**“Kindness Matters” this Mental Health Awareness Week**

Kindness matters is the theme of this year’s Mental Health Awareness Week. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed and value many spontaneous acts of kindness, from Colonel Tom Moore raising over £32m for the NHS, through to those volunteering to support the isolated and lonely in local communities and people clapping every week for those who care for us. Our prayer is that society will continue to be kinder when we emerge from these testing times.

*“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32)*

Unfortunately, despite these moments when we can feel uplifted, there continue to be high levels of stress. If you’re concerned for your own mental health, the best thing you can do is to talk to someone. The groups and organisations below can help you find that listening ear and will not be surprised by anything you say to them or share it with anyone else.

Below, you will find some contact details you may find helpful:

* **AWARE**

[**www.aware-ni.org**](http://www.aware-ni.org)

AWARE is a Northern Ireland organisation. It has a series of support groups in all parts of the province. Even during the present “lockdown”, AWARE can put you in touch electronically with others facing similar challenges so you can learn from and support each other. The website has some good helpful resources and ideas. During COVID-19 please email info@aware-ni.org for more information or alternatively call 07548530931 or 07340488254

* **SAMARITANS**

16 Clarendon Street, Londonderry .

If you need to speak to someone urgently, Samaritans will be on hand every day between 10am to 10pm for immediate help and support. They can also signpost you to other services that will help.

116 123 free from any phone, or 0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

* **Mind UK**

[**www.mind.org.uk**](http://www.mind.org.uk)

This English-based organisation has lots of helpful free advice and resources on its website. You will find information about practical steps you can take and things you can do that will feel more in control of your life.

* **Big House**

[**www.thebighouse.org.uk**](http://www.thebighouse.org.uk)

This Belfast-based Christian organisation offers various forms of help to younger people faced with mental health issues. During Covid-19 it can provide face to face counselling and support via the internet. In more normal times it also runs camps which have proved to be extremely helpful to those wanting to build healthy patterns of living into their lives. Helpline 02890 664300 Tuesday to Thursday 9:30 to 2:30.

* **Christians Against Poverty (CAP)**

[**www.capuk.org**](http://www.capuk.org)

Many people are faced with financial difficulties which can seem insurmountable. CAP can help you find a way through so that those challenges become manageable over a period of time. It offers a number of support services available at a location not too far away from you.

You can contact CAP Services directly through their website, but it’s probably best to get initial advice from someone in your local church first. (Call 07712873322 to talk to Canon Paul Hoey).

* **Your Local Church**

Research shows that being part of a loving, accepting, supportive church family can significantly improve a person’s sense of mental well-being over the longer term. Almost certainly there will be people there who have walked a similar journey to yours and who will be willing to support you. Why not talk to Canon Paul, who will be able to point you in the right direction.

* **Prayer**

**Finally, even when you feel that you have come up against a closed door, remember that God has a way of helping us find the key.**

“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2)

**Your loving God is only ever a prayer away.**

**“**Lord God, you are always with me. You are with me in the day and in the night. You are with me when I’m happy and when I’m sad. You are with me when I’m healthy and when I am ill. You are with me when I am peaceful and when I am worried. Today I am feeling (name how you are feeling) because (reasons you are feeling this way). Help me to remember that you love me and are with me in everything today. Please give me the peace and strength I need. **Amen.”**