important thing that transforms our lives as Christians, and hence should exert a more powerful demonstration of the gospel in our society. Her prayerful, practical and loving commitment to her own neighbourhood was one of the most challenging aspects of the book to me. If we all lived that way, how much emptier our surgeries and clinics would be of those whose sickness is basically that no one truly cares for them.



Mindful of the light
Practical help and spiritual hope for mental health
Stephen Critchlow

- Instant Apostle, 2016, £8.99 Pb 224pp, ISBN 1909728446
- Reviewed by **Ken Yeow**, Consultant Psychiatrist based in Belfast

I found this to be an extremely helpful book. It makes a vital contribution to the important area of mental health and spirituality. The material has developed out of a series of talks that the author presented in various settings and this helps make the writing very readable. There is systematic coverage of six important mental health issues (stress and anxiety, depression, suicidality, addictions, schizophrenia, dementia). For each topic Critchlow presents a chapter containing core, empirically-validated information followed by a chapter on the spiritual help potentially available.

There is a balance of clinical acumen honed from years of frontline psychiatric practice at

senior level as well as deep pastoral sensitivity arising from mature Christian discipleship and ministry. Chapters are brought to life by ample illustrations and case studies. Resources for further exploration are suggested.

I think this book can have wide application. Those who struggle will find good information and comfort. Those who care for them will be resourced to provide well-informed help. Every church leader would benefit from having a copy to refer to. Because of its practical utility and grace-filled essence, this is one of the books that I am able to heartily recommend to those with any interest at all in the interface between Christianity and mental health issues.