



One Head, Two “Cures”

Finding mental health within
mental illness



What is mental health?

- The bible has no word for health as we know it today.
- Health as *shalom*
- Health within illness?



The understanding of mental health within psychiatry may well be quite different from the understanding that the church brings



What are diagnoses?

- What is a diagnosis?
- What do diagnoses do?
- What and who are diagnoses for?
- The church needs to begin its journey in a different place



What are mental illnesses?

- A deeply meaningful set of human experiences that are open to a multitude of different interpretations.
- Places where people encounter the world in ways which are sometimes distressing but always deeply spiritual.
- Diagnostic categories have biological, social *and* spiritual implications.



Mental illness can lead to profound dissonance and disorientation

- The old stories don't fit
- The old maps don't lead to the same places
- The old methods of coping can't cope!
- Dissonance leads to spiritual questions: *Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going to? Why?*
- Spiritual questions lead to the telling of new stories



Christianity and Psychiatry: Putting diagnoses in their proper place

- Psychiatry and professional mental health care practices have an important role.
- Health occurs within creation: Psychiatry as part of God's good provision...But, only if it is faithful to its calling/vocation.
- People may well need therapy. However, *mental illnesses don't just belong to individuals; they belong to communities.*



Hospitality and friendship

- The church as a place of hospitality and welcome.
- Friendship is the embodiment of shalom
- What is required is creative, hospitable conversation between churches, people with mental illness and the mental health professions.



Towards Shalom: Churches as Culture Brokers

The culture broker accepts and respects the knowledge and skills of the professional and realises that they can be helpful for the person. The broker should be a person of good standing in their community, who can advocate this treatment, and this treatment, to the patient, while helping the professional to present psychiatric knowledge in a culturally acceptable manner.



Bearing Witness to Shalom

Friendship as brokerage



Bearing Witness to Shalom

Genuine hospitality, friendship and welcome can only occur when the church begins its journey from the right place.