

Not Alone Worship Resources

There is a range of resources here for you to choose from. The stories, information and worship resources have been put together by a group of people involved in leading worship or connected in various ways with promoting mental health. Bible notes and prayers are by the Revd Michaela Youngson and the dramas by the Revd Andrew Brazier.

Call to Worship

Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; God will not fail you or forsake you. *Deut 31.6*

Prayer of Praise and Adoration

Let us offer our praise to God

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

Creator we adore you

All creation reflects your glory.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

You have made women, men, girls and boys in your image

You welcome those who are vulnerable

with open arms of compassionate acceptance:

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

Redeemer we adore you

All creation is reconciled in you.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

Where the weak and broken lie bruised and discarded

You challenge the complacent, revealing the truth behind our lies

and invite the wounded to your feast of life.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

Sustainer we adore you

All creation is inspired by you.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

You breathe life into places of deathly fear;

you increase our understanding of things hard to comprehend

and draw us into your dance of loving joy.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

God, three in one,

All creation sings of your great deeds.

We lift our voices in gratitude and praise

Amen

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Prayer of Confession

We have not always lived in ways that reflect God's love for all.
There are times when prejudice and ignorance have caused us to judge others
as less important, less capable, less whole than ourselves.

Gracious God release us and grant us mercy.

We have not always lived as people assured of our place in God's heart.
There are times when despair has been our refuge and we have turned from
God's promises.

Gracious God release us and grant us hope.

We have not always lived as disciples of Jesus.
There are times when the paths to wealth and power have been more attractive
than the longer roads of justice, peace and tolerance.

Gracious God release us and grant us courage.

We have not always lived as people of the Resurrection.
There are times when we have only seen the world as a place of threat and
brokenness, forgetting God's creative genius.

Gracious God release us and grant us wisdom.

In quietness we remember those thoughts, actions and words that have marred
your image in us, hurt others and damaged the world.

Silence

God has heard the confession of our hearts and minds.
In Christ we are set free.

Thanks be to God.

Amen

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Dramatic Communion Liturgy

Based on Stations of the Cross

Around the room are placed prayer stations (As many as possible considering the practicalities). Each station should include material showing the positive work done by mental health chaplaincies, counselling and support groups, churches role in presenting a strong image of people with mental health issues. The fact that 25% of us will suffer from mental health issues at some stage in our life needs to be clear, that these issues may not be visible, and that people with these issues are probably making a huge contribution to church life.

Placed in the centre is a communion table with the elements ready to use. Alongside is a large loaf of bread cut to present as large a flat white surface as possible. Images of Christ's face are then projected onto the bread - preferably a continuous stream of varied pictures showing Christ in different guises, ethnicities and moods. (Images can be found in 'The Christ Among Us' pack available from mph 01733 325002.)

Then around the table a huge banner reading: "Just because you don't see the world the way others do....."

The liturgy can be a fairly standard communion perhaps with some of the sketches on this web page included. Provide plenty of time and space for people to reflect at each of the prayer stations.

Prayer:

Dear Lord and Father of those who have never crossed the lines,
who are held in by fears, and who are bound by walls they cannot see.

Dear Lord and Mother of those who are living on the very edge,
those who find themselves drifting without boundaries.

Dear Lord who is brother to all of us that need and long for peace of mind,
peace of heart and the certainty that we are loved no matter what.

Dear Lord who is sister to all who walk with the emptiness
that comes with insecurity and low self esteem.

Send your Holy Spirit, and make us whole.
For we pray to you almighty God who is as fragile as we are
and who made us in your own image;
who understands and sees into our hearts even when we turn away.

Unfurl us like the petals of a rose and unhide that which we have hidden.
Heal our minds, heal our souls, and carry us into the Kingdom
made new in your love

Amen

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Prayer of Intercession

As we offer our prayers for the world and for ourselves we will share in times of silence, allowing us to reflect on the needs of others and on our own experiences. As we reflect, it may be that God will speak into that silence and help us to understand the world and our lives in new ways.

We remember creation, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit:
places of beauty and brilliance,
places of grandeur and spectacle,
places of extravagant diversity.
We pray, creating God,
for places damaged and degraded
for people scraping a living from land made fruitless by human greed.

Silence

Help us to live sparingly and to care for creation.
Gracious God: **Hear our prayer.**

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 when they need it.

Silence

Help us to be welcoming, helpful and more aware of those things that make for
mental well being for others and ourselves.
Gracious God: **Hear our prayer.**

We remember the Church, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit:
a community of beauty and brilliance
a community of love and compassion
a community of extravagant diversity.
We pray, inspiring God,
for denominations working out how to be one family, offering an effective witness
to your love in the world;
for churches with projects that offer help to people struggling with mental illness;
for ourselves and people in our own families and community who need to be
understood, accepted and loved.

Silence

Help us to be willing to change ourselves and inspired to change the world.
Gracious God: **Hear our prayer.**

In the name of Christ.
Amen

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Hymns and Songs

From Hymns & Psalms

Christ be my leader by night as by day
Christ from whom all blessings flow
Come, dearest Lord, descend and dwell
I know that my Redeemer lives
Immortal Love, forever full
Lord, I believe a rest remains
Lord, thy church on earth is seeking
O Christ the Healer, we have come
Son of God, if thy free grace (omit v 3?)
Your will for us and others, Lord

From the Wild Goose Worship Group (Iona Community)

A Touching Place (from Love From Below)
A Women's Care (from Heaven Shall Not Wait)
If you believe and I believe (from Sent by the Lord)
Just as a lost and thirsty deer (from Psalms of Protest and Praise)
Our Burden is Heavy (from Love and Anger)
Out of the Direst Depths (from Psalms of Protest and Praise)
Sent by the Lord am I (from Sent by the Lord)
Sing to God With Joy (from Psalms of Protest and Praise)
The Love of God Comes Close (from Love and Anger)
We Cannot Measure How You Heal (from Love from Below)

From Taize

Kyrie Eleison (various settings)
Stay with Me

From Songs of Fellowship

Be Still
Broken for me
Father I place into Your Hands
Fear not, for I am with you
I am a new creation
I'm not alone
Lighten our darkness
Peace to you
O Lord, You are my light
We break this bread
You are compassionate (Higher than the heavens)

Bible Texts and Notes 1

God's Healing Love

1 Samuel 16.14-23

Psalm 23

Luke 8.26-39

2 Corinthians 12.6-10

Linking the texts

The newly anointed David is able to offer service in the house of Saul. Despite his inexperience he has a wonderful gift as a musician and is able to sooth the troubled heart of the King. People living with mental illness and those who offer support sometimes use music therapeutically with great success.

The familiarity of Psalm 23 can be a comfort to those struggling to find places of comfort and safety in a stressful and complex world. Depression is often described as a place of darkness; this Psalm offers the reassurance of guidance through the darkness and a place of welcoming hospitality – the mark of a loving Christian community.

The Luke passage is very challenging. Many preachers make a connection between the 'demons' that possess the man in the story, and modern understandings of mental illness. However we might understand the man and his symptoms, the story makes clear the power that Jesus had to transform not only the individual but also the whole community. We are left reflecting why was there a need for the pigs to be destroyed? What caused the people of the surrounding country to be so afraid that they asked Jesus to leave? What would life hold for the man who had recovered and would his story open the eyes of his community to a new understanding of God's love?

We are not always healed or freed from the things that trouble us. The reading from 2 Corinthians helps us to understand that Paul, whose life was transformed by his encounter with the risen Christ, still carried torment. What was it that 'kept him from being elated'? Despite asking many times for release from this thing that troubled him Paul learnt to be content 'with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.'

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Bible Texts and Notes 2

God's Liberating Love

Isaiah 9.2-7

Psalms 119.17-48

Luke 4.16-30

Acts 16.16-24

Linking the texts

The Isaiah passage is often used during Advent when Christians look towards the arrival of Jesus Christ as the Light of the World. The people had faced oppression and the prophet offered reassurance of God's love and that God was to free them from the horrors of conflict, bringing them to a time of 'endless peace'.

The extract from Psalm 119 expresses in heartfelt language the experience of someone who 'lives as an alien' in the land and feels only scorn and contempt from other people. This is what life feels like for many people living with mental illness. The stigma of society can be harsh and intolerant of those who behave 'differently' to the accepted norms. There can be a sense of shame, not only in the experience of the person struggling with his or her own mental health, but also felt by their family. The Psalmist seeks God's steadfast love and finds joy in the teachings and commandments of God.

The theme of liberation continues in the Gospel reading, where Jesus set out his God-given mandate to liberate the oppressed. His message of a world transformed was not welcomed. When reading the passage we can hear the 'who does he think he is?' mutterings of the congregation as Jesus declares that God's love is not restricted to any particular group. The voices of those who call for liberation are often drowned out by the shouts of those interested in keeping things just the way they are. What messages of liberation do our church and our personal discipleship offer in a world where difference is not celebrated and where the powerless are silenced?

Paul liberated the slave girl in the Acts reading from a 'spirit of divination'. He 'freed' her from her gift of foresight and intuition because he had become 'very much annoyed' that she kept telling everyone who he and his companions were. Her owners were not at all happy that her gift had been removed because their opportunity for profit had gone. One wonders what became of the girl, had she lost her livelihood, or was she able to find a new 'more ordinary' life? Sometimes others can exploit the things that mark us out as gifted individuals. Things that we do not always like about ourselves, or others find irritating, might be gifts of God!

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Bible Texts and Notes 3

God's Protecting Love

1 Kings 19.4-17

Psalm 91

Matthew 6.25-33

Romans 8.18-39

Linking the texts

The prophet Elijah was very vulnerable and isolated, to the extent that he could see no future and had had enough. In despair, perhaps even contemplating ending his life, he fell asleep under a 'solitary broom tree'. The gentle ministry of an angel of God provided Elijah with sufficient hope and practical help to journey on. After much travelling Elijah was confronted by God's word and drawn out of his safe hiding place to encounter God. In contrast to the turmoil and chaos he had experienced, the lonely and desperate prophet met God in a sound of sheer silence. Many people face profound isolation and loneliness – how can the community of Christ show God's protecting love? Are we sometimes too noisy in church and in the way we live our lives to hear God's message and bear it to those who need protection?

Psalm 91 offers a vision of God as a refuge and fortress, under whose wings all can find protection. There is no longer need to fear the terror of the night or the destructive forces of daily living. God responds to those who call, is with them in trouble, able to rescue and honour them. Again, angels will bring God's comfort to those in fearful places. Who are the angels that bring God's protection and comfort to those of us experiencing mental illness? How can the church be a place of refuge and safety that honours all people?

Worry is a feature of many people's lives. The anxiety of modern living is hard enough to take when we are well. If we are struggling with depression or other forms of mental illness anxiety can become extreme and prevent us from getting through even the basic things of life such as eating, getting dressed, sleeping. Matthew writes that Jesus told people not to worry, God would look after those basic details, after all the flowers and birds are cared for. Can we take this seriously? How do we feel when told not to worry - does it help or does it sound like cheap comfort? What can Christians and churches do to reduce the amount of worry that people experience?

The passage from Romans helps us to put our lives and concerns in the perspective of God's love, which has no limit. God's protection is for everyone, no matter what – death, life, things of heaven, things of earth – nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. 'If God is for us, who is against us?' These are truly liberating words! Do we live as people who really believe this? How can we help others know that God loves them and that they cannot go beyond the limit of God's love?

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Stories

These are true stories illustrating how churches have helped people affected by their own or their loved one's mental illness. Names have been changed.

Are there ways that your church can respond? If you are involved in offering support, formal or informal, ask people to share their experiences (being sensitive for the need for confidentiality). If you have people in church who work in health care and community projects to do with mental health ask them to talk about what they do.

Offer prayers of thanksgiving for all that is done and intercession for those who need more help and support.

Jean's Story

Jean is a member at our church. She would disappear for weeks on end and we really worried about her. She did not answer her door and we assumed that she had gone away. Eventually we found out that Jean was suffering from agoraphobia and couldn't leave her home or cope with visitors. We kept praying for Jean and putting church newsletters and notices through her door. The times when she is well enough to be with us she tells us how much this matters. We are learning to give her space and try to be sensitive in the questions we ask.

Sally's Story

Sally was very happy when she found she was pregnant with her first baby. Things seemed to go really well but a few weeks after Olivia was born Sally didn't seem to be coping. Our Minister wondered if she was suffering with post natal depression and was able to spend time with Sally offering support and encouraged people at church to help baby-sit from time to time. We couldn't help deal with the medical cause of Sally's depression but we were able to help out whilst she had treatment and began to get better. The baby's baptism was a really special time and included thanksgiving for Sally's health.

Winston's Story

Winston has a son called Wes who is very unwell. He's been diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia. Winston didn't tell anyone at church for ages but finally felt able to tell his pastoral visitor. It turns out that there are a lot of families in our neighbourhood with children coping with this illness. So we've set up a club called 'Time Out'. There's a lot on offer in our community for those with mental health problems but little support for their families. So we open our church for a morning and an evening a week, serving coffee and providing space for people to share how things are for them.

Ideas for Reflection

Reflection on Silence

God who spoke to Elijah in sheer silence, speak to us now.
Help us to be quiet enough to hear the voiceless.
Help us to listen to the excluded, the stranger and the unexpected.
Open our ears and hearts to your word.

God who brought Elijah out of hiding,
call to us now.
Confront us with the task you have for us.
Challenge us with uncomfortable truths.
Turn our comfort into action.

God who spoke to Mary through an angel, speak to us now.
Help us to be bearers of your word.
Help us to face a hostile world with courage.
Open our lives to the possibility of new life within us.

God who brought Jairus' daughter out of death, call to us now.
Grant us new life transformed by your love.
Give us new opportunities to serve you.
Turn our dis-ease into healing love.

Take our noise and quieten us.
Take our silence and hear us.
Take our injured voices and heal us,
That we may listen to you, and work for you.
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

From 'Making the Colours Sing' by Michaela Youngson, MPH 2005

Death of a Patient

They told us
just before we
had our tea
that Judas
had died

suddenly

We did not ask
when or how or why
we just went quiet
and waited
because that's what
you do here

fear I suppose

Then someone heard
he'd self-ligated
(which means
he hung himself)

They say that it's a shame
And no-one is to blame
He didn't leave a note
A decent sort of bloke
And no-one can understand
Because he was so much better
And the medication was really working
And he was going to church
And doing well in therapy
And gaining insight

But my room was next to his
and I would hear him
in the night

Bob Whorton (used with permission)

Drama 1

Three characters, The Minister, the church secretary and a congregation member:
With one voice over for each. (Total needed 6)

Narrator/Voice over person 1

On this mental health awareness day we felt that it was important that people realised how seriously we were taking the subject.

Voice 2 Yes, in a world where *[during speech a very soberly dressed minister enters po-faced]* around 25%, yes one in four of us, will have mental health issues at some stage of our lives.....

Voice 1 That we could not be accused of *[Enter a soberly dressed woman (church secretary)]*trivialising this very complex subject.

Voice 2 So let us think about what we might need to reflect on *[Enter congregation member who is dressed as a clown]* as we identify issues around mental health awareness.

(The three characters now stand in a row - Each holding a thought bubble or looking like they are deep in thought)

Voice 1 *(Now speaking as the minister)*

I am the minister, I look down on her because I am completely sane. During my training a committee of psychiatrists passed me as being fit for ministry. I have a firm grasp on reality. I look down on her because she is a little batty!

Voice 2 I am the church secretary. I look up to him because he is my minister and very sensible, where I can be disorganised and scatty. I can be over emotional. I look down on him because he is clearly as nutty as one of my fruitcakes.

Voice 3 *(Congregation member in a clown suit)*
I know my place

Voice 1 On Thursday, my day off, I am so tired that I walk in the hills reflecting on the inadequacies of my stupid congregation. This is a mental health exercise that helps me cope with my working week. I look down on her because she thinks shopping is important.

Voice 2 I look up to him because he is deep and reflective, where as I spend my days off shopping. I am not sure that shopping is a good mental health exercise, but its fun - and at least I am not like him

Voice 3 On Tuesday I bungee jumped for age concern and two weeks ago I tried to eat a bicycle for cancer research. It didn't work but it was very funny. I think it annoyed the minister though. I want to base jump off the Empire State Building cos that would be mental man.

(Pause)

Voice 3 I grew up with ADHD and was diagnosed Bi-Polar at the age of 19. With proper treatment I live a normal life, whatever that is, and have taken two degrees. I feel like I have turned my life around. I don't look up or down to anyone. I just know I'm crazy

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Voice 2 I look up to him because he understood when I had a breakdown after my children left home. He helped me to reorganize all the church china because one of my symptoms was OCD. Now all the plates are in size height and colour order. I have successfully led a team who helped redesign our old church into a new modern facility - and don't think most people even notice that all the cups are regularly rotated so they wear out evenly, but it keeps me happy

Voice 1 I look at everyone from a distance. I feel isolated and alone. My job has eaten away my life and I see no hope. I am not sure I even believe in God anymore, or maybe he just isn't listening at the moment.....

(The characters break the line and speak as themselves)

Minister Glad you could both make it. Are you both well?

Woman As well as can be expected Reverend. I am looking forward to my daughter visiting on Wednesday. Are you well?

Minister Yes fine, fine... Now Bob about the fund raising committee

Clown Ooh now, I was wondering about a 24 hour climb-a-thon and I thought the Women's Fellowship could...

Mental health is not a negative, being unaware of it is.

Not Alone

Drama 2

We imagine the church is actually the interior of a large hospital. The congregation are effectively cast as a new member of staff being shown around the mental health wing.

The script is in sections and each section should be delivered from a different area of the church. As if it were different parts of the hospital. The central character is dressed casually.

Section one - greeting in the lobby

Do come through. I am so glad you could make it (make a gesture to the congregation as if you were guiding them into the building.) I am not really sure how to begin to tell you about this wing. Being a Mental Health wing tends to produce a number of strange responses in people, and you can imagine the unhelpful clichés that get bandied about. I suppose the easy thing is to say that this is a place where I feel safe. It is like an island that stands proud of a sea of darkness that sometimes overwhelms me. It seems here that one's fears and demons cannot reach you in the same way. I come here about twice a week usually for a couple of hours. Let me show you round....

Section 2 - (preferably from a balcony or raised area if available. It doesn't matter if there is a pause while the journey is made, this will just add to the proportions of the hospital.)

This here is the multi-faith chapel. It's really peaceful. It has that atmosphere that makes you want to speak in hushed tones even though you don't quite know why. The view from here is amazing too. You can see through the tower blocks to the industrial areas beyond. Places I find quite intimidating close up, but from here... well.... On the rare occasions that I am here at night the lights turn the unyielding rectangles of the businesses into a glitzy paradise.

Section 3 - Down the corridors

Down here is the main part of the wing, you know wards, treatment rooms, and so on. Everything has been decorated to make the place feel tranquil. Every other wall has artwork, some more restful than others. A lot of the work is done here in the hospital. The art therapy sessions tend to produce far more than the intended hour or so of reflective contemplation. Mind you not everything is to everyone's taste. I got roped in to something to do with cross-stitch. Well frankly that was enough to send anyone over the edge.

Section 4 - Coffee Shop, by now the actor should have returned to the front where two chairs and a little table will be waiting.

This wing is relatively small by comparison to the other parts of the hospital. So we share a cafe with the main body. For some though this holds lots of dangers that mean they'd never cross the line into the coffee shop. For me the dangers lie more in relationships than geography. *[Sits and gestures to congregation to join him/her]* Come, take a seat - coffee? I find this the kindest place in the world. You can come here with any state of mind or condition and not be judged. You can be seeing things, be riddled with unfounded fears, or in a complete state of breakdown and be totally accepted. Yep, I'd say without hesitation that this is the sort of place you can come and feel truly safe - well as safe as it is possible for you to feel.

Sorry I forgot to introduce myself, I'm.....

Question to the congregation... Who is she/he? (Split down into groups to decide who the character is... patient, administrator, the chaplain.....)