



EMIN NEWS

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Well Known Priest and Writer Shares Her Own Experience With Depression

*Jesus Wept: When Faith and
Depression Meet*

The Rev. Barbara C. Crafton
Published by Jossey-Bass
2009

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The Rev. Barbara C. Crafton
has written an important
book for *EMIN News* readers
and all who have or love
someone with debilitating
depression.

The following synopsis
comes from the dust jacket:
"Depression is the sapping

of spiritual strength and joy,
the graying of everything."

-From the Prologue

Drawing from her personal
experiences and those
of hundreds of others,
Episcopal priest Barbara
Cawthorne Crafton explores
what it means for a person
of faith to suffer from
depression. Just as no two
people are the same, the
experience of depression is
unique to every individual.

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*The Rev.
Barbara
Cawthorne
Crafton*

A Reader Tells Her Story

Greetings!

My name is Mary Worzel and I am a parishioner at Christ
Church in the small town of Deposit, New York.

I grew up as a Roman Catholic, but started attending Christ
Church after a visit by the priest while I was a patient in the
hospital. This was no "ordinary" visit; I was a patient in the
locked psychiatric unit of the hospital; the unit that most
people are too afraid to even speak of. Fr. Nick was definitely
different from my "so called" friends; he was not afraid to
give me a hug. He prayed over me and warmly invited me
to "come to Christ church" and see if it would help me. There
was no pressure to attend mass there, and there never has
been. Since my second marriage, I had been searching for
a church I felt "at home" in. All the parishioners at Christ
Church were very welcoming, but they were also not aware
of my mental disabilities.

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CareForTheTroops Offers Resources to Assist Returning Troops and Their Families

A thoughtful discussion among a group of Episcopalians has developed into a program for congregations, clergy and individuals to help military families and troops returning from war areas. CareForTheTroops is a not-for-profit interfaith effort designed to address the spiritual and psychological needs of military families while working with congregations to make them more welcoming and understanding of the issues they face. The comprehensive website, www.CareForTheTroops.org, provides tools, resources and links aimed to equip congregations to reach out and support the military and/or their family members.

In the planning stages for 15 months, CareForTheTroops was created by clergy and laity of the Diocese of Atlanta. "The idea started with the Rev. Robert Certain, an Episcopal priest and ex-POW, and Billy Harrison, a vestry member and former Air Force officer, at St. Peter and St. Paul in Marietta, Georgia. I joined shortly thereafter," recalls Peter McCall, currently the Executive Director. "It's meant to be an interfaith effort to help all who have mental health needs associated with the current and previous wars. Their primary target audiences are not only the military member and their immediate family, but also

the entire extended family system, congregation and community leaders, and civilian mental health professionals to help them better understand the military culture and trauma, and thus be better equipped to help those in need."

He added, "We're not pro-war, we're not anti-war. We want to help the troops and their families by starting a military ministry of awareness and acceptance."

According to the website, goals for the program are:

- To work to improve the ability of the civilian mental health infrastructure in the State of Georgia, then nationally, to work with military family members
- To facilitate connecting military families to providers of spiritual and psychological services familiar with the military culture and trauma
- To focus on addressing combat stress recovery as well as other spiritual and mental health related problems impacting the marriages and families of military veterans
- To educate and train clinicians, congregations and community leaders, extended family, and civilian groups about the military culture and trauma associated with military deployments in order to better assess and treat mental health symptoms, and provide more effective referrals and care and

provide opportunities for additional trauma treatment training to clinicians

- To operate in an interfaith, non-political manner, focusing on the humanitarian interest that benefits the veterans and their extended family members

CareForTheTroops has attracted the attention and support of Bishop Suffragan George Packard of the Episcopal Church's Office of Federal Ministries as well as Bishop Neil Alexander of Atlanta, who wrote to his diocese on May 11, 2009: "I am pleased to announce a new ministry initiated by the rector and people of St. Peter and St. Paul in Marietta.

On May 1, CareForTheTroops was launched as a 501c3 charity to benefit military members, veterans, and their families. They are developing a coalition of faith groups, civic leaders, the Georgia Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, and clinicians to specialize in treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder as a network of civilian groups to fill the gaps where the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs leave off.

CareForTheTroops provides an excellent model for others to use in creating a meaningful, long-term ministry to our men and women who have borne the burden of battle."

Episcopal Church Center Addresses Needs of People Living with Disabilities

The Episcopal Church Center's Evangelism and Congregational Life Center has established the Ministry for People Living with Disabilities. Angeline Cabanban, associate Program Officer for Ethnic & Multicultural Issues, has been named to this new position.

Angie said, "as the Episcopal Congregational Life point person for people living with disabilities – both mental and physical, be it visible or invisible – it is my hope that, with your help, we will be able to achieve some specific goals."

These goals are outlined on the website at www.episcopalchurch.org/disabilities.htm.

They are the following:

- Help congregations to be physically and spiritually accessible and hospitable to people living with disabilities
- Help people living with disabilities to be able to bring in their gifts so that they will not only be active members but active leaders of the church.

And for these goals to be achieved, we would

endeavor to do the following:

- Gather existing resources, both print as well as other forms of media, and identify best practices for people living with disabilities
- Work collaboratively with ECC staff on resources for people living with disabilities
- Collaborate on projects with existing Episcopal disabilities networks and other colleagues in the different denominations dealing with the same issues
- Help people visit other links where they can find other resources to meet their needs
- Work collaboratively with interfaith and ecumenical staff on resources for people living with disabilities.

The ministry website includes helpful resources and links to organizations assisting people with mental illnesses or who have hearing or vision impairments.

Angie invites everyone to share thoughts and ideas so that, "together, we will be able to make our dream a reality."

You may contact Angie at:

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Phone: (212) 716-6186



EMIN E-Mail List

We at EMIN would like to be able to reach our readers with updates and information between the printed newsletters. To make that happen, we need your e-mail address. We promise that your address will not be given to any other organization or sold. If you want to receive e-mail updates from EMIN, send a message to eminnews@msn.com and put "FOR EMIN LIST" in the subject line.

A Reader Tells Her Story Continued from page 1

I need to tell you why I was in the psychiatric unit of the hospital. It is hard for me to remember a time in my life when I did not struggle with my disabilities; major depression and Severe Anxiety Disorder – SAD. And, yes, I have, at the lowest points in my life attempted suicide; not just once but several times. I realize this is the main reason I can not work outside of my home. As soon as any of my employers discovered I had a mental illness, I was let go. There are also times when I feel too anxious to leave my home.

While other “normal” people could work and enjoy the outside world, I was held prisoner; not by iron bars or locked doors, but by severe anxiety, depression, and a broken heart. My life was controlled by my disabilities, as I have discovered, many are.

Years passed and I lived through my “highs and lows”. No, I am not bi-polar, that is another form of mental illness.

My mom died on September 16, 2008 from a courageous battle with colon cancer and I had stopped attending church, except for an occasional healing service. I was lonely without my mom, although she lived with her physical disability for three years, after being told by all doctors. she would only live for six months.

Well this year, I decided I needed to change my life. I

made a commitment to God that I would attend mass every Sunday through Lent and maybe even attend the Bible study. I made a promise to God that he would be the #1 priority in my life and in everything I do. This I knew would be most difficult because of my panic attacks outside my home. I did attend mass on Ash Wednesday, and with a little bit of medication prescribed by my doctor and help from the Holy Spirit, I made it through. I had taken the first step toward my goal.

The next day, I felt drawn to know more about the Episcopal Church if I was going to worship there. I turned on my computer and not being real computer savvy, I whispered a little prayer to God to show me what I was searching for.

Much to my surprise and delight, I discovered The Episcopal Disability Network website: www.disability99.org. This is an organization that works for the inclusion of people with handicaps and disabilities into the life of the church and society. It was through this site that I discovered the Episcopal Mental Illness Network. It is my goal, that through my writing, I can share some of my personal struggles and blessings of living with my disabilities.

Some days I feel totally isolated and worthless as a person. I want to go and hide and keep to myself. Yet, inside, my soul is screaming

for someone to come and know me and love me. The beautiful thing about this is Jesus knows me and he knows what it feels like inside me. Yes, there were times when I gave up too easily and sought the wrong way out by attempting to take my own life. PLEASE do not judge me if you have never been in such immeasurable pain.

Though I did not recognize them at the time, God was blessing me in many ways. He put people in my life to love and support me. I give thanks to God for my family and friends who are not afraid to be near me and hold my hand or wipe away a tear.

It is not easy to know and then to admit to yourself and others that I am “different.” Now I am willing to finally face reality and establish a way of life that includes daily prayer, reflection, and regular worship with my church family.

There is a stigma attached to mental illness by a society that is too ignorant to seek answers and try to find a cure. Some people are literally afraid of someone who suffers from mental illness. One of the greatest gifts God has given me through my depression is the fact that my four children have grown into loving, knowledgeable adults who are not intimidated by a person’s disability. They “see” the person, not the disability.

With all this knowledge I had discovered, I thought that NOW – surely I would “get better.” Days passed and I was attempting to establish the changes that would heal me. I attended Sunday mass – panic attacks and all. I spent time each day reading my Bible, and even attended weekly Bible study – and I was still depressed and anxious.

One morning I read the story of the crippled man who had lain beside the healing pool for 38 years because he had no one to help him in. I could relate to his hopelessness. Then, Jesus came to him and asked him, “Do you want to get well?”. I had heard this story many times, but this time something was different.

As I read Jesus’ question, I almost resented his question. I thought to myself, “What kind of question is that?” I put myself in this man’s place. I have seen a doctor almost every week for the last 10 years and now Jesus asks ME, “Do I want to get well?”. God waited for me to answer. Of course I want to get well-you don’t have to be God to see the obvious; or was it?

Jesus was calling me to come closer and see what it was he saw in my life. For a minute, put yourselves in my shoes. Much of my life has been governed by my depression and anxiety. All this time I only wanted one thing; to be healed. So what was I afraid of? When had I begun to lose hope? First

a year went by; then two. There was no miracle for me. What about the next five years, ten years, and increasing depression and anxiety? How long could I continue to hope and not be discouraged? Was God testing my faith? Didn’t he see my tears that fell through the lonely days and sleepless nights?

Slowly and unknowingly, I resigned myself to a life of fear, resentment, and anger. I abandoned all desire to get well. That’s when Jesus took my hand and we stepped into the “secret place” of his own heart. When he asked me again, “What did I want?”, Jesus infused into MY heart-HIS DESIRE to be made whole.

I had abandoned my desire to be made whole and replaced it with knowledge and facts about my disabilities as the key to my life. I was sure God was too busy for ME. I didn’t doubt God’s healing power – for others, but I doubted his love and care for me. Now Jesus had come into my life and was appealing to MY desire – the Creator of the universe was speaking to MY heart and offering me a new life in Him!

Is that what you are longing for? Jesus disperses desire, he awakens it within your heart. All my knowledge with no desire was fruitless. I knew something had gone really wrong in my heart. My life was not getting better. I had betrayed my desire and replaced it with knowledge. I’m not saying

knowledge is wrong; I’m saying knowledge without desire can lead to depression, resentment, and hopelessness. This Lenten Season I reflected on Jesus’ walk to Jerusalem. Did I walk beside him or leave him to walk the road alone? Was it ME that shouted “Hosanna” or did I cry, “Crucify Him?”. Did I, like Peter deny even knowing Jesus? This Easter, I peered into the tomb where Jesus had been lain, and found it dark and empty; like my life was before God called to me. Only God knows why I heard him the day I read about the crippled man. I said nothing to my family or friends. I didn’t know what to say or do.

Since I talked with God, my life is no longer under the control of darkness. It is slowly, but surely, showing signs of the healing and life giving presence of God’s light and love. I have placed my future in his hands. Courage, though still a bit cautious, now appears where fear and anxiety once dominated. I am ready to give my life to God. I desire to be a living testament to the victory Jesus has won in my soul. I yearn to be identified with my Savior, and if that requires being misunderstood, mocked, or even persecuted, I am willing.

How long has it been since you thanked God for the gift of His Son? What does your heart long for? Yes, our hearts DO matter to God. Take care of your heart. Do it so you may love better for

the sake of those who need you – and they DO need you. I’ve been there and back. Yes there are still days I struggle with my illnesses. Now, when I feel like it’s too hard to go on, I am refreshed by submitting my burdens to Jesus to help me carry them. Finally, God has restored the desire in my heart, through His mercy and love.

There is healing for every brokenness. He will make you whole. Jesus can and wants to heal your heart and soul. All you have to do is ask – and BELIEVE!

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

New Book

I Trust When Dark My Road A Lutheran View of Depression

From long-time EMIN supporter, Fr. Chet Watson of California, comes news of a book recounting the struggles and triumphs of a Lutheran pastor dealing with clinical depression.

Pastor Tom Peperkorn tells of "wearing the mask" of appearing fine while facing the internal difficulties of this serious illness.

As Fr. Chet points out, it is rare to have a male perspective from an

ordained minister. Many will find Pastor Peperkorn's honest story helpful in understanding depression from the inside out.

Each chapter concludes with a prayer and relevant discussion questions.

For more information on the free 100-page book and to see the blog that Pastor Peperkorn started before he made his depression public and still keeps current today, visit www.darkmirrored.org.



Pathways to Promise

Interfaith Ministries & Mental Illness 2009 National Summit
September 29-October 1

Pathways to Promise was formed to mobilize national faith groups and local congregations across the United States to reduce stigma and to support people with mental illnesses and their family members in the process of recovery.

As a result, the last two decades have seen exemplary models of ministry emerging in

congregations across the country.

At the National Summit, come learn from the successes and help us establish new pathways for progress and collaboration.

The conference is co-sponsored by and will be held at The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL, 15 minutes

from downtown St. Louis. For hotel reservations call (800) 682-2879.

For Shrine info visit www.snows.org.

Registration deadline is September 15.

For more information, visit www.Pathways2Promise.org or call (314) 877-6489.

LEARN

From models of ministry & collaboration

MEET

Pastors, mental health professionals, lay leaders, those who now experience recovery from a mental illness

EXPLORE

Resources and tools for mental health ministry

A Prayer for Overcoming Indifference

I watch the news, God. I observe it all from a comfortable distance. I see people suffering, and I don't lift a finger to help them. I condemn injustice but I do nothing to fight against it. I am pained by the faces of starving children, but I am not moved enough to try to save them. I step over homeless people in the street, I walk past outstretched hands, I avert my eyes, I close my heart.

Forgive me, God, for remaining aloof while others are in need of my assistance.

Wake me up, God; ignite my passion, fill me with outrage. Remind me that I am responsible for Your world. Don't allow me to stand idly by. Inspire me to act. Teach me to believe that I can repair some corner of this world.

When I despair, fill me with hope. When I doubt my strength, fill me with faith. When I am weary, renew my spirit. When I lose direction, show me the way back to meaning, back to compassion, back to You. And let us all say, AMEN.

Priest and Writer Shares Her Experience With Depression Continued from page 1

Depression's mark on each soul can perplex or even annoy loved ones, friends, and family, while at the same time they want very much to help.

All too often religious people face unique challenges when depression sets in. *Jesus Wept* explains that faith can be enormously helpful and comforting or can seriously hinder the healing process.

Communities of faith and ill-advised teachings can leave sufferers feeling abandoned. They wonder, "Where are the joys and comforts of faith and the power of prayer? How can I trust God? My depression is a sign that I have disappointed God!"

Offering hope to those who suffer, Crafton shows

how a life of faith can bring together unique resources for dealing with the dark night of the soul. The ancient practice of prayer, which has taken sorrow seriously for thousands of years, can be a powerful elixir for the spirit. Supportive religious teachings can offer a powerful hope for resurrection and healing. Faith can build a community that, at its best, enshrines love and welcome to the poor in spirit.

Jesus Wept is a valuable resource for those who are finding their way through the darkness of soul and spirit – or for those who care for them.

Barbara C. Crafton is an Episcopal priest, spiritual director and author. She is the founder and head of

the Geranium Farm, www.geraniumfarm.org, an online institute for the promotion of spiritual growth which publishes *The Almost-Daily-eMo* from the Geranium Farm, read by thousands of people worldwide.

In a chapter titled "A Learning Experience," Crafton writes:

"The pain is a memory now, but that thought can still produce a shudder. *I don't ever want to feel like that again.*

Or perhaps that frightful era just past wasn't a demon at all. Perhaps it was a teaching tool, a means by which I was strengthened in wisdom about the very nature of the human self. *Was it purposed to teach me about my many blessings by allowing me to*

experience their privation, in case I ever started taking them all for granted? In truth, I *have* been educated by having survived depression, by the memory of its dreadful emptiness. I do feel glad just to breathe the air without feeling its dead weight on my chest. I do have a more nuanced view of God than a simple equation of God's presence with my own well-being, not that I had ever put much stock in that equation anyway. And it certainly has taught me what a blessing "normal" is. *I don't ever want to feel like that again.*" (pp. 16-17)

Note: The Rev. Barbara Crafton has consented to be interviewed by *EMIN News* about this new book. The article will be published in the Winter 2009 issue.

**Episcopal
Mental Illness
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What Is The Episcopal Mental Illness Network?

The mission of the Episcopal Mental Illness Network (EMIN) is:

To seek out and support, through prayer and action, consumers, families and/or service providers in the Episcopal Church whose lives are affected by major psychiatric disorders;

To help Episcopalians, clergy and laypersons, become aware of the nature of these illnesses and the special needs and gifts of those affected;

To reduce the stigma and misconceptions that prevail and to remove those barriers which frequently prevent persons with psychiatric illnesses and their families from participating in the full life of the Church.

Please Help With A Contribution To EMIN

While endorsed by the National Episcopal Church, EMIN is completely self-supporting. Like all good Episcopalians, we hate to ask for money. However, we find ourselves in the position in which we are serving more and more people (that's the good news), yet fewer cash contributions are coming in (that's the bad news). We would greatly appreciate any contribution to offset the cost of this organization. Donate online at www.eminnews.com or mail a check payable to EMIN to the address below. Thank you so much!

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