

Pastoral and Spiritual support in Deaneries and Parishes

In this section you will find some ideas for providing pastoral and spiritual support in a deanery or parish. These range from an afternoon event for people who have or are experiencing mental distress, as well as ideas for a healing liturgy. This section concludes with some prayers which many people who have contributed to this resource pack have found helpful.

Providing pastoral support in our parishes

Helen Bassirat, Mental Health Project Worker in the Diocese of Shrewsbury, has organised a number of events in the diocese: She writes of her experiences:

'To date I have organised two afternoon events in different parts of the diocese simply inviting anyone whose life is affected by mental health issues. So this would include sufferers, carers, professionals, family members etc. Although the events did not have huge attendance, they generated a lot of work in our diocese and for me!

Responding to those who did attend I have since organised healing Masses around the diocese including an anointing of the sick for mental health sufferers and their families. This has certainly raised awareness and in a small way I think it is beginning to break down some of the stigma as people are talking about it more openly.

The format for the afternoon events is quite simple. A welcome, introduction and prayer (we use as our theme 'Come to Me' taken from Matt 11:28-30). Edna Hunneysett then speaks about her experience, then we break into groups for people to share/comment on Edna's input. Then there is more input from Edna. In this second input she generally speaks about the carers groups and the importance of spiritual support. We then break into groups again asking for feedback and how participants feel that the church/parish can help and support them.'

The events such as the afternoon sessions which Helen describes can be a strong source of support for those with mental distress and Helen speaks of one Mass which was particularly powerful as the homily was based on the personal experiences of the priest who celebrated the Mass.

In our planning we may want to consider having someone available to be with a participant to needs to take 'time out' from a discussion session or a Mass.

While the liturgy will be based on the liturgical guidelines on Pastoral Care of the Sick, we will need to be sensitive to the feelings of some potential participants that sickness may be associated more with a physical than a mental health condition.

Organising a Mass or Healing Service

You may wish to consider a Mass within which anointing takes place or a healing service which is not part of a Mass. Here are some ideas for readings and psalms.

Some ideas for Scripture Readings for Healing Liturgies

Isaiah 40:28-31

The Lord is the everlasting God,
He created the boundaries of the earth.
He does not grow tired or weary,
His understanding is beyond fathoming.
He gives strength to the wearied,
He strengthens the powerless.
Young men may grow tired and weary,
Youths may stumble,
But those who hope in the Lord renew their strength,
They put out wings like eagles.
They run and do not grow weary,
Walk and never tire

Isaiah 49:13-17

Shout for joy, you heavens; earth exult!
Mountains, break into joyful cries!
For Yahweh has consoled his people,
is taking pity on his afflicted ones.
Zion was saying, 'Yahweh has abandoned me,
the Lord has forgotten me.'
Can a woman forget her baby at the breast,
feel no pity for the child she has borne?
even if these were to forget,
I shall not forget you.
Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands,
your ramparts are ever before me.
Your rebuilders are hurrying,
your destroyers and despoilers will soon go away.

Romans 8: 24-27

The spirit too comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God.

Psalms for healing liturgies

There are many psalms appropriate to liturgies which have a focus on mental health issues. Helen Bassirat suggests the following:

Psalm 144:17-21 R. 18

Psalm 87:2- R.3

Psalm 26:7-9 13-14 R. 13

Psalm 138: 7-10. 13-14 R 24

Psalm 22

Healing or curing - reflecting on liturgical focus. Some people experiencing mental distress may feel 'let down' when their prayers and the spiritual support they receive don't lead to an instant cure. The letter of St James gives a focus on healing as a continuous activity rather than on an instant cure. 'Is anyone sick among you? He should call for the priests of the Church and have them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith will save the sick person and will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven» (Jas 5:14-15).'

The healing power of Eucharistic Ministry – Stephen's story

Stephen's story about his difficulties in talking about the hospitalisation of his son in the parish is in the module 'Caring about Carers'. Stephen is also a Eucharistic Minister and he reflected on how he might get involved with Eucharistic Ministry at the local Mental Health Unit.

'I first approached the Chaplain at our Mental Health Unit who told me that there is a need to bring Communion to Catholic patients on the inpatient wards. The requests do not occur that often and staff need to be made aware that this service is available – they may not always recognise the specific spiritual needs of

patients. As a volunteer with the Chaplaincy team I receive training and support and the opportunity to work with volunteers.

My first visit was to Michael, a 29 year old man on a locked ward with a very deep faith. Michael asked me to have our Communion service in his bedroom. He had taken a sheet from his bed and used it to cover a small table for our service. As our service progressed I was conscious of the Holy Spirit being present to both of us. He had thought carefully about the reading he would like - from John 6, and he took the trouble to provide a short homily on the reading for me ! Our prayers of intercession were also special and we concluded our Communion service with further prayers chosen by Michael. There is so much healing in the Eucharist in these circumstances – not just for the patient but for ourselves as well.'

Peace and Tranquillity – the contribution of meditation. In mental distress there is often a need for silence, peace and tranquillity. Meditation can often help in restoring wholeness and confidence. Christian meditation can often be a source of spiritual strength. Further information can be found on meditation – the World Community for Christian Meditation on www.wccmeditatio.org.

Providing pastoral and spiritual support for carers. For some years Edna Hunneysett has been facilitating support groups for carers and those experiencing mental distress which meet in a confidential and non-judgemental setting. Edna has contributed to a number of events in sharing her experiences. Read her account in the module 'Caring about Carers'

People with dementia and their caregivers have spiritual needs which should be addressed in parishes and deaneries. A recently made DVD 'Its still ME, Lord' addresses these issues both in the context of parish life and in the pastoral support provided by parish communities to residential and nursing homes. For more details on obtaining the DVD and on taking this agenda forward in parishes and deaneries contact Caritas Social Action Network – www.csan.org.uk . For resources in pastoral support contact the Pastoral Care Project on www.pastoralcareproject.org.uk. The Pastoral Care Project also facilitates retreats and days for carers.

The National Week of Prayer and Awareness of Dementia initiated by the Pastoral Care Project takes place every year 12-19th March where resources are available to download for parishes to pray specifically and raise awareness about dementia and the strain on family carers. It is also an opportunity for schools to get involved. Resources and details of some of those who organised events and raised donations for the charities work can be found on the Pastoral Care Project website

Some additional prayer resources for discussion sessions and liturgies

Hail Mary...

*Hail Mary, strong, gentle woman,
divinely chosen to be the mother of God,
divinely chosen as mother of all who suffer,
divinely chosen as mother of all who weep,
divinely chosen to stand and wait, wait, wait,
divinely chosen to witness the crucifixion,
divinely chosen to feel the death of your only Son,
your only Son.
Divinely chosen to receive the broken body of the Christ of God.*

*Divinely chosen to stand beside all who suffer,
divinely chosen to be with all who are mocked,
divinely chosen to be with all who are humiliated,
divinely chosen to be with all who are put down,
divinely chosen to be with all who are taken down from the cross of dementia.*

*Divinely chosen to receive their broken bodies,
divinely chosen to receive their broken minds,
divinely chosen to receive their broken spirits,
divinely chosen to present them to God.*

*Divinely chosen as mother of all,
Divinely chosen.
Divinely begotten daughter of God.*

“Rejoice so highly favoured, the Lord is with you.” Luke 1. 29

(From 'Petals of Prayer' - Sr Siobhan O'Keeffe – published by Kevin Mayhew Publishers (2011)

Our Lady of Mental Peace

Edna Hunneysett writes: This information was sent to me some years ago by Christine Mears when she lived in Glasgow. She had invited me to speak at a Conference that she had organised at St Mungo's Academy in Glasgow in May 2003 and it was there

that I learned from Christine of the devotion to Our Lady of Mental Peace. Christine has since emigrated to New Zealand. She asked me at the time if I would promote this devotion in England and I try to do this wherever I go to raise awareness of support needed for those with mental illnesses and their families, especially when I speak at Masses or at Conferences, and I take the prayer cards with me to distribute to anyone wanting one.

Our Lady of Mental Peace

Mother of tranquillity

Mother of Hope

Our Lady of Mental Peace

We reach out to you For what is essential In our weakness.

Teach a searching heart That God's love is Unchanging

That human love begins and grows By touching His Love

Our Lady of Mental Peace Pray for us.

We remember humanity'...

We remember humanity, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit;

People of beauty and brilliance,

People of gifts and grace,

People of extravagant diversity.

We pray, healing God,

For people whose lives are diminished because they live with their own or another's mental illness;

for people facing the stigma caused by misunderstanding about mental illness;

for people struggling to find help where they need it.

From 'Not Alone' Worship Resources, Methodist Church, 2010

Some suggested opening prayers for sessions:

Lord, help us to understand the needs of all those experiencing mental distress. Help us to bring hope to them and those close to them as they face the challenges of daily life. Help us to learn from their experiences as we confront the challenges of our own lives.

Help us to make our parishes and deaneries communities of love, understanding, and healing as we journey with those experiencing mental distress.'

*'God be in my head and in my impairments.
God be in my eyes and in my blindness.
God be in my ears and in my deafness.
God be in my head and in my madness.
God be in my legs and in my lameness.
God be in my hands and in my clumsiness.
God be in my mouth and in my silence.
God be at my end and in my dementing.'*

(Janet Lees, speech therapist, revisits the Sarum prayer. Printed in the Religion and Spirituality Division Quarterly, Spring 2006, page 3)

*There are people close to us
Perhaps they are feeling overwhelmed by loneliness and despair
Perhaps we are overwhelmed by the despair they feel.*

*Help us Lord to bring our healing to them
Bond us through what is holy and sacred.*

*Help us to journey with them in our parish community
Help us to share their pain and uncertainties.
Let the gift of words flow through us, dear God.
Help us them to experience your love and healing.*

*Let our meeting be an encounter
Where the balm of your grace is present.
Send forth your Spirit
To inspire and nurture all those experience mental distress.*

We ask this in your name's sake. Amen

(Adapted from 'Prayers for surviving depression' – details in the toolkit introduction)