

# Mental Health Chaplaincy

by Jon Nelson, Mental Health Chaplain

Faith and mental illness have been an intricate part of my life. My whole life, my mother has suffered from bouts of severe depression. However, it was her faith in a loving God that made the greatest impression upon me.

My mother is an incredibly faithful woman. Even in the darkest periods of her depression, I never witnessed her giving up on God's grace. Her struggles were not easy. Undiagnosed for years, she turned much of her pain and criticism inwardly. There were times she was ready to give up on life, however her faith in God was firm and nothing could dent her knowledge that God was with her.

One of my favorite verses is Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us." My mother was one of my great witnesses and her faithfulness in the midst of suffering has been a source of strength for my own faith. It was her faith that first led me to Christ. And later, when I struggled through an episode of depression and anxiety, I was able to draw upon her faithful endurance to help me past the isolation I felt. Because of her faith, I knew that God's faithfulness was stronger than my despondent feelings.

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It was experiences like these that led me to mental

health chaplaincy. Like a chaplain at a hospital, a mental health chaplain meets with the ill and their families, offers prayers and provides pastoral care through difficult times. A mental health chaplain often works alongside other professional resources such as counselors, psychologists, and doctors helping individuals through the emotional and spiritual upheavals of mental illness.

If you suffer or have a loved one suffering from mental illness, please know that you are not alone. Our God is faithful and has surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses who have walked this path before us. If you have questions about mental illness, want

to share your story, or need some prayer, please feel free to contact me.

I am thankful to God and FPCB for this opportunity to serve as a parish associate and mental health chaplain. For the last three years, my family and I have been nurtured by the worship and faithfulness of this congregation. The outreach and care this congregation gives to those in the midst of suffering serves as a beacon of Jesus' love on the Eastside. It is a privilege to be a part of that outreach.

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