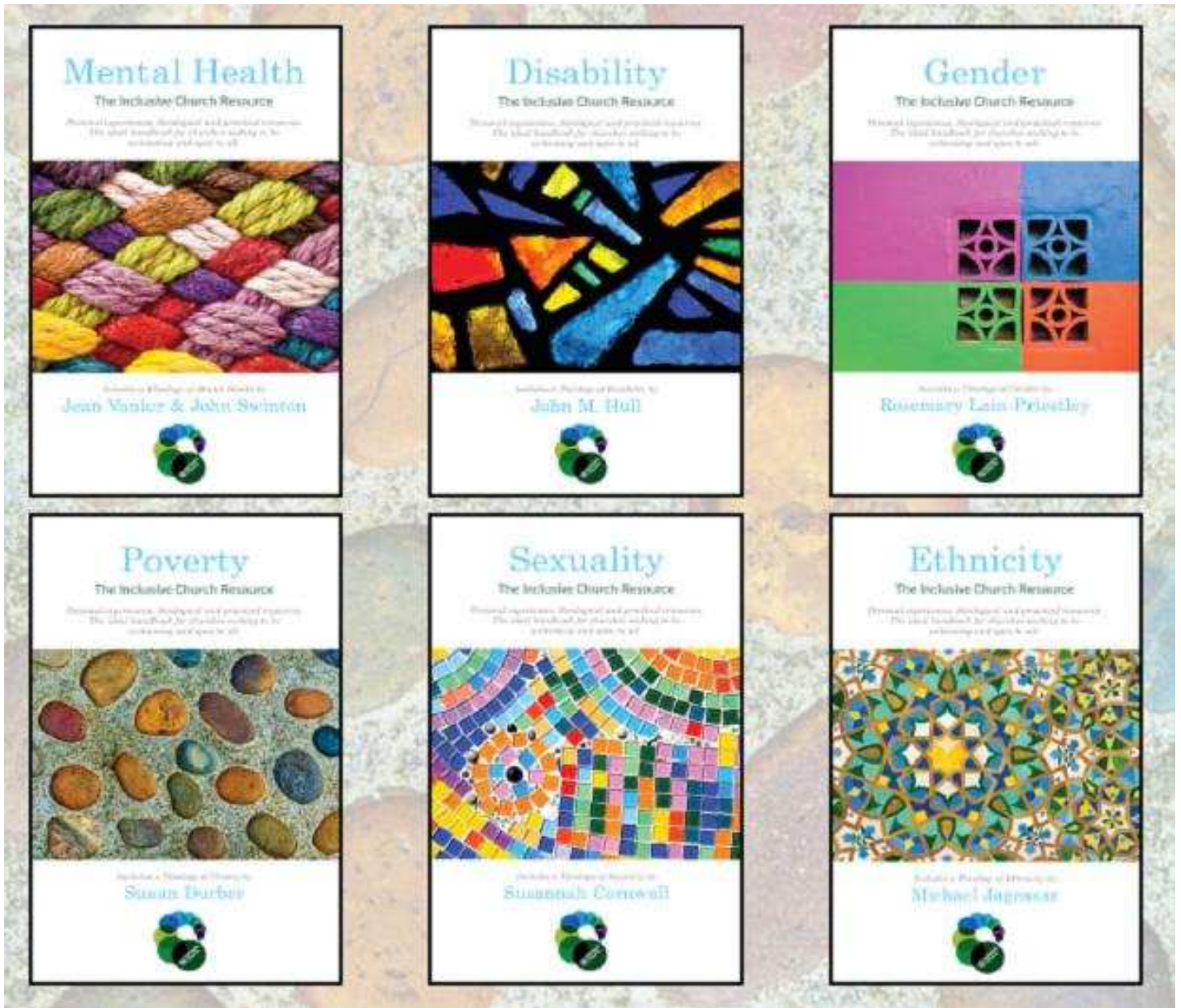




Inclusive Church

Small Group Study

Resources: Mental Health



DARTON · LONGMAN + TODD *The Jerusalem Trust*

Small Group Study Resources



Outline & Acknowledgements

Outline

The Inclusive Church Resource series is published by Darton, Longman & Todd. The series comprises 6 titles: Disability, Mental Health, Gender, Poverty, Sexuality and Ethnicity.

Each book contains stories from lived experience, a theological reflection and resources for further information. We recommend that each church/group using these study resources obtains a set of the Resource Books.

These small group study resources provide additional material to supplement the books. They have emerged as a result of churches using the books creatively for small group study. These study resources can be used in any order. Each study guide contains the outline, introduction, protocols, and liturgies, as well as the core study material

Acknowledgments

Inclusive Church is grateful to the generosity of the Jerusalem Trust for a grant that has enabled these materials to be drawn together. This grant was match-funded by Inclusive Church supporters and members.

Inclusive Church would like to express its gratitude to Darton, Longman & Todd for its continued support of the Inclusive Church Resource Series.

The material has been written and compiled by Jeremy Pemberton.

Jeremy has been a priest of the Church of England for thirty-four years. He has worked in parishes in the North and East of England, as a Mission partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in theological education. Latterly, he has been Senior Chaplain and Bereavement Services Manager for a large NHS Trust in Lincolnshire. He now works as a cathedral lay clerk, a civil celebrant and a consultant specialising in spiritual care and equality and diversity relating to sexuality and religion. He is married to Laurence Cunnington, and they live in Southwell.

Small Group Study Resources

Introduction & Protocols



Introduction

These study materials are designed for use by a group of up to twelve or so people. If you have more people who want to use them, we recommend that you split into two groups.

Each session is designed to last for an hour and a half - but you can shorten or extend that as you choose.

The sessions have deliberately been designed to be very simple. They do not require extensive preparation by "leaders"; anyone can lead each session. It can be shared by two people if that helps, with different people leading different sections.

The aim of the material is:

- to provide enough material on each topic to stimulate people's thinking
- to structure the time so that everyone has a chance to speak and express themselves
- to link to Bible material that may be helpful in considering each topic
- to encourage reflection on how the group/church may better include the subject of the study
- to frame the time with prayers that can be led by anyone

To use these materials with a group you will need:

- A place to meet and enough chairs or cushions for everyone to sit comfortably
- A candle which is lit at the beginning of each meeting and extinguished at the end (this is not essential - if you don't have one it doesn't matter)
- Copies of the opening/closing liturgy for people to share in. In addition to being included in the study material, the liturgies have also been included as separate pages at the end of the study material for ease of printing.

- Bibles for everyone (or printed off copies of the Bible resource passages for each session)
- And that is it!

These are the skills that the person/people leading needs:

- Confidence to be able to draw the group together and help people find their way through the material
- An eye to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard
- The ability to discourage those who talk too much and encourage those who are reticent
- The ability to keep an eye on the clock and to work out roughly how to move from section to section so that you finish on time

If someone would like to try leading but has not done so before, why not let them try sharing the leadership that week with someone more experienced.

It should be noted that, as with all group work of this kind, there are no right answers. This is not about finding answers, it is about expanding our thinking, and listening for God's voice. We support one another in a group and hope that we can learn to be better disciples together. When we approach sessions prayerfully and thoughtfully, ready to learn, then we find that we are surprised by the new things that we discover working together.

Please remember too, that not everyone may be very comfortable doing lots of reading silently or aloud. You may need to find some people in your group who would be happy to read some of the materials aloud to the group, so that everyone can participate equally having listened to the material under discussion. Be careful of asking someone in front of the group if they would read aloud. Better to ask for volunteers.

Sessions include links to short YouTube videos. These can really make an impact if you have access to a computer and the internet so that you can play them to the group. If you have the capacity to link up to a TV or a larger screen that is very helpful, but even playing them on a laptop is very helpful. But the sessions work without them; they are not essential.

In particular, we hope these sessions can make us long for God's church to become a place of greater awareness and greater action towards including everyone. If they help us notice where people have been invisible, or where

their gifts have lain unused because they did not fit a particular mould, or where their needs have been ignored, then they will have fulfilled their purpose.

Jeremy Pemberton

Group Protocols

You will need to agree these at the start of the first session. Some people like to write these up and display them so that they are there for future reference. The best way to get a group to agree to protocols is to ask them to devise them themselves. Here are some suggestions of the kinds of things that you might like to consider including:

- Commitment to meeting - groups work best when everyone agrees to come to the sessions
- Commitment to participating - groups also work best when everyone there contributes
- Not interrupting or speaking over people - it helps everyone participate if their contributions are listened to by all
- No side conversations - people agree not to have whispered conversations with their neighbour while others are talking
- Confidentiality - what is said in the group stays in the group. We want people to feel safe. Some people will never have disclosed anything personal in a group before; confidentiality helps them feel safe
- Consideration in speaking - people who are confident about speaking in groups should not hog the time by talking too much
- Respecting people - there may be many different views expressed. It helps our learning if we don't rush to judgement.
- Gentleness in challenge - if someone says something we disagree with, then we agree to find a way of expressing that without aggression. "I don't see it quite that way...", "I look at that differently...", "I wonder if you have thought about..." can all be ways to do this
- Keeping to time - a group that always overruns can be off-putting for people who have to get home, catch a bus, get to something else etc. Good time-keeping is important in maintaining group loyalty
- Praying for each other - a group whose members commit to praying for each other through the week quickly builds a sense of group solidarity and care

Small Group Study Resources



Mental Health

1. The welcome

Welcome everyone to the venue. If you are offering refreshments, then the beginning of the meeting is a good place to do so. When everyone has settled you can begin. Timings against the different sections are only suggestions.

2. The Opening Liturgy (3 minutes)

Use the opening liturgy to start your meeting. You will have decided whether or not you wish to light a candle, and if so, have that ready.

In addition to being included here, the opening and closing liturgies have been included as separate pages at the end of the study material for ease of printing

[One voice leads the liturgy. The parts in bold are for everyone to say together. Don't be afraid to hold the opening silence for a minute or two.]

A candle is lit.

May the light and peace of Jesus Christ
be with you.

May the divine Presence bless you.

We say together:

**In silence we come to God.
We lay aside the burdens of the day,
the demands of others,
and our own preoccupations;
we ask forgiveness for our sins and omissions;
we long for God, and we listen:-**

We keep silence

Come to us, liberating Love,
forgive us and free us to hear your life-giving voice.

Send your Spirit to lead us into all truth,
for the sake of your wonderful name. **Amen.**

(We say together a version of the Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are
yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the
power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

3. What do we understand by mental health? (30 minutes)

Here is some information about mental health and mental illness. Read it silently or aloud and then discuss the questions that follow:

Mental health: Being mentally healthy doesn't just mean that you don't have a mental health problem. If you're in good mental health, you can:

Make the most of your potential,
Cope with life,
Play a full part in your family, workplace, community and among
friends.

Some people call mental health 'emotional health' or 'well-being' and it's just as important as good physical health. Mental health is everyone's business. We all have times when we feel down or stressed or frightened. Most of the time those feelings pass. But sometimes they develop into a more serious problem and that could happen to any one of us.

Mental illness: A *mental illness* is a condition that impacts on a person's thinking, feeling or mood and may affect and his or her ability to relate to others and function on a daily basis. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis.

About **1 in 4 people** will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year, with mixed anxiety and depression the most common mental disorder in Britain.

Women are more likely to have been treated for a mental health problem than men and about **ten percent of children** have a mental health problem at any one time.

Depression affects 1 in 5 **older** people.

Suicide rates show that British men are three times as likely to die by suicide than British women and self-harm statistics for the UK show **one of the highest rates in Europe**: 400 per 100,000 population.

Only **1 in 10** prisoners has no mental disorder.

What do mental health and mental illness mean to you?

How has your understanding of mental illness changed through your life?
How does the stigma of having mental illness show itself?

In your experience, how does the church handle mental illness?

How much would it matter if a bishop or church leader was known to have had periods of mental as opposed to physical ill-health?

4. The experience of mental illness (20 minutes)

This short extract from the Inclusive Church Resource give a flavour of how one person experiences mental health issues. Read this aloud and then consider the questions below.

Miriam Hodson was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder in 1996. She now works as a mental health consultant and as a play therapist. Here is a bit of her story:

"After several manic episodes, severe depressions and hospital admissions I was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder, or manic depression, as many call it...I was very fortunate to come across the recovery movement. The recovery movement works towards changing attitudes within the psychiatric system and wider society. They believe you can move beyond the label: that you can recover, or learn to live with, and cope with, symptoms - that you can move on and lead a fulfilling life.

I still need to go to the hospital sometimes. When I get manic, I can't stop talking, can't stay in one place and have strange delusions. One of the most extreme examples was when I believed I was the modern-day John the Baptist...I have also had some really beautiful experiences and visions, like seeing angels...a psychiatrist would probably call this a delusion or

hallucination, but to me it felt more like a metaphor and still feels very special and real. (About church) I slowly got to know the congregation and I generally found people friendly and non-judgemental....I do sometimes feel excluded. Some people don't understand and get annoyed when I have to get up and walk around in services...I have heard of churches where people have been asked to leave or even been barred from church for a while."

How do you respond to this story?

What questions does it raise for you?

How does your church handle mental illness?

What more could you do?

5. Theology and Mental Illness (30 minutes)

Look at this video put out by Mind, the Mental Health charity:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_y97VF5UJcc

Jean Vanier is a Canadian Roman Catholic priest whose life has been dedicated to developing communities in which people with severe mental disabilities and people with normal intellectual capacity have lived together and learnt from each other. These communities are called L'Arche - The Ark. In the Mental Health Resource book, he says:

"What unites those with mental illnesses and those with intellectual disabilities is that each of them needs to be welcomed, appreciated, loved, understood and listened to with respect. They need to belong."

Talk together for a few minutes about the video and that quotation.

Here is one of the most famous gospel passages about someone with mental illness (understood in the New Testament as demonic possession). Read it aloud or silently:

"Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me'— for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them

permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him." *Luke 8:26-39*

Talk about this passage together. At one level Jesus' greatest gift to the man is to relieve him of the things that torment him. But at another, the healing is not really complete until he is re-integrated into society again, and into his own society at that. So Jesus sends him home. As Jean Vanier said of people with mental illness, just as with those who have mental disabilities, "They need to belong".

Consider how your own experience of church aligns with this model. Can people with mental illness find a home in our churches?

How do we manage people who can make others feel insecure or uncomfortable?

How much is there opportunity for meeting people and listening to their stories, thus offering them a space for *shalom*, the peace that brings healing?

6. Silence and the Closing Liturgy (7 minutes)

Bring your conversation to a close and sit together in the peace of God's presence in silence.

We bring before God all we have heard,
Our thinking and speaking,
Those about whom we have talked,
The things that have challenged us,
And the ways in which we have heard the still small voice of the Divine:

(short pause for silent reflection)

Loving God, who knows us as we are,
and whose son understood people's fear and pain
before they spoke of them;

we pray for those living with mental illness.
Surround the frightened with your tenderness;
give strength to those in anguish;
hold the weak in your arms of love,
and give hope and patience to those who are recovering.
Make our churches a place where all may find a home.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

After this the candle is extinguished. Then the meeting may close with one or other of these prayers

**The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy
Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen.**

In our hearts and homes the love of
God,
**in our coming and going the
peace of God,**
in our life and believing the strength
of God,
**at our end and beginning the
welcome of God.**

Small Group Study Resources

Opening and Closing Liturgy: Mental Health



The Opening Liturgy

[One voice leads the liturgy. The parts in bold are for everyone to say together. Don't be afraid to hold the opening silence for a minute or two.]

A candle is lit.

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May the divine Presence bless you.

We say together:

In silence we come to God.

**We lay aside the burdens of the day,
the demands of others,
and our own preoccupations;
we ask forgiveness for our sins and omissions;
we long for God, and we listen:-**

We keep silence

Come to us, liberating Love,
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Send your Spirit to lead us into all truth,
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(We say together a version of the Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin**

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass**

**against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are
yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

**against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the
power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Closing Liturgy

Bring your conversation to a close and sit together in the peace of God's presence in silence.

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The things that have challenged us,
And the ways in which we have heard the still small voice of the Divine:

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