

Models
of
Ministry



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PRESBYTERIAN SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS NETWORK

Models

of

Ministry



C O N T E N T S

Introduction

The Mental Health Ministry of the North
Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo, MI

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Chicago, IL

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Alexandria, VA

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Denver, CO

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Nashville, TN

I N T R O D U C T I O N

By: Brenda Gales for Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN)



John Lewis and Brenda Gales (Chair of 2001-2003 PSMIN Leadership Team) share the first award plaque with Flo Kraft.

Over the past six years the Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN) has selected five congregations which we felt deserve recognition for their ministry **WITH** individuals and families affected by serious mental illness. The annual Florence Iversen Kraft Award was presented during the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association's Awards Reception held during General Assembly. These congregations are by no means the only congregations that have Models of Ministry, but they were nominated by individuals who felt their stories were unique and deserving of recognition. Only one congregation is chosen to receive the PSMIN Florence Iversen Kraft Award at each General Assembly. It is our goal to publish in the future all of the Models of Ministry that have been submitted. This publication is dedicated to the 2000-2004 PSMIN Award winners. We hope that as a result of sharing their stories, other congregations will explore and develop Ministry

with individuals affected by Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and include them in the life of their congregation.

The Florence Iversen Kraft award is named for one of the founding members of the PSMIN network. Flo, as we fondly call her, continues to be an active member of the network and a dedicated advocate for individuals and families affected by SMI.

The PSMIN network believes that the Church is called to be in ministry **WITH** and not just **FOR** individuals and families affected by Serious Mental Illness.

We are including in this edition:

- congregational models as they were written and submitted for nomination
- updates for each congregation
- a bio of Flo Kraft
- the criteria for nominating congregations for future award consideration



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PRESBYTERIAN SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS NETWORK

The Mental Health Ministry of the North Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo



Brenda Gales presents the first PSMIN congregational award to Rev. Linda MacDonald during Sunday morning worship, November 5, 2000, at North Presbyterian.

The First Mental Health Mission Group came into existence at North Church in 1977. The efforts and prayers of this mission group eventually led to the formation of a **“Ministry with the Community”** as a mission of North Church. The Ministry was the first soup kitchen in Kalamazoo and also served as a drop-in and referral center. It served a hot meal to 100 people a day at North Church until the size of the group outgrew us and had to move out on its own.

The first Mental Health Consumers to become members of North were Edith Smith and Daisy Layton in 1970. Because of what North Church came to mean to them, Edith and Daisy invited their friends, who then invited their friends, to come to worship and join in the programs and activities and be elected to church boards. A number of mental health consumers also became members of North Church in the 1970's through their involvement in **“Ministry with the Community”** and through the Bible Study that the Rev. Robert Rasmussen led at Rickman House.

The Rev. Fred Cunningham became pastor of North Church in 1988. In 1989 when she was no longer able to afford to go to the Delano Clinic support group, Bettye Snelson asked if it would be possible for North Church to sponsor a support group for mental health consumers. She was encouraged to invite some of the other members of the church who were involved with the mental health system to see if they would be interested. They decided that they would be interested in a weekly activity. Their desire was presented to the session. The session discussed the advisability of having a separate group for people with a mental illness. Questions were raised about

the wisdom of singling out people in this way. Approval was given to give it a try, with the expenses to be covered by fees which the pastor received for leading workshops and retreats. Four to eight people began to meet weekly. Bettye made the calls each week to see who wanted to attend that week's activity. For a year or so, the size of the group did not go over eight to ten people. Various members of the congregation and the pastor provided transportation by car.

Eventually, word about the Togetherness Group began to get around. Participants began to invite their friends. Case Managers and other professionals in the county mental health system began to hear from their clients what the group meant to them and they began to refer other clients to the group. To help with the increased expenses, the Self-Development of People Committee of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan provided funds for the Togetherness Group for three years. The Health Ministries of the Presbyterian Church (USA) provided \$1,000 for the group. The First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo contributed \$1,000. Other nearby Presbyterian Churches and friends of North Church also contributed funds. Since 1994 the Togetherness Group received grants from the John E. Fetzer Foundation. The Kalamazoo Deacons Conference, the First Presbyterian Church and Pathways, a clubhouse for people with mental illness and developmental disabilities make their vans available for the group's use. The Kalamazoo County Human

Services Department makes two of their vans available for Togetherness Group activities because they feel that it provides a valuable "psycho-social rehab program" for clients.

The Togetherness Group has led to an increase in self-esteem in the participants. It provides opportunities for socialization. And after seven years it led to a desire on the part of the members to reach out in concern for others beyond the group. Funds have been sufficient that we have yet to have to tell anyone that they cannot participate in the group. Members of other Kalamazoo churches now take turns driving for the events along with the pastor and members of North Church. The annual budget of the Togetherness Group is now about \$6,000.

Almost from the beginning, people who attended the Togetherness Group activities who were not a part of another church began to worship at North Church and become members. They came because their friends were there and they were glad to have a church where they were welcome and accepted as they were. The majority of our new members the past few years have become members through the Togetherness Group. People with mental illness are members of the choir, the Deacons, and the Session.

With the increasing percentage of people with mental illness in the congregation, there began to be some discomfort on the part of some of the other members. Worship, fellowship, and meetings were different. While North Church has always been an inclusive church, the inclusiveness was being tested. There began to be a decrease in the activity of some of the non-mentally ill members. For two years we worked hard to come to terms with what was happening. The pastor invited small groups of non-mentally ill members to his home for dessert and conversation. Monthly Shepherd Group dinners hosted by session members were held with a mixture of mentally ill and non-mentally ill members present. At the end of those two years there came to be a new acceptance, appreciation, and a sense of humor about who God was calling us to be and what God was calling us to do.

Our ministry is no longer just to people in our community. The pastor, along with members of the church, are now being invited to speak at workshops and seminars about how a church can reach out to and welcome people who have a mental illness. At these workshops and seminars we talk not just about what we have been able to do. We also talk about how this has not always been an easy ministry for us;

that the lack of understanding, fear, and discomfort that is found in society as a whole are also issues that we have to deal with in our own lives and the life of our church. The opportunities that some of the people have had to share their experience has increased their sense of self-worth but has also increased the self-worth of other members of the church and the Togetherness Group, who know that their friends are being called upon to offer leadership in this way. North Church receives \$19,000 from the Presbytery and that support is assured. In 1997 it received \$13,000 from other churches and friends of North Church. The remainder of its \$56,600 budget is contributed by its members. In 1999 we anticipate needing \$12,000 from individual and church friends of North Church.

2006 U P D A T E

North Presbyterian continues to be a welcoming congregation to individuals and families affected by Serious Mental Illness.

Rev. Linda MacDonald, Pastor, and Lenora (member of the congregation) participated in a panel discussion on "Models of Ministry" before the PC(USA) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Task Force on Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness held in Chicago on November 6, 2005.

Contact

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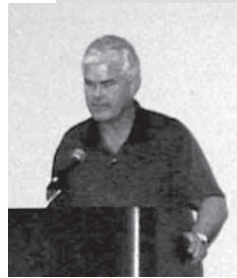


Edgewater Presbyterian Church

The Edgewater Presbyterian Church has a history of being an open, affirming, and welcoming congregation for all who want to worship, lead special ministries, and serve the community. From the mid nineteen-sixties on, the state of Illinois emptied its large "mental institutions" and dispersed the residents into community based half-way houses owned by individuals who received governmental subsidies. Edgewater received a large number of these new residential homes for persons receiving drug therapy for serious mental illness.

Those early days were indeed difficult as supervision in community housing was inexperienced and residents spent their days on the streets and became objects of the prolific street crime in the area. They were subjected to sexual and physical assault, robbery, bigotry, and harassment. No one could protect them. The police did not want to take them to the Cook County jail, but they could not be left on the streets. Bryn Mawr Care, their residence, could not legally confine the residents to the premises, and the community was both resentful and fearful of their presence. Those newly released persons living in single occupancy residences received less care and supervision and were at even greater risk.

The Church tried to welcome these new residents to worship and social events but the tensions and disruptions created great difficulties. When the church extended a call to me to be pastor in 1994, I came with no specialized training or exposure in ministry to persons with severe mental illness. In fact, I had no idea that this challenge and opportunity lay before us. Except for several pastoral counseling episodes with mental illness and suicide, I was a neophyte. The customary response to serious mental illness in other churches that I had served



Rev. Gordon Neil Butcher at the 213th General Assembly (2001) after the presentation of the second Florence Iversen Kraft Award sharing Edgewater's model of ministry.

was to cover it up, call the police, or escort the person off the church property. Those congregations were too afraid and too trapped by a lack of wisdom to do otherwise.

Nonetheless, in 1994 The Edgewater Presbyterian Church made a heroic effort to be inclusive, even though doing so invited disruptive behavior. Our session prayerfully determined that exclusion was a fundamental denial of Christ's call to open our arms to all, even at the cost of some apparent and indeed very real, risk.

In 1997 the intentional ministry with the seriously mentally ill began to develop. For 2 years we enjoyed the services of Reverend Dr. Lucille Faith Sider who worked with us on a part-time basis to help the pastor and the church start this ministry, named Edgewater Lighthouse. Dr. Sider returned to full-time private practice and the ministry, now rooted in the life of the church, continued to grow.

Persons who suffer serious mental illness have such profound and unique needs that a congregation, no matter how well intended, simply cannot provide the needed support and training, anymore than we can diagnose and recommend drug therapy. Most of the Samaritans (as participants in this ministry are called) suffer from severe forms of schizophrenia or depression and must maintain appropriate levels of drug therapy. Oversight of their psychiatric treatment is the responsibility of Cindy Ellis, Clinical Director at Bryn Mawr Care. For those persons living in subsidized housing, we find responsive, supportive psychiatric care. Those persons living individually and wanting to gain social and vocational skills are referred to Thresholds, which offers a variety of rehabilitation programs.

However, neither Bryn Mawr Care nor Thresholds provides a loving, safe mainstream community of friends where persons with serious mental illness are seen as God's children. Nor is either of those organizations equipped to look into or after spiritual needs. Through the work of the Edgewater Lighthouse, our congregation has learned and continues to learn, how to do both. The growth in the Church's ability to understand and support persons with serious mental illness is directly related to dramatic decreases in erratic and disruptive behavior. We accomplish that decrease by providing structure and discipline as well as acceptance and care. The limits of unacceptable behavior are clearly defined and patiently reinforced.

A warm welcome to Sunday worship and the coffee hour following is extended and received. Twenty to twenty-five people attend every session. A few of the Samaritans serve as ushers, and take small roles in leading worship and help with clean-up. The Samaritans attend all major church social functions, including dinners and the annual picnic. They also attend worship services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Christmas Eve.

Each Sunday, we provide a prayer service at one o'clock following worship. Ten to twelve persons attend. There is a need to "process" the Sunday experience and to "work out" any part of it that may have been disturbing or exciting. This 1:00 p.m. service is not group therapy in the tightly clinical sense, it is prayer therapy time. We recite the parts of the prayers, text, or sermon that need to be processed.

On Wednesday nights, the Samaritans come at 7:00 p.m. for refreshments, a short Bible study, and Eucharistic service. Twenty to twenty-five persons are generally in attendance. Some fear the Church, and this less liturgical service of communion, served by the intinction method, is powerfully and well received. They have developed the ability to focus on and express coherent prayers during this service. The prayers that follow are so plaintive, so joyful, so simple, and yet so profound that worship leaders and participants are often moved to tears. We do encourage cross-talk in prayer so that if others are moved to be supportive, such urges are not suppressed. We have now extended this ministry of Bible study, prayer, and spiritual care into Bryn Mawr Care twice a month, which has been received with great enthusiasm. We also hold large social gatherings three times a year and seventy-five to eighty persons attend. Sixty different persons are

regularly involved in all of our ministries.

We also provide pastoral friendship during the week on an individual basis, however, such care must be given fully recognizing how easy it is to do great harm with the best of intentions. We are not psychiatrists; we are a church family, and these, our neighbors, have a rightful place in this house. Six persons from this ministry have attended new members classes and have been received into full membership of the Church.

We are a small, but growing city church. Though our funds and personnel are limited, we have discovered by God's grace and through the love of Jesus Christ that we can offer a healing balm to the mental anguish caused by fear, shame, rejection, rage, and distortion. We have found that love and grace in partnership with skilled rehabilitation and a clinical director can make possible a real measure of health, healing, dignity, and peace. **We believe that any church can do what we are doing.** Indeed, congregations willing to be led and empowered by Christ's love and wisdom can discover and extend the assets needed to offer a Church home to persons in their church and community suffering from serious mental illness. It is our hope to carry this message to the Church. We have helped organize a day-long workshop in April for churches considering this ministry in the Chicago area. We are also talking with church leaders in San Francisco who have shown interest. We will gladly share our work wherever and whenever we are asked.

2006 Update:

The pastor of Edgewater Presbyterian, Rev. Gordon Neil Butcher, accepted the Flo Kraft award during the PHEWA G.A. event. The current pastor of Edgewater is Rev. Barbara Houck Cathey and the ministry of Edgewater continues.

Rev. Butcher now serves First Presbyterian in Lake Forest, IL. Rev. Cathey participated in a panel discussion before the PC(USA) Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Task Force on Comprehensive Serious Mental Illness held in Chicago on November 6, 2005.

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Mount Vernon Presbyterian

Agape Reservoir: A Ministry of Wholeness with Individuals Affected by Emotional or Mental Disorders

God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church (MVPC) session responded, "Here I am; send me!" And the session initiated a task force to explore the feasibility of beginning a ministry of wholeness with individuals affected by emotional or mental disorders.

God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And members of MVPC responded, "Here I am; send me!" And a ministry of wholeness with individuals who are affected by emotional or mental disorders was born.

God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And members of MVPC responded, "Here I am; send me!" I can help prepare food, provide transportation, share in a meal, teach a craft, or lead a discussion. I can be an extra pair of hands. I can listen. I can share in table conversation."

God said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And members of MVPC continue to respond, "Here I am; send me!" And as a result, a ministry that began November 1999 with only eight individuals now averages 50+ people per week.

As love is received and love is dispersed from the Agape Reservoir, lives are transformed and the healings of the Gospel prevail today, just as they did some 2000 years ago.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common, they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

— Acts 2:42-46

Koinonia is the Greek New Testament word that describes the type of fellowship experienced within the early Christian church. For the early Christians fellowship meant to share mutual love and concern for one another, to nurture the community, and to care for everyone. *Koinonia* is the type of fellowship that best describes the experiences of mutual love and compassion experienced within Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church's special ministry - Agape Reservoir: A Ministry of Wholeness with Individuals Affected by Emotional or Mental Disorders.

Agape Reservoir, a ministry of the Outreach Council, is a ministry in which people are not so much asked to volunteer their time, but are invited to share their God-given gifts and abilities in acts of mutual love and compassion. Presently, this ministry averages 50+ people per week. At least one-fourth of the members of this congregation serves and participates in various aspects of this ministry. Thanks be to God, Agape Reservoir is a growing and thriving ministry.

A Vision Becomes a Reality

Nearly three years ago an elder, whose daughter has a mental illness, encouraged the session to respond to the needs of people who experience emotional or mental disorders and are striving to recover. This elder's vision was to find a way to provide opportunities for consumers, those who are diagnosed with an emotional or mental illness, to experience the fullness of life. A task force of consumers and members from the congregation was formed and soon this group envisioned a new ministry, *Agape Reservoir: A Ministry of Wholeness with Individuals Affected by Emotional or Mental Disorders*.

During the planning stages of this ministry, the task force recognized the brutal reality of social stigma imputed on those who are diagnosed with an emotional or mental disorder. The task force further recognized the myriad of ways this social stigma also heightens the intensity of challenges faced by family members, friends, and mental health professionals

who live and work with individuals who are diagnosed with emotional or mental disorders. Once the significance of the stigma was recognized, a conscious decision was made by the task force to ensure this ministry would be an inclusive program where consumers and members of the congregation would blend into oneness. After much discussion, the phrase “affected by” was included in the name of the ministry; thereby, inviting anyone who experiences or knows someone affected by such disorders and illnesses to come share in a ministry of fellowship, a ministry of mutual love and concern for one another.

This special ministry met for the first time in November 1999. That first evening, there were eight participants. Today, this ministry has been the formation of three subgroups: Stream of Hope - a support group for parents, spouses, and others who are care providers who are struggling to effectively deal with their situations; Stream of Light - a consumer led group for individuals who are networking to assess needs within Agape Reservoir so participants might help identify and address specific needs of one another; and Stream of Understanding - a consumer led group for individuals who enjoy writing and sharing their personal stories and interests in a variety of literary genre.

Agape Reservoir is intended to help ALL individuals develop stronger ties with a faith community and to ultimately bridge themselves into the faith community in a non-threatening way. We rejoice and give thanks to God for the ways Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church is being led down new and exciting paths that witness the Gospel to all who come. Within this ministry, generosity and empowerment, manifestations of God’s love, prevail over society’s ways of greed and power. Empowered by the Spirit, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. Indeed, there is a mystery and magic in the successfulness of *Agape Reservoir*.

Why the Congregation of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Deserves This Award

As previously stated, Agape Reservoir is a ministry where participants are not so much asked to volunteer their time, but are invited to share their God-given gifts and abilities in a ministry of mutual love and compassion. Children, youth and adults of all ages are invited to come and share in the joys of serving in this special ministry. Their participation generates a context for (1) the experience of equality

in status, (2) elements of *Koinonia*, (3) a community without barriers where there is respect for personal boundaries, and (4) dignity for all. *Agape Reservoir* is a place where everyone, especially consumers, can come and participate and feel like they are making a difference — and indeed they are making a difference! *Agape Reservoir* is a place where people come to be loved and accepted for WHOSE they are, not who they are. Weekly, the healings of the Gospel take place as people reach out to offer comfort, support, and provide assistance to one another in times of need. Indeed, mutual care and concern for one another, acts of *Koinonia*, are integral aspects of this ministry.

A steering committee that is composed of consumers and members of the congregation meets monthly to plan activities, to discuss the future of this ministry, and to promote oneness and unity between the congregation and the consumers. As this ministry grows, care is taken to identify ways to successfully integrate consumers into the life of the congregation. We rejoice that consumers are developing strong ties with our community of faith by attending and/or becoming active members of various church-related activities and that the congregation is growing in its understanding of the nature of mental illnesses and helping consumers overcome its stigma. In addition many consumers, as well as members of the congregation, are discovering ways in which they have become empowered to use their God-given gifts and abilities in new and exciting ways.

Acts of worship and involvement in mission are important components of this ministry. When the ministry first began, there were several who resisted a prayer circle before the meal that is served before the evening program. When God’s name was mentioned, one individual would respond, “No God. No God.” Today, prayer time before meals may last twenty minutes or longer. Initially, meals lasted approximately fifteen minutes; there was little conversation during mealtime. Today, we are a family who shares in conversation and enjoys hearing about what has happened to each during the course of the week. Visitors are made to feel welcomed into our family. Hospitality and fellowship are extended. What a blessing it was when those who experience emotional and mental disorders helped to lead worship during Mental Health Awareness Sunday. Several consumers have also shared their faith journeys during worship and Church School.

Mission activities have included ecology projects, the preparation of 176 emergency kits for World Wide



Church Services, assistance in church clean-up days, and the collection and distribution of magazines to various locations. *Stream of Light* activities involve reaching out to one another in times of need, sometimes purchasing clothing, helping to clean and organize one another's home, assisting those who are moving, and providing places to stay while the homeless await housing accommodations. Transportation is provided, as needed, to and from Agape Reservoir and other church-related activities so each has opportunities to participate in the life of the congregation.

Funding received from the budget, designated giving, and grants from the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic and the Office of Health Ministries help to defray operational costs and to provide opportunities for paid work-related experiences and post-high school training. Financial assistance is available to cover extermination costs for pest control, to assist with transportation needs, and to make arrangements to prevent the disconnection of utilities.

Agape Reservoir, filled with love, dispenses love. It is a reservoir of love where individuals come to quench their thirst. Once quenched, out of their hearts flow rivers of living water, acts of compassion, which continue to replenish the reservoir so that **ALL** might experience the love of God.

2 0 0 6 U P D A T E:

*Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church
continues its Ministry of Wholeness with
Individuals Affected by Emotional or
Mental Disorders.*

*For more information contact:
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Blessed to be a blessing to others
Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church
has heard the Call of God and responded
to the needs of God's people.
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise God for the many experiences
of Koinonia!

**Congregation of
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Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church



Rev. Mark Meeks, the present pastor, first became involved with Capitol Heights in the fall of 1977 when he and his wife developed the Karis Community, a residential program for persons living with mental illness. The program responded to those coming out of hospitalization seeking a place to live. Capitol Heights supported this effort and in 1979, Rev. Meeks became the Spiritual Leader for the congregation. Fifteen years later, in 1994, his daughter was diagnosed with bi-polar illness following a suicide attempt in her early teens. Led by the Holy Spirit, a transformative process took place in this congregation.

Rev. Meeks (in his words) shared that Capitol Heights is simply a church open to our experience and to the experience of those who come our way. So the best thing we have given as a community lies in a spirit of acceptance, compassion, and hope for persons affected by mental illness. That has meant for us that we regularly, in worship and other settings, pray for people who hear voices, feel panic, despair and act hopeless, and we pray for folk whom we remember, personally and corporately, in terms of when they feel different and act with more personal presence as well as when they act strange and seem more distant to reach. Openness to such experience is hard to maintain, but our commitment has helped us learn over time that this mix of experience is what many must bear and none of us now know how to take that from them, so we, at best, journey with them to give a continuity of care, hope, and support, however limited it seems at times. One of the ways we've tried to grow these capacities is by having community dialogues, giving us conversations with persons who experience mental illness and those close to them, allowing them to teach us their experience without forcing on them our efforts to change them. We've considered an "asset" of such persons to be in their experience and an opportunity for us to wait in learning more from them. Thus, as we speak of someone's need and share the commitment to pray, we do so with a better "feeling"

for what they are living and a better sense of what relief might look like. Thus, open dialogue on the experience of mental illness and communal prayer for all who suffer from its pain is at the heart of what we do. Sometimes this has been both enabled and challenged by preaching or personal sharing that confesses pain, describes experience, and strives to make our faith in the Crucified who is Risen concrete in the face of mental and emotional distress. In other words, the confession of struggle is painful to hear and listening must resist quick turns to solutions.

Our experiences have given us insights so we can sometimes offer wisdom and comfort for those facing both acute difficulty and the burden of persistent illness. We've focused on the spiritual imagination in the Gospel that calls us to see the world not only in present terms of difficulty but also in enduring terms of God's presence and reign. Cognitive focus on what gives imaginative force for hope and a brighter outlook does matter and is grounded in the best of our faith. So naming the Gospel in relation to particular pain is an ongoing discipline for us. We open worship with a silent prayer for peace, lighting a peace prayer candle, as a weekly ritual that affirms how our minds can be stayed on peace even amid the ongoing struggle; this helps support, dignify, and empower the fold for what remains an ongoing challenge. It may be much easier to face acute problems that can have a short-term resolution than those which now occupy much of a lifetime.

Our Saturday lunch program is one continuing program we've arranged successfully, over many years, to form community with other persons living with mental illness outside our immediate church community. We provide them a good meal in an atmosphere of warmth and personal friendship that also creates an opportunity to visit freely with fellow guests. Sometimes these folks come to our services, but usually not. Some of them do not feel comfortable in a large social setting. Some have difficult thoughts when in church.

Some of them do not feel comfortable in a large social setting. Some have difficult thoughts when in church. Some already have church homes. Sometimes our guests are in a homeless period, but usually they are helped to maintain an apartment. We now have a small social group who've been coming here for years. We are divided about trying to build our numbers or let it be like it is, with 10 to 15 regular guests. The smallness feels welcomed by our guests who often have provision of meals in much larger settings. We have opportunity to visit with folks, hear of their news, and share in something of what burdens them or gives joy. Capitol Heights is the host sight every week, but two Saturdays a month other churches come to make and serve the meal. A local service for provision of meals to needy persons helps provide food for us to prepare at our church.

Mental illness can be terminal and sometimes results in deaths that mean very complicated pain for survivors. So we have provided a setting for either a minister or service that can be conducted with openness towards more understanding of why people die-by-suicide and how emotional distress can affect life in ways we ever regret, but for which we need Gospel comfort and how such is truly there. To be open about death-by-suicide is a matter of great significance though never easy for anyone. Which reminds me how the mentally ill are often made to be the explanation for their problem: "Who sinned that this man was born blind?" How people effect their own illness experience is something no one can fully articulate; that we can is undeniable, but that fact must be resisted as a foot in the door towards blame. So one of our challenges is to strive to understand how someone suffers in mental illness pressures that undermine and overwhelm strengths, how they develop coping strategies which may have many problematic dimensions, and how compassion and understanding must be disciplines that can face seeing someone growing their problems but not make them the burden of blame. Our church tries to resist simple answers, like one we often hear reported, which is, "if you only had more faith." Finding grace and sustained dignity amid a persistent and sometimes overwhelming struggle is at the heart of our community search and commitment. One thing I often say is that someone you are not now thinking of will be a beneficiary of your experience, and I have most often seen that to come true. Its possibility is far more likely in communities of openness, courage and grace. We seek to be one small such place, and God's grace has certainly shown up among us.

One other thing, maintaining some contact, some awareness of agencies that provide services to the mentally ill has been important for us. We are part of Capitol Hill United Ministries (CHUM) in Denver's

urban heart and together with our sister churches we've helped raise funds for local human services and maintain more of a relationship with them. Since the late 1980's we've raised around \$500,000 through a grocery coupon means that's been possible because of churches cooperating and being in relationship with agencies that service those for whom we would like to see more service. Also, CHUM maintains an advocacy effort to foster political commitment sustained in human services, which is getting much harder now with all the government efforts to cut back on costs. Again, this emphasizes that our small efforts can be expanded by our connections and cooperative commitments.

It must be added that our building has for many years been the home office site for National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Colorado, which has also meant for us some opportunity over time to work together with NAMI towards common goals. It included the joy of performing a wedding for two NAMI staff, both of whom suffer mental illness and became good friends to our community over the time of their service with NAMI. So we become a kind of setting known to be in someway accessible and hopefully helpful for those whose lives have been marked by experience with mental illness. You never know exactly what you may get to do when you bear that kind of identity.

Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church, founded in 1896, has a long history of ministry in the greater Capitol Hills area of Denver. In the pattern of many inner city congregations, Capitol Heights experienced an extensive exodus as members moved to the suburbs during the 1960's and 70's. The economic profile of the neighborhood changed and the congregation took on a different character, resulting in dramatic decline in membership. In 1972 a group of parishioners from a nearby Roman Catholic Church withdrew to form a new parish and were invited to share the building. They have been there ever since.

2006 Update:

Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church is a congregation that embraces diversity and empowers its members to be inclusive of everyone. The Church houses a NAMI office as well as a Catholic community and incorporates individuals with all disabilities in its church life. For more information about Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church contact the Rev. Mark Meeks at (303)333-9366.

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church



The Hillsboro Presbyterian Church of Nashville is a suburban congregation of around 750 members with a reputation of being a place where diversity is embraced and inclusiveness is valued. "This honor reflects our congregation's serious commitment to the diversity of God's kingdom," says Dr. David Kidd, senior minister.

"I'm proud that our members with mental illness experience the unreserved love that comes from being a part of this congregation. And I'm also proud that these valiant people who struggle daily with mental illness have chosen to share their important gifts with the rest of the congregation. The kingdom of God invites everyone into citizenship, and it's enriched by everyone who comes. It's been our experience that among the most gifted are people who struggle every day with mental illness - people who provide an example of the courageous strength to be found in Jesus Christ."

This special ministry began about 10 years ago with request for prayer for someone who was hospitalized with a serious mental illness. (That person is now an elder and serves on the Session.) Pastoral visits followed, a Sunday morning service was set aside to lift up those suffering and a sermon on "Christ and Mental Illness" was preached. Out of this developed the Mental Illness Awareness Committee which planned a strategy to make a deliberate attempt to integrate individuals and families affected by serious and persistent mental illnesses into the total life and work of the church.

Today, it's OK to talk about mental illness just as we do about other illnesses.

This openness became a means of evangelism, reaching and drawing in persons who were previously not attracted to the church. Support is offered through counseling, visitation by clergy and laity, transportation for appointments and worship services, education through Wednesday night programs, Stephen Ministry training and church school classes. Other psycho-educational programs such as Bridges and Journey of Hope classes have been held at Hillsboro. Scholarships have also been provided for those who attend special courses at

Ghost Ranch Conference Center and local retreats at Penuel Ridge.

Each May, a worship service emphasizes mental illness and mental health through liturgies, adult and children's sermons, a minute for mission and a bulletin insert. Members of the church also participate in planning community events for October's Mental Illness Awareness Week and Hillsboro hosts a citywide Interfaith Service sponsored by a coalition of mental health providers, professionals and consumers.

The church works cooperatively with other agencies such as the Mental Health Association (MHA), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the Tennessee Coalition for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to advocate for mental health issues on the state and national levels. The Church participates in the "Room at the Inn" program for those who are homeless, and has provided a place for Emotions Anonymous to meet.

"How blessed this congregation is," states Dr. Nancy McCurley, associate minister, "by the individuals and families of those affected by mental illness. We have been ministered to by their presence as much or more than we have ministered to them."

2006 U P D A T E :

Hillsboro continues to be a congregation where individuals affected by SMI are active members in the life of the congregation. John Lewis of Hillsboro Presbyterian, active in PSMIN and past member of the PSMIN Leadership Team reports that Hillsboro members are also very active in NAMI sponsored events. In May of 2005, members participated in the NAMI-Walks Program where they raised \$2,700. John Lewis was also honored in 2005, during another NAMI event, with the "Pioneer Award" for his leadership as the first President of NAMI-TN in 1985 and '86. For more information about Hillsboro inclusive ministry contact the Church office at (615)665-0148, visit their website at www.hillsboropresbyterian.org and/or e-mail ofchpc@bellsouth.net.



A B O U T Florence Iversen Kraft

Florence Kraft known as Flo by her many friends and colleagues, is a founder of the Presbyterian Serious Mental Illness Network (PSMIN) and has served as its representative on the PHEWA Board and as Network Chairperson.

Flo graduated from the University of Maryland and pursued a career as an educator. She has three adult children. Flo has fifteen years of professional experience at the congregational, presbytery and national levels of the Presbyterian Church and is an ordained elder.

While Flo was a mission worker in Cairo, Egypt, her eldest son was diagnosed with schizophrenia. She returned to the States to assist with his care and turned naturally to church colleagues to learn what sources of information and support were available in this time of crisis. Having coordinated a Pre-Assembly Conference on Mission, Flo was aware of the denomination's work in both education and health ministries, so she was surprised to hear there were no resources dealing with mental illness. As her own way of coping with the trauma presented by her son's illness, she set out to learn all she could about diseases of the brain. Thus was born her new mission in life and in the Presbyterian Church.

Flo accepted an assignment to the Health Ministries Office in New York and coordinated a consultation bringing together a diverse group of pastors, mental illness professionals, persons who have a mental illness, persons who provide community services and representatives from other denominations and secular groups to meet with the Presbyterian Church Director of Health Ministries. A denominational statement on the Church's response to serious mental illness resulted from this consultation and was approved by the General Assembly in 1988.

Flo then turned her attention to the development of educational resources to help pastors and congregations minister to and work with persons who have mental illnesses as well as with their families. She wrote an awareness and resource manual entitled "The Congregation: A Community of Care and Healing" and edited the Jan.-Feb. 1991 issue of "Church and Society magazine", which includes a variety of perspectives on the church and mental illness. Flo helped raise the awareness in the denomination by conducting numerous workshops for synods, presbyteries, congregations, interfaith coalitions and women's groups. She led week-long seminars on mental illness at Stony Point and Ghost Ranch Conference Centers and has written articles for various Presbyterian publications.

Flo's ministry demonstrates a vision beyond a single issue or a single denomination. As a lifetime member of PHEWA she has always encouraged cooperative work among the networks where concerns converge on issues such as congregational care teams, homelessness and affordable housing, health care reform, child and adolescent health, substance abuse, family violence, disabilities concerns, etc. She has become nationally known through membership on the original Board of Pathways to Promise: Interfaith Ministries and Prolonged Mental Illness and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The adage, "We create a path by walking it," acquired personal meaning for Flo as a parent of a person who has a serious mental illness, as a tireless educator with an unpopular cause, and as a person who has, herself, experienced several episodes of major depression, including four hospitalizations. Except for a brief assignment in New York, none of her official positions within the Presbyterian Church involved health ministries. All of this was accomplished as a volunteer and on her own time.

CRITERIA FOR A PSMIN CONGREGATIONAL AWARD

The Florence Iversen Kraft Award



1. This congregation makes a deliberate attempt to welcome and integrate persons with a serious mental illness and their families into the total life and work of the Church, without being obvious and setting them apart, by:
 - a. Being accepting, friendly, understanding and genuine.
 - b. Praying for those who have a mental illness the same way as for other illnesses.
 - c. Visiting and calling on the mentally ill person and by offering to help in little ways.
 - d. Offering support and love to the parents or family of the ill person, by inquiring about the relative's health as one would for anyone who was ill.
 - e. Listening and talking with the mentally ill person.
2. This congregation uses every opportunity to educate themselves and others about mental illness by:
 - a. Encouraging clergy, lay staff and members to learn about mental illness.
 - b. Raising awareness of mental illness in sermons, bulletins, and newsletters.
 - c. Adding books and other publications to the Church's library.
 - d. Becoming familiar with local mental health services and support groups.
3. This congregation offers its facilities and/or resources to those having serious mental illness and their families by:
 - a. Hosting a group of people from a local facility.
 - b. Sponsoring a support group for them and/or their families.
 - c. Sponsoring a social club or drop-in center.
 - d. Offering employment opportunities.
4. This congregation advocates for people with mental illness by:
 - a. Working with other churches and organizations, such as the Mental Health Association and Alliance for the Mentally Ill.
 - b. Supporting efforts to obtain appropriate housing and jobs.
 - c. Not letting false, stigmatizing statements about mental illness go unchallenged.
 - d. Supporting adequate state and local budgets for mental health services.
 - e. Giving money for research into the causes and cure for mental illness.
5. This congregation undertakes a ministry to, ministry with, and ministry by persons with serious mental illness and their families. They are invited to serve as office bearers and on committees.

Nominations for the PSMIN Congregational Award may be sent to us at any time. We will notify you the current timeline for nominations/selection/presentation upon request or upon receipt of your nomination. Include in your nomination the name of congregation being nominated, the contact person for the nomination with addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses for the church contact and for the one completing the nomination, and a two page description of the ministry, including why they are deserving of this recognition.

Please mail or fax nominations to: PSMIN/PHEWA
100 Witherspoon St. Rm. 4617
Louisville, KY 40202-1396
Fax: (502) 569-8034
Toll-free phone: 1(888) 728-7228 ext. 5800

Models of Ministry



*For further information please contact PSMIN through the
Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association office in Louisville, Kentucky.*

1-888-728-7228, ext. 5800



www.pcusa.org/phewa/psmin

PRESBYTERIAN SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS NETWORK

*PSMIN is one of ten networks organized under the
Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA), a ministry of
the National Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*