

**FAITH AND HOPE MINISTRIES  
NEWSLETTER  
FOR CLASSIS QUINTE**

VOLUME 5, WINTER 2009

~ helping our communities  
of faith serve those with  
mental illness ~



**We have a name change!! The Mental Health Initiative has changed its name to Faith and Hope Ministries!!** We hope you like the name. Faith and Hope is exactly what we feel we are all about in helping those who suffer from mental illness and those who are their caregivers. We want our faith to intersect with the already good resources out in the community and we know that it is Jesus who gives us hope to carry on through these tough times in our lives.

We have been very busy collecting and organizing new resources that we would like to share with your church communities. We have **four new DVD's**: Creating Caring Congregations, Mental Illness and Families of Faith: How Congregations can Respond, Breaking the Silence: Postpartum Depression and Families of Faith, and Mental Health Mission Moments. We also now have a Canadian resource called **"Creating Living Room" which is a faith-based mood disorder support group.** The author of this support group has Bi-polar herself and has also written a book "A Firm Place to Stand." Another resource that we have from Mental Health Ministries in the States, is a **small book and bible study called, "In the Shadow of God's Wings: Grace in the Midst of Depression."** A pastor who developed depression found the Mental Health Ministries as she found the church had some growing to do in order to reach out to folks who experienced depression or other forms of mental illness. From Pathways to Promise we have a couple binders entitled, **"Pathways to Understanding: A Manual on Ministry and Mental Illness.** We also have numerous pamphlets and brochures from FaithNetNami (Nami stands for National Association for Mental Illness) about the various mental illnesses, their symptoms and what we can do about them. Three other resources that are in small booklet or brochure form are: **"Pastoral Care of Persons with Depression: A Guide for Clergy"** and **"Parents and Teachers as Allies: Recognizing Early-onset Mental illness in Children and Adolescents,"** and then **"Building Bridges: Mental Health Consumers and Members of Faith-Based and Community Organization in Dialogue."**

These are all great resources, however, if they are not being used by you and/or your churches they simply sit on our shelves. We want to encourage you to ask for them from us. Some we can let you borrow and others may come with a small fee.

In January we met with the Christian Leader's group of Kingston and the Kingston Ministerial. Both of these groups were very receptive to the discussion about Christians experiencing mental illnesses. It was very clear that among clergy this was also a difficult obstacle at times. Dr. Grant Mullen who has a website [www.drgrantmullen.com](http://www.drgrantmullen.com) is a Christian doctor who now does mainly talks regarding this topic. We are considering him to be our key note speaker for the Faith and Hope

Conference in 2010. If any of you have other suggestions please let us know. We are also in contact with Hebron church who is considering setting up support groups.

In the next few weeks we will be contacting all of our CRC churches asking if we could make a presentation to the council, the pastor, the pastoral caregivers of the church or the congregation. We have new Faith and Hope brochures that will also be distributed.

We would also like to connect with the ministerial groups in the areas of our churches so that other Christian faith communities may respond to the needs of those with mental illness and their families in a way that is helpful.

We are pleased to have another challenging year ahead of us. Please contact us if questions arise or if you would like us to speak to any of your groups at church: women's groups, youth group or men's groups. Together we can make our churches safer communities for those who suffer from mental illnesses so that they can become accepted, active members of our communities.

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**Calling on interested people of the Classis Quinte Churches to join the Faith and Hope Ministry Board: please call one of the resource people. If you have any interest in mental health issues and would like to help make this a viable ministry please come forward.**

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**~ VISION STATEMENT ~**

We believe that God has equipped the Church with a unique potential to create relationships with those who have mental illness and their families so that they can be a vital part of the Christian community in ways that are meaningful.

**~THE GOAL OF THIS MINISTRY ~**

That each congregation can be an inviting, informed place for people who have a mental illness to flourish in their spiritual, emotional, mental and relational development.

**How Does Depression Affect Spiritual Activities?  
By Dr. Grant Mullen (paraphrased)**

There are four fundamental things that Christians do to maintain their walk with God.

**PRAYER:** Prayer requires concentration. Depression makes it hard to concentrate and the low mood makes one feel cut off from God. Prayer becomes very difficult for the depressed person.

**BIBLE READING:** This too, requires concentration that a depressed person just doesn't have. As a result Bible reading is abandoned since it's too difficult.

WORSHIP: Worship requires concentration and a sense of hope or celebration. Depressed people can't concentrate and they have nothing to celebrate. They feel dead inside. So worship stops too.

WE ATTEND CHURCH: This involves seeing and talking to people. The most awkward words that a depressed person might hear in the church lobby might be, "Hi, how are you?" They can't be honest and say, "Quite honestly I want to die, how are you?" Small talk is very difficult and often times people with depression stop coming since its too difficult.

Depressed Christians feel like hypocrites for not being able to pray, worship or read the Bible. Then well meaning friends may suggest a greater commitment to prayer and bible study as a treatment for the condition. Or pastoral counselling or self help books might be suggested. But these methods can only be effective if the person has total thought control which will allow them to change their thinking or even process their emotions.

The good news however, is that when depression is treated, spiritual life will return to normal.....

Stay tuned to more excerpts from Dr. Grant Mullen's discussion on "Why is depression more painful for a Christian?" in the next newsletter.

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## LIFE BEHIND THE GLASS WALL

A mother's journey through despair to hope,  
healing & ministry

By Constance Hale

In my wildest dreams I never imagined I would tell this story. I am a parent of three adult boys, the wife of a loving husband, and a school teacher of 32 years. This is a story of survival, the power of hope in the midst of sorrow, and of life beyond the diagnosis of schizophrenia.

At 17, my oldest son Christopher came home from high school making bizarre comments and exhibiting strange behaviour. I dismissed it as typical teenage behaviour. But then his thoughts became more confused. He began expressing the delusions that plagued his mind. One day he lost complete control and began smashing windows and doors. Christopher ended up in the hospital and we received the heartbreaking news that our firstborn son suffered from schizophrenia. The long, dark journey began.

For nine years now, Christopher has lived behind a glass wall. I call it a glass wall because with mental illness you can see and even get very close to the person, but you cannot touch them. I put my hand on the glass wall and he puts his up to touch mine, but I cannot feel the warmth of this hand. He is in a world that I cannot enter, or even understand. Schizophrenia is not about having a split personality, as many may think. It's a disease where one splits or separates oneself from the real world.

In our attempts to save our son, we faced two obstacles. The first was the law. During one of Christopher's violent episodes, we discovered that a person 18 or older cannot be hospitalized against their wishes unless arrested for a crime and evaluated. To our horror, we had to have our son arrested in order to remove him from our home and get some help for him.

The second obstacle, unexpectedly, was the church. If you are diabetic and your pancreas malfunctions, you are given insulin. The church does not hesitate to pray for you without judgment. If you have a heart condition and you need medication and rest, the church will send meals to your house for weeks until you are better. If your illness

is in your brain, however, many well-meaning Christians think you have a demon. Can you imagine the horror a God-fearing mother feels when she is told her son is possessed?

Labelling mental illness as a spiritual issue rather than a physical one only makes the chasm between the church and affected families wider than ever. Our friends and church members understandably didn't know how to approach us or what to say. But as the body of Christ, we must learn how to be more compassionate. I felt helpless and we wrestled with a sorrow that words could not express.

My precious son was mentally ill. I felt ashamed and struggled with questions. "Was this disease caused by my poor parenting?" "If I had been more spiritual, read my Bible and prayed more, could I have prevented this terrible tragedy?" These thoughts from the enemy drove me into an even deeper hopelessness. While other parents told me how their children were going to university and Bible college, my son was in a psychiatric ward for the mentally ill. Shame always renders us powerless. It makes us feel unworthy. It prevents us from connecting with others. That is precisely the plan of Satan – to isolate and then watch as guilt and shame destroy the soul.

One day the sense of hopelessness overcame me and I sat on my bed and wept from the depths of my soul. I thought my life was over. That was the day God gave me the grace to truly surrender my son to Him – the day I chose hope over despair. I surrendered. I took what was precious to me and released it from my control. Then I embraced the love of Jesus and rested in the outcome. That was the hardest part.

Christopher is now 26 years old. Living at home on medication, and functioning to the best of his ability. I still pray for God to heal him. In the meantime, God has healed and forever changed me. I see the world differently. I realize that life is a short, unpredictable journey. We need to tell our stories and use our gifts and influence to help others.

That day, God gave me Jeremiah 29:11 to be the foundation for my life. "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me" (Jeremiah 29:11-13, NLT).

God is in control. He has a plan for me – and for Christopher. Hope is not about having a perfect family, having all our dreams, fulfilled, never being disappointed, or always being healthy. It is also not about having children who meet the world's standard of success. Hope arrives and remains secure when we get to know the Source of all hope.

The psalmist David says it best: "Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me" (Psalm 62:5-7, NLT).

**Blessings and much encouragement,  
From your Faith and Hope Ministry Resource Team:**

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