

# Coming alongside Mental Health

Dr Andy Pike  
Clinical Psychologist  
and Pastoral Care Minister  
St Paul's Church, St Albans

# A definition of Mental Health

- “mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” (WHO, 2014)

# The Stats

- Ten million British adults diagnosed with at least one mental health problem each year;
- Around one in four adults in the UK will have been diagnosed with at least one mental health problem over their lifetime;
- Mixed anxiety and depression responsible for an estimated one fifth of all days lost from work in Britain;
- Significant and growing levels of self harm and anxiety in children and adolescents

# The Church agrees

“...One of the biggest issues facing the church today..”

*James Newcome – Bishop of Carlisle and lead bishop for health and social care*

- Do we agree?

# So what are people's experiences ?

- Get into small groups and discuss how you feel the church has dealt with mental health good or not so good?
- 10 minutes and come back together and write up on flip chart.

# So what is the church's role?

- The Good Samaritan?
- What does that look like?

# What the research says

- There is a mounting body of evidence that suggests that religious belief aids resilience in responding to traumatic events and leads to faster recovery from mental health problems.
- Research shows a positive correlation between religion and well being specifically in relation to those involved in social participation (i.e. a religious community).

Source: Theos Report on Christianity & Mental Health: Theology, activities and potential, 2017

# What we already do well

- Unconditional Love of Christ
- Genuine care and compassion
- Community
- Prayer
- Walking with them on the journey
- De-institutionalising
- Anything else?



# What is needed?

- Finding an authentic theological and biblical language for sufferers?
- Help people to not over-spiritualise and educate and reduce stigma of medical intervention?

# So what is the church's role?

- The Inn Keeper?
- What does that look like?

# What's happening to the inn keeper?

- **271** mental health patients died after what they describe and document as “**numerous failings by health bodies**”.
- In many cases these were people taking their own lives but not exclusively
- further analysis suggests half were in their 20s, 30s and 40s as well as high numbers of adolescents.
-

# What's happening to the inn keeper?

- With falling numbers of Psychiatrists especially in acute services
- 6,000 fewer mental health nurses than in 2010 there is a very real resource problem.
- Genuine care and concern has in some cases been replaced by apathy or half hearted risk assessment? or
- Batting referrals between services due to excessive demands on them.
- My sense is that this will get worse before it gets better.

# What can we do already?

- Christian Counselling
- Prayer Ministry
- Support groups/Speciality resource
- Local Partnerships
- Mental Health awareness and education
- Pro-active not reactive
- Community

# What others are doing

- Anxiety, anger, bereavement, Bipolar AD, BDD, Carer Support, Demonic influences, Clergy mental health support, dementia, depression, developmental disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, loneliness, OCD, PND, PTSD, self esteem, self harm and suicide, sleep and stress.

# Who does God want you to be?

- The Good Samaritan?
- The Inn Keeper?
- Or both?

# Useful Resource

Theos Report on Christianity & Mental Health:  
Theology, activities and potential, 2017

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk>