

Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Church

The United Reformed Church has a clear equalities policy statement which can be found [here](#). It seeks to ensure that our communities are accessible and inclusive, reflecting that not only did Jesus have a ministry to all, but we, as disciples, are commissioned to continue that ministry. It follows that our churches should be actively engaged in that work, seeking and contributing to God's mission in their local situation.

A policy statement alone is not enough to ensure that people experience the church community as a place where they feel safe and included, able to participate and able to find friendship and hope. A church community should strive to learn how to be that place of welcome and sanctuary for all. A church community should be a place where everybody can see themselves as made in the image of God, with their identity defined by the belief that God creates, redeems and sustains them.

The young people within the URC have made significant efforts to address this. This includes a ['Get Talking' conversation starter](#) and a [list of resources](#).

Around one in four of us will experience mental ill health at some point in our lives and some people live a significant part of their lives with mental ill health. The local church community should be active in working towards reducing stigma.

Developing good practice in your church

Basically, good practice ensures that everyone is treated in the same way: so everything we do – all our practices and procedures – should be affirming and not marginalising.

Basic good practices

- People should feel able to come to church when able – it's ok to arrive after everybody else and a welcome (however simple) should be offered,
- Some people find change difficult – make sure you always explain what you are doing. Don't assume everybody knows what happens next!
- Sometimes it helps to know what the boundaries/expectations are – always be clear when making arrangements, for example: 'would you like to meet me at 10am in the café for 30 minutes for coffee next Wednesday?' is a far better question than: 'Shall we get together for coffee on Wednesday?'
- The best person to check something out with is the person themselves.

Get involved

As well as local events there are a series of national and international awareness events – some of which you could participate in;

- Dementia Awareness Week (May)
- Mental Health Awareness Week (May)
- World Suicide Prevention Day (10 September)
- World Alzheimer's Awareness Day (21 September) (Part of World Alzheimer's Awareness Month)
- World Mental Health Day (10 October)

Get informed (some websites to start your search)

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

<https://www.rethink.org/>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.dementiauk.org/>

<http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/>

<http://www.alzscot.org/>

<https://www.seemescotland.org/>

<http://www.chooselife.net/>

<http://www.hafal.org/>

<http://www.mentalhealthwales.net/>

Resources specifically for churches

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/churches/>

http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/life_pc_mental_health_0707.pdf/

<http://www.mentalhealthaccesspack.org>

Worship resources

http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/life_pc_mental_health_Worship_Resources080708.pdf

The Revd Helen Mee, on behalf of the URC Equalities Committee

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