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RLN welcomes story ideas, news items and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please be in touch with the editor.

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**Cover:** Kieran Young, Lilah Willman, and Payton Young play in the snow after church at St. Paul's, Fort Garry.



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*In Memorium*

# JOURNEY THROUGH FEBRUARY LENT *Allison Chubb*



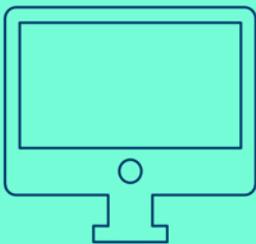
We're finally in February, and spring isn't far away, but at this time of year it can feel like the cold and dark of winter will carry on forever. In a few weeks we'll be into Lent, that spiritual desert place where we long and wait for Christ's great suffering and triumph. Lent can be a good resting place, but it can also feel long and dry, like Rupert's Land winters.

For many people with mental health concerns, February is a particularly trying month. This month's magazine attempts to begin wrestling with the difficult questions of caring for these folks in our midst, both ourselves and those we love. At Synod in October, a call was put out and a resolution was made that more training and resources will be provided for our parishes. This is because we know that mental health is not only the concern of professionals; it is, as Lee Titterington writes, "the concern of all who love Jesus."

Christ promises that one day we will live in a world

where no one will struggle with things like mood disorders, schizophrenia, or addictions. But in the interim between now and the kingdom's fulfillment, let's make our communities safer and more welcoming places for those who struggle, so they may know they are not alone. In this issue, you will hear from three diverse voices about how we might begin doing that: a priest and psychologist, a mental health nurse, and a chaplain. Spring is coming soon – but first we will journey together through Lent. May we learn and grow much along the way. [rin](#)

## Your News is Migrating Online



RLN wants to provide you with the most up-to-date news while becoming better financial stewards and connecting with an increasingly diverse Church. For these reasons, the monthly magazine will be primarily offered online as of September, 2015. It will continue to come to you via email, be posted on our website, and have an easy-print option for individuals and parishes. The mission of RLN is to connect, so parishes and friends will be encouraged to take printed copies to shut-ins and others without internet access. Watch here for more information in the coming months about how the changes will unfold.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Many thanks to you for a great e-publication [RLN Weekly]. I'm enjoying it a lot and look forward to receiving RLN in my email. I like the current notices

about things happening around Rupert's Land as well as upcoming events. The youth leadership stories are particularly good.

*-Davada Carlson,  
Holy Trinity, Winnipeg*

## DOES GOD WANT ME TO GIVE UP CHOCOLATE? *Donald Phillips*

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday – February 18 in 2015. It is true that the theme of self-denial runs long and deep in the Church's observance of Lent. It is also true that in the post-Christian culture in which we live, it's not a bad thing for Christian disciples to be "noticeably different." In *The Five Habits of Highly Missional People*, Michael Frost writes that "Christians ought to lead questionable lives." Of course, what he meant is that

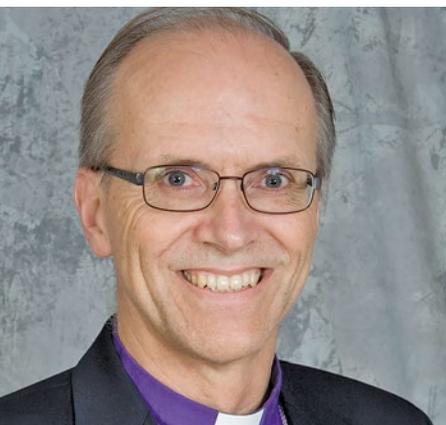
people should experience aspects of the way we live as different – and therefore something that others take notice of and want to ask about.

However, we don't give up or deny ourselves certain pleasures during Lent in order to "put on a show" in front of our neighbours. In the Gospels, Jesus was pretty clear about not doing it for those reasons. In its most ancient forms, before the season of Lent took on a penitential thrust aimed at praying for God's intervention after failed crops threatened food supplies in medieval Europe, Lent was a time of intense preparation for those who were candidates in the annual celebration of Christian baptism at the Easter Vigil on Easter Eve. The preparation for that grand, life-transforming event involved the whole Christian community. It was a time of intense learning, self-examination, and concentration

on what it means to be and live and as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Given that heritage, the most important thing we can do during Lent is to get very serious about growing and deepening our response to the Lord Jesus Christ by more consciously living out our Christian discipleship in all areas of our lives. And what will help us with that? Anything that causes us to be immersed in the Scriptures and Christian writing, that helps us to pray more effectively, and that prompts us to spend time in self-examination and prayer for God's grace to help us become, more fully, the people God wants and needs us to be.

So should I give up chocolate? Probably not – unless it somehow prevents you from engaging in the activities mentioned above. Here's an idea: attend a Bible, book, or prayer group – and offer to bring chocolate! Have a life-changing Lent! 



△ *Donald Phillips,  
Bishop of Rupert's Land*

# FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW JESUS *Lee Titterington*

In January 2014, the Winnipeg Free Press reported on a five year study undertaken by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy at the University of Manitoba. This study examined data from 2008-2013, focusing on 1) the reasons for visits to physicians, 2) medications dispersed by pharmacists, and 3) hospital stays. The study found that in the five year period, 24.4% of physician visits, medications, or hospital stays in Winnipeg were related to mental illness (nearly one in four). By way of comparison, one in eight visits, medications, or hospital stays were connected to heart-related issues.

Mental illness is diagnosed by use of the DSM-5, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association. It includes such conditions as depressive, anxiety, bipolar, obsessive-compulsive, or trauma disorders (to name a few). What the one in four statistic does not include are those persons who are struggling with a mental illness but have not been diagnosed, and those family members who are trying to support and encourage their loved ones who have a mental illness. It is fair to say that the one in four statistic under-represents the impact that mental illness has in our community. Why should we care?

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, "mental illness is the second leading cause of disability and premature death in Canada. In any given week, at least 500,000 Canadians are unable to work due to problems with their mental health. In addition, the burden of mental illness is estimated at \$51 billion per year" (camh.ca). These are startling facts!

For those of us who follow Jesus, it is important to recognize that mental illness crosses economic, racial, cultural, and faith traditions. As we look at our church families on any given Sunday, there may be many persons who may be struggling with either a mental illness themselves or trying to help a loved one who is dealing with the effects of a mental illness. Or, through the course of our missional activities, we may encounter someone who faces the many challenges associated with these issues. As I write these words, it is the Last Sunday after Pentecost. The Reign of Christ is approaching. In the Gospel for the day, Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus says to the righteous, "...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I

was in prison and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are member of my family you did it to me". (RSVP, 35-40) It is clear that Jesus calls upon us to respond from a place of compassion to those who are hurting.

How do we in the Diocese begin to respond to those with mental health challenges? At the October 2014 Synod, a series of resolutions about mental health were passed. Beginning soon, the Diocese will be promoting education and training about mental health issues. We will begin to build resource and referral networks, and to help our parishes become safe communities for all. These are ambitious tasks but, given the need, they are worthy tasks for those who follow Jesus to take on. 



**△** *Lee Titterington is the priest at St. Bartholomew's, Winnipeg, and is a psychotherapist.*

## BURNING BUSH: IS THE TEN PER

*This month in the "Burning Bush", two Rupert's Land  
We hear first from Sheila Welbergen, a parishioner at St. Luke's,*

*Sheila Welbergen writes  
that the traditional tithe  
should be reconsidered.*

We try to be fiscally responsible for ourselves, our city, our province, and the Church, from parish upwards. At the parish level, it is getting harder. Older buildings, declining numbers, people feeling the squeeze from grocery prices to taxation. It is no single problem with no single solution.

Unfortunately, the first cry when the parish discusses income and expenses is, "Give us more money. Adjust your automated giving upward. We have handy charts which assess how much you should give according to your particular income." Lost in all the handwringing over budgets is the small phrase, "All things come of thee, and of thine own do we give thee." This includes ourselves, our souls, and our bodies... our works as well as our money. Money does not come first. It is the heart which gives the money.

Tithing is an Old Testament concept, a requirement of the Law whereby the Israelites were to give 10 percent of the crops they grew and of the livestock they raised to the tabernacle or temple, i.e. to the Lord. "If that tithe was too heavy, because of the journey, you may exchange it for silver"

(Deuteronomy 14:24). "First fruits of the corn... they brought a tithe of everything" (2 Chronicles 31:5). These are two examples of Old Testament laws often taken out of context. Since not many of us have crops and livestock, it was a handy segue to "10 percent of your income."

The New Testament speaks of the importance of giving. It nowhere commands, or even recommends, a legalistic tithe system. And nowhere is a percentage of income designated, but gifts are to be "in keeping with income" (1 Corinthians 16:2). That suggestion is swept away by the flow charts — which are probably not made by those on pensions or minimum wage. What happens when giving is equated with the collection plate? For one thing, Consecration Sunday becomes, "how much can we expect in the coming year to balance the budget" Sunday.

We may think of talents as something we can do, sing, embroider, or bake, but Gallup analytics defines it this way: "Talents are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behaviour which can be productively applied." That focusses on what we think and feel, and how we behave as Christians. When we concentrate only on money we

could write a cheque and discharge our obligation to tithe, but that is not the whole picture.

In most parishes, people give generously of their time, visiting the sick and the shut-in, cooking breakfast for the hungry and homeless, gathering clothes for the (nearly) naked. They teach children and young people, provide music for worship, prepare and clean the church, and take part in worship in innumerable ways. Their talents flow outward from the church doors as they give witness to their faith in love and gratitude to the God who gives all things. Our obligation and pleasure is to give God ourselves, because He gave us himself. Money is important, yes, but not above giving ourselves.



## CENT TITHE A THING OF THE PAST?

*Readers share their opinions about the traditional tithe.*

*Winnipeg, and then from Tony Harwood-Jones, a retired priest.*

***Tony Harwood-Jones writes in favour of the traditional tithe.***



*Photo: William Wiggins*

There is really only one argument to be had among Christians about the tithe, and that is whether the full 10% should go only to the institutional Church or whether it might be divided up between various charities. The actual number, that controversial 10 percent, is not really negotiable.

Jesus actually taught that 10 percent is just the beginning, a base or starting point for human generosity. On at least two occasions he criticized Pharisees who tithed, one who lacked humility (Luke 18:9-14) and others for not caring about justice and faith (Matthew 23:23). In both cases Jesus didn't tell these people that tithing was wrong; he just said that they shouldn't stop with tithing (in Matthew 23:23, Jesus says that the Pharisees must practice justice and faith, "without neglecting" the tithe).

Tithe, of course, but then get on with the real heavy lifting of a godly life.

However, if we were to push Jesus about the percent, we'd find that the people he commends most loudly were a rich fellow who gave away 50 percent (Luke 19:8-9) and an impoverished woman who gave all her money (i.e. 100 percent) to the temple treasury (Mark 12:41-43). There was also the rich person who Jesus instructed to give away 100 percent of his wealth in order to obtain "eternal life" (Matthew 19:21 and Luke 18:22). So for the Christian, 10 percent is something of a minimum.

Of course, the 10 percent figure predates Jesus by a thousand years, and comes from the Hebrew Torah. There we find that it is only part of what is expected of a citizen in that ancient society. Modern opponents of the tithe often suggest that in those days the tithe was the equivalent of modern taxes, paying for civic services. But this is not actually true. The tithe was entirely for the priests and the temple cult (see, for example, Numbers 18:21), while additional and quite different support was expected for the king (the "state" of that day).

Others suggest that because the tithe originates in the Old Testament, it is su-

perseded by the Gospel. But wait a minute! The law that says, "you must love your neighbour as yourself" is also an Old Testament Law, and no one would suggest that it has been superseded.

Think of it this way: we know that we ought to love our neighbour, but sometimes we don't, or at least we don't do it very well. This doesn't mean that the commandment is wrong. We even believe that the Lord forgives us for our failure to love others, but we are still obliged to try. It is the same with the commandment to tithe; we may not do it, and we may be forgiven for failing to do it, but we are still obliged to try.

So the only argument we should have is about where our tithe should go; should all of it go to the Church? Or, should some go to the Church and some to charities that feed the hungry and bring about fairness and justice in the world? I suggest this: give your tithe to God's work. Where you give it will be a strong indicator of your real religion. 

***Do you have something to add? Find this piece online at [rupertslannews.ca/tithing](http://rupertslannews.ca/tithing) and add your comment. If you have an idea that you think should be discussed in the Burning Bush, please be in touch with the editor.***

# MENTAL ILLNESS THROUGH A BIBLICAL LENS *Mary Holmen*

Religion and psychiatry have a long and complex relationship, not always a positive one. However, in recent years there has been an increase of interest in and openness to, spirituality in mental health care. When mental illness enters the picture, spiritual well-being suffers. The person may feel alienated from, or abandoned by, God. Long-held beliefs are called into question. The person may not have opportunity or feel well enough to attend worship services. There is a profound sense of loss and grief, stemming from loss of hopes, dreams, and control.

Sadly, there is often rejection and stigma that lead to a loss of self-esteem and a sense of shame. The person must search for a new sense of meaning and purpose, new hopes and

goals, and the elusive sense of acceptance and peace. It's not just the individual who experiences this; we are told

something wrong with my faith" to, "There's something wrong with me". Her beliefs became a source of shame, not strength.

*"God,  
why have you  
rejected me?"*

Take a look at Psalm 88, words written by a person of faith. It takes great faith to accuse God of abandonment. Those words were written by someone who knew first-hand the realities of depression. Just listen to

that one in three people will experience a mental health problem sometime in their life, and when you add in the families, friends, and co-workers, it is clear that mental illness affects us all.

the language: My life is full of trouble; I am at the brink of the grave; no strength; lost; overwhelmed; I cannot get free; wretched and at the point of death; troubled mind; destroyed; darkness. So much for the idea that people of faith shouldn't get depressed.

I recall a patient who had lived with depression for many years. She was a woman of strong faith who tried to live in a manner consistent with her beliefs. As we talked, a problem emerged: her belief that, "Christians shouldn't get depressed". Instead of being a source of comfort and hope, her faith was causing her distress on top of her illness. She believed there was something wrong with her faith because she couldn't rise above depression by her own efforts. It's not a very big step from, "There's

Faith is not magic, and it is not a vaccine against trouble. The writer cries out to God but has no sense of being heard. The writer feels forgotten by God and, in despair, cries out, "God, why have you rejected me? Why have you turned your face from me?" This is utter, total despair. Our culture does not tolerate despair well. Much of the time, we cruise through life in a state of spiritual forgetfulness. We have a kind of collective amnesia



◀ *Mary Holmen recently retired from her role as Interfaith Chaplain at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre and is an Honorary Assistant at St. Peter's, Winnipeg.*

that leads us to believe that cheerfulness is our natural state and our birthright. The truth is closer to the biblical assertion: "Humankind is born to sorrow as surely as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). We forget what the Buddha taught: life sometimes hurts. And when life hurts, we know pain; we grieve; we mourn.

The problem of innocent suffering is the question at the heart of the story of Job. When Job suffers the loss of everything – his livestock, shepherds, and children, and his body covered with sores – he enters a recognisable state of depression. He sits in the dust and longs for death. The only thing that keeps him going is his passion to tell his story, to demand a hearing, and to proclaim the injustice of his suffering. His wife cannot tolerate his despair: "Curse God and die," she advises (Job 2:9). But Job will not.

His three friends come to console him, and the best thing they do is keep their mouths shut while Job laments his many losses. The trouble begins when the friends start giving Job advice. The first one says cheerfully, "Don't worry, Job, your faith will protect you from harm." But he has already been harmed beyond all tolerance. The second friend says, "Well, Job, you know God is just, so you must have done something to deserve this." The third friend advises Job to repent of his sins so all will be well again. Some comfort! Job dismisses their words as hollow and

empty. What Job wants is not answers or theological propositions. What he wants is for his friends to accompany him, to stay with him, to bear witness to his pain and outrage. But that is just what the friends cannot do. Their cheap spiritual salves are all that stand between them and Job's utter vulnerability, and they are too afraid to face their own vulnerability which they glimpse in Job's devastation.

In the 1990's, a study was done of the religious and spiritual needs and resources of mental health clients. The number one need was an expression of support from another human being. That's not so hard to do, is it? Like Job, people with mental health issues do not want to be "fixed." They do not want advice or cheering up. They want someone who will walk with them in good times and bad, listen without judging, and be a living reminder that they are not alone in their difficulties.

Resources in the study included the person's beliefs, their faith community, prayer, and other supports. A strong spirituality can be a resource in times of trouble. Spirituality, with its associated practices of prayer, meditation, scripture reading, and worship, can help the person feel that God cares for and loves him or her, that he or she is not alone, is worthy of love, and can depend on God. Spirituality can help in finding renewed hope and addressing issues of guilt, forgiveness, and loss. Some

people with mental illness have commented that their experience has brought them closer to God, or that they have become more compassionate because they have a better understanding of other people's struggles.

People with mental health concerns are not all in hospitals or living on the streets. They cut our hair, teach our children, run our businesses, and care for us when we are sick. They sit in our pews and lead our congregations. "They" are, in fact, "us." When we recognize this reality, we may reach out in care and concern for our brothers and sisters who are part of the family of faith. 

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## PARISH NEWS **ROUND UP**

### ▷ St. George's, Crescentwood

After much searching, St. George's has found a new incumbent. Simon Blaikie will begin his new post on February 2, 2015. A celebration of new ministry will be held on March 8 at 3:00 p.m. All are welcome!

### ▷ St. Margaret's, Winnipeg

From Thursday, February 19 to Sunday, February 22, Rev'd. Rutledge will visit St. Margaret's for four days of intensive preaching and teaching as part of the course. To register for the weekend, contact Julienne Isaacs, Ecclesial University Administrator, at julienneisaacs@saintmargarets.ca or 204-774-9533. The cost to attend the weekend with Fleming Rutledge, including catered breakfast and lunch on the Saturday, is \$75/person.

### ▷ St. Paul's, Fort Garry

St. Paul's is hosting the personal and family preparedness seminar, "What if I got hit by a bus?", March 14, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. The seminar is offered by Emmerick Quality Consulting, and enables participants to think through the planning of personal details in case of personal loss or emergency, geared toward organizing personal information and wishes.

### ▷ Iona Prayer Group

The group is now meeting at St. George's, Crescentwood, to pray for peace and justice in the Iona tradition. All are welcome to join them on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

### ▷ Lent

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18.

*Do you have an event of interest to the wider diocese? Send us your announcements at least six weeks in advance of the next paper (for example, a notice to be published in the April paper is due February 18).*

### ▷ St. Chad's One Year Later

Since its first Sunday School service at Lincoln School on February 10, 1963, St. Chad's has been a vital Anglican presence in the Westwood area of Winnipeg. For 45 years, St. Chad's shared a worship space with St. John XXIII Roman Catholic Parish on Portage Avenue. More than a year ago, on November 2, 2013, we began a new chapter in our spiritual journey with the celebration of our first service at a new location, 472 Kirkfield St., the home of Kirkfield United Church. Ironically, this location is only a short block away from Lincoln School!

It has been a wonderful first year in our new home, to which St. Chadians were warmly welcomed by Kirkfield Park parishioners. Over the past year, they extended invitations to take part in a number of moving joint services and several joint missional and social opportunities. St. Chad's pastoral presence in the neighbourhood has increased during this time to include regular Eucharists at five seniors' facilities, along with an increasing lay ministry to shut-ins in the neighbourhood.

The Westwood Ecumenical book club continues to flourish in its new home, with representation from St. John XXIII, Kirkfield Park, and St. Chad's. Club members are currently reading, "The Hiding Place," by Corrie Ten Boom. Six young St. Chadians are being prepared for confirmation later this year.

One year later — thanks be to God!

*Pamela Bann, St. Chad's, Winnipeg*



# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN RUPERT'S LAND

*If you or someone you know is struggling with a mental health concern, here is a list of local resources for referral. A more comprehensive list can be found at [rupertslandnews.ca/mental-health-resources](http://rupertslandnews.ca/mental-health-resources). If you have suggestions to add to this list, please let us know. Those outside of Winnipeg are encouraged to contact the centres below for more information about local and distance supports for your area.*

## Counselling and Longterm Support

### Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon:

(204) 942-0126

[aamanitoba.org](http://aamanitoba.org)

[mb.al-anon.alateen.org](http://mb.al-anon.alateen.org)

### Rainbow Resource Centre:

(204) 474-0212

[rainbowresourcecentre.org](http://rainbowresourcecentre.org)

Provides free counselling and resources.

### Recovery of Hope:

(204) 477-4673

Recovery of Hope is a Christian counselling centre which offers services based on a sliding scale. They are particularly good for someone on a limited income, and have offices in Winnipeg, Steinbach, Winkler, and Altona.

### Aurora Family Therapy Centre:

(204) 786-9251

[aurora.uwinnipeg.ca](http://aurora.uwinnipeg.ca)

Aurora, at the University of Winnipeg, offers a variety of workshops and therapy programs, including an immigrant and refugee program, and discount rates with student therapists.

## Emergency and Crisis

### Mobile Crisis Unit:

(204) 940-1781

The Mobile Crisis Unit has teams across Southern Manitoba that respond to people in distress, 24 hours a day,

by coming to where they are immediately, to de-escalate the crisis.

### Emergency Intake Services:

A person in crisis may be taken to any emergency room at any time; however, the well-equipped Crisis Response Centre is at 718 Bannatyne in Winnipeg (near the Health Sciences Centre).

### Mood Disorders Email Support:

[info@mooddisordersmanitoba.ca](mailto:info@mooddisordersmanitoba.ca)

### Farm and Rural Support Line:

1-866-367-3276

### Klinik Crisis Line:

1-888-322-3019

The people who answer this line deal with crises of many kinds, including mental distress, assault, and those struggling to care for a loved one.

### Manitoba Suicide Line:

1-877-435-7170

For both those struggling with thoughts of suicide and those concerned for them.



*Photo: David Neale*

### Addictions Foundation of Manitoba:

(204) 944-6200

[afm.mb.ca](http://afm.mb.ca)

### Manitoba Schizophrenia Society:

(204) 786-1616

[mss.mb.ca](http://mss.mb.ca)

## SOUNDS OF FAITH

*Jaylene Johnson*

I recently received a message from someone referring to music of mine that they heard on Christian radio years ago. They asked if I still do “that sort of thing.” Though I welcome the dialogue, I never know how to answer questions like that. I’m a Christian, and I write and sing songs.

For as long as I can remember, music has been my shadow; no matter where I’ve been, or what I’ve gone through, it has followed me. My dad recalls me swinging my little toddler legs off the balcony of our apartment, my face pressed through the bars, singing songs to Jesus.

If music is my shadow, then faith is the light that casts it. Expressing words through melodies is a gift to my life, but faith, too, is a gift from God. That being said, not all of my songs have a spiritual lyric in the stereotypical sense, and while this is not necessarily intentional, I defend it to those who may criticize the fact that I don’t always write songs solely for the Church.

Imagine a Bible filled only with a handful of our go-to verses and void of the many stories and topics that are at once gritty and relatable and divinely spun.

Imagine it without the emotional rawness of the Psalms, the rage of the prophets, the drama of the Exodus, the seduction of the Song of Solomon. Imagine the Gospels without the parables – stories about real people living real life. I can’t.

So I write about life, and



△ *Jaylene Johnson is a Winnipeg singer/songwriter and Ministry Coordinator at st. benedict’s table.*

while my faith informs my writing, I believe there is a place for all kinds of songs in the world. Just as we daily witness a brilliant and varied creation, there are songs that simply make people smile and tap their toes or that touch a profound emotional place.

But what of “Holiness?” Again, I’m not sure how to answer, but I suspect that my views on “holy music” might not jive with some people’s views. I’m reticent to call music “sacred” only if it has an obviously Christian lyric.

I believe God alone makes holy that which we offer of ourselves, be it a love song, a beautifully laid out family dinner, or a random act of kindness.

I also believe that, as Christians, we are called to be in the world but not of it, rather than of the world but not in it. The “culture” of Christianity has sometimes gone the way of the latter, attempting to be a decent copy of secular culture but not offering enough depth, honesty, and excellence to connect with a broad audience, using words that are solely understood in a Christian context. Furthermore, artists in the Church are sometimes scrutinized if they create something that doesn’t have an overt gospel message.

As an artist, I want to offer my gift as truthfully and as artfully as I can. I appreciate many of the artists-who-are-Christians who’ve gone before me. Some do “that sort of thing”, sharing music in the Church and via Christian radio, facilitating our worship of God through songs. Others, like me, write on wider paper. All of us are, I think, doing our discerning best with the gifts we’ve been given – gifts of music and of faith. Pray for us. 

***Are you interested in writing for our new music & faith column? Please let the editor know.***

# FOLLOWING LAZARUS OUT OF THE CAVE *Bob Curle*

Traditionally, the Church has assisted in the recovery of mental health by, “the blood of the lamb and the word of their witness” (Rev. 12:11), that is, ministering with the sacraments, the scriptures, prayer, and the testimonies of others. The study, “The Prevalence of Religious Coping among Persons with Mental Illness” states: “Religion may serve as a pervasive and potentially effective method of coping for persons with mental illness, thus warranting its integration into psychiatric and psychological practice.” Peer support groups in Bible study and sharing sessions can be healing, as is one-on-one counselling.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada’s mental health first aid workshops offer the Church three things: **1.** Exposure to the language of mental health professionals, thus aiding communication when parishioners are referred for help; **2.** Exposure to psychiatry’s understanding and treatment approach, which has strengths and limitations; and **3.** Knowledge to offer mental health first-aid to individuals in crisis.

Much of the pathology of mental illness is still shrouded in mystery. The brain has 100 billion neu-

rons linked with 100 times more connections that are in constant flux. Knowledge about these dynamics, and the role chemicals and genetics play in the mix, is in its infancy, thus weakening the effectiveness of mental health treatment compared to other health issues.

Psychiatry rarely, if ever, raises the influence of spiritual beings on the human psyche. The Church acknowledges this influence can be profound in both a negative and positive way. Christian mental health counsellors should not shy away from addressing the spiritual dimension.

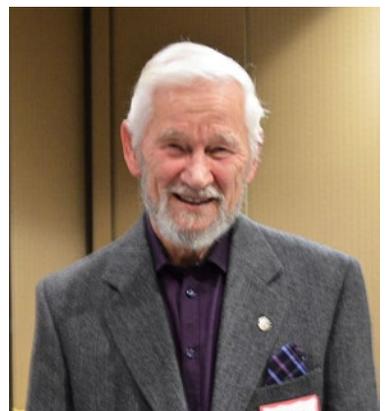
Insights into mental health challenges are not hard to find because depression, anxiety, and disorganized thoughts are, from time to time, episodes in the lives of everyone to a lesser or greater degree. The following illustration sketches the descent into mental illness and a role the Church can play in mental health prevention and recovery.

A key mental exercise associated with achievement is repetitive and detailed visualisation, a skill highly developed by elite athletes and organisation leaders who imagine succeeding. This technique has

the ability to shape neural pathways that help them succeed. The same mental processes are at work, but negatively, in the slide toward poor mental health.

Negative visualising can take people to places that feel like caves, sometimes deep, to the point of long-term alienation. The effects are disrupting and disturbing, but most people are only occasional cave visitors, caused by situational events in their lives. Abstract caves are mostly dug by worry, trauma, deprivations, and fears.

Occasionally, however, some elements of brain anatomy contribute, like faulty genetics and abnormal physical matter that disrupt the brain’s neural pathways. These become chains that seem to attach some people to the cave walls. The interior of the cave is for some dark,



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but for others a place that bombards the senses with a kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and feelings that are frightening and overwhelming. Looking toward the entrance of the caves, the outside seems to offer enticements and rejection, opportunities and dangers.

It takes a lot of energy,

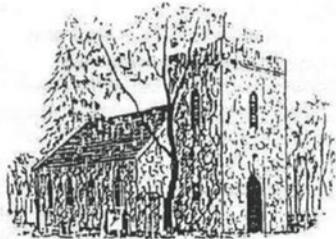
and sometimes a long time, to journey out of a cave; personal relationships that inspire hope, courage, faith, and love are of great help. A self-appraisal of the cave is required for insight, as is the development of new cognitive skills and knowledge. The latter are necessary to grasp the opportunities

and cope with the dangers outside the cave.

Positive visualisation through meditation and prayer is a therapeutic practice that can move people out of their caves. The Bible often encourages the practice in both the Old and New Testaments. Joshua 1:8 reads, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful". In Philippians 4:8, the writer tells us, "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things".

Journeying with people out of their caves may require some time; each person's recovery will be different. The story of the release of Lazarus from his cave does give us hope for something more: the miraculous power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's ability to break chains. The power of God "can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). 

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## BONHOEFFER'S SILENCE *Preston Parsons*

Bonhoeffer was entirely silent on the matter of “Confessional Differences.” Why silence on that subject in particular? In a Pentecost statement in 1936, Bonhoeffer writes: “Do not allow your speech and actions to be bound by any alien law; instead entrust yourselves to the word of truth that is at work in the church alone and that makes us free.” There are two kinds of freedom that Bonhoeffer refers to here: freedom in speech and freedom in action, and both of them are present at Finkenwalde, the seminary Bonhoeffer ran between 1935 and 1937.

What was happening at Bonhoeffer’s seminary, and in his church more generally, was that Lutheran and Reformed Christians were sharing the same space on account of their shared rejection of Nazi interference in the government of the church. What Bonhoeffer does, as a way to negotiate the differences between Lutheran and Reformed Christians, is not to interrogate the difference between churches but rather the place where the world comes to do battle with the church. This relativizes historical difference.

What Bonhoeffer is doing here is underlining the relative freedom the church has with regard to historical

documents, because the church is under the absolute authority of the Word. The Church does not, for Bonhoeffer, abandon its doctrinal inheritance. Doctrine is living and binding. But the Word, for Bonhoeffer, carries an authority that relativizes historical difference, and sets the church free to forge a new way forward, because it is the Word that speaks through Scripture that has ultimate authority. Under that authority, the church has a freedom in theological speech that follows a silent listening to Word.

But, as we read above, freedom, for Bonhoeffer, is also in action. In his correspondence from prison, Bonhoeffer develops some of his thoughts on the relationship between the Church and the world. Bonhoeffer describes a sphere of freedom that comprehends the whole world, and all of the obediences of the world. This freedom is found within the Church, for Bonhoeffer, through particular practices—art, education, friendship, and play. But this freedom is not a rejection of obedience. Instead, freedom corresponds to obedience. At Finkenwalde, for example, all four practices correspond to a mode of obedience. Singing in worship should be done in

unison, for Bonhoeffer. But music was not only ordered in worship; it included listening to jazz and spirituals, and playing chamber music, where melodies and harmonies are anchored by the bass line, or continuo.

Theological education is not only marked by attention to doctrinal discipline, but also by the freedom afforded by the Word. Relationships among the seminarians were ordered and disciplined, but Finkenwalde is also where Bonhoeffer’s most significant friendship, with Eberhard Bethge, began. And the daily work, including classroom work, was often at risk of being interrupted by a trip to the seaside, or in Bonhoeffer’s own personal case, a drive in the country.

Silence is not, for Bonhoeffer, simply about keeping quiet. It is a generative listening to the Word. Bonhoeffer was not silent in

*Continued on page 16...*



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the Harz mountains about difference because there was nothing to say. He was silent because, in that moment, he was free from that kind of difference, and the task was to keep quiet in order to listen to the Word that would reveal what really was pressing. What was pressing was not a response to yesterday's schism. It was a listening to the Word that would give voice to God in the church, that sets the church free in its obedience, and offers a word against a public discourse that was busy repeating the revelation it thought it was hearing in the world.

Art, education, friend-

ship, and play, are all practises that the church can cultivate for the sake of a world that misunderstands freedom. The freedom of the church that listens, in order to hear, speak, and act, allows the church to do certain things that aren't about making the church function in a certain way. They are useless practices, done for their own sake, without any necessity except that of freedom. This does not mean, however, that the freedom of the Church is only significant for the Church. For Bonhoeffer, art, education, friendship and play are all practices that also restore a certain kind of freedom to the world.

They are, in that sense, reparative political practices.

So, much like Finkenwalde can be understood as free, both from and for a world in bondage to its own debilitating cultural logic, a vision emerges for the church. With this kind of freedom as a governing concept, even now, through a certain kind of freedom—which is, for Bonhoeffer, not a freedom from obedience or a freedom to do as one wishes, but a freedom for others—gains political traction and a critical capacity through a freedom that is for the sake of the world, and in the service of those to whom the Church is given. 



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