

Mental Health Friendly Church

Some things to consider:

1. Pastoral teams:

How much training on mental health issues does your church give your pastoral carers/pastoral teams?

What advice do we give pastoral teams as they encounter many different people? In Matthew 10:16 Jesus sends out the disciples and tells them to be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Do you let your pastoral team know what you are going to preach on in advance so they can be prepared for issues that may arise?

Resource:

Mental health access pack is a new resource which will be very useful for pastoral teams, and others. This can be downloaded as a single resource or sheet by sheet according to need.

<http://www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org/download-the-whole-pack/>

2. Times and places:

- Have you identified the safe spaces for people in the life of your church?

Sometimes Sunday mornings are not always the best time and place for deeper, on-going conversations. In some churches these conversations happen during the week, perhaps at coffee mornings or evening small groups.

- Sunday services. What are your Sunday services like?

In the service is there space for:

Quiet reflection?

Vulnerability, even among the leadership?

Are there places reserved for those who may feel anxious in crowds and self conscious?

- Do you ask people what they need rather than tell them?

3. People and theology

There are lots of people on the Bible who experience significant bouts of depression; how often are these mentioned or preached about?

What labels do we use for people in church and which labels do we prefer people to have? How honest are we with each other about labels? Can we be honest with each other?

Is church a safe and distinctive place?

What does it say about:

- Identity
- Realism - acknowledging that life has its ups and downs
- Forgiveness
- Continuity - being there for the long haul
- Answering existential questions - e.g. who am I?
- Hope - beyond human hope for each one and holding out hope for each other.

4. Some markers of a mental health friendly church:

Opportunities for one-to-one time with others in the church, not necessarily with the church leader.

- Worship in more than one format
- Pastoral care strategy
- Leadership which is open, honest and sometimes vulnerable
- People who are available, good listeners and willing to give of their time
- People who listen and do not always offer the answer
- A kind and friendly welcome on arrival
- Details or help available in the church notices
- Jesus centred and person centred
- Links with the wider community (including with local mental health services)