

Abstract

Mental Health is a complex term, it is often misunderstood and branded as 'just a bad day' and misrepresented in the media. Mental wellbeing is being talked about more in society along with increased suicide rates but, or the church mental health still has a stigma attached. This dissertation is based on the premise that clergy stand in front of a congregation wearing a dog collar and the clergy and parishioner worship a perfect God but as humans both parishioners and clergy are far from perfect, they suffer the effects of sin in the world and a range of emotions. Clergy are not exempt from any physical illness and so they too are subject to mental illness.

This dissertation examines mental health from a biblical perspective throughout, highlighting that mental health is not a new phenomenon. It existed throughout Jesus' ministry and the Messiah himself promotes positive mental wellbeing. Further, theological issues that arise from such a sensitive topic are addressed. From my personal experience I have a passion for caring for those with mental health and making the church more accessible. Through my interest I discovered that there is a plethora of literature on generalised mental health and how to care for those with such an illness. However, there is very little on care for the caregiver and specifically care of clergy who serve in such a unique role where mental health may be more prevalent.

This dissertation analyses what resources are currently available for clergy across the Christian church as a whole while focusing specifically on The Church of Ireland and what needs to be further developed. Through my research I discovered that resources are available but it appears clergy are unaware of them and view them as a resource for a mental health crisis rather than a preventative measure.

The dissertation highlights the need for development of resources for clergy mental wellbeing and maintains that as clergy we must promote positive mental wellbeing and reduce the stigma within the church.