

Is Your Church 'Mental Health Friendly'?

1. Read Genesis 1:24 – 2:25

At the beginning of human existence, when life was perfect in the Garden of Eden, list all the things that God provided for people so they had good physical and mental health.

2. Read Proverbs 18:14; Psalm 119:25; Job 7:16

What do you think of as 'mental health problems'? What things can cause these?

3. Read Galatians 6:2. Can churches help those with mental health problems?

4. If you have time, listen to this tongue in cheek parody of what might happen when the well-intentioned, but not well-thought-through, try to 'fix' your church. Glib, simplistic and offensive answers to complex problems abound. Do not listen to without a sense of humour! (11 minutes)

http://www.mindandsoul.info/Media/Player.aspx?media_id=44891&file_id

5. 'Mind and Soul' is a non-denominational organisation exploring Christianity and Mental Health.

It has suggested criteria for what makes a 'Mental health Friendly Church':

Churches are friendly to issues of health and disability as measured by the extent to which:

- People with difficulties feel they 'belong' whether or not they are able to take part in or attend meetings (although it is of course a good sign if they do feel able to attend and be part of meetings)
- A contact/team is available to consult with who 'champion' issues around disability and health and are able to signpost local services
- Information is available in alternative formats appropriate for different needs (e.g. large print, audio, electronic)
- Physical adjustments are willingly made to help those with different needs and the style of individual services is relatively predictable
- Church activities welcome, accept and are positive environments that are flexible to people's needs
- People give their time sacrificially to listen and respond to pastoral issues, ideally described by a Pastoral Care Policy/Strategy
- The culture/ethos of the church is one of an on-going journey of valuing all, addressing their needs and enabling them to use their gifts and contribute

Go through each of these points and discuss:

a) does my church do this?

b) are there any practical things that we could do to make these things happen?

Information and Help:

www.mindandsoul.info

A non-denominational organisation exploring Christianity and Mental Health.

www.seemescotland.org

A national organisation working to challenge the stigma of mental ill-health

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

A free and confidential helpline targeted at people experiencing low mood, depression or extreme worry

www.samaritans.org

A confidential emotional support service available 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair

www.smhfa.com

Scotland's mental health first aid course: 12 hours of training to learn effective skills to help people with mental health problems. Could someone from your church go on this course?