

## **Mental Health For All: Community Well-Being and the Church**

Lorna Murray

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This is a wise and timely book written by an experienced Methodist presbyter and newly retired Mental Health Chaplain in the NHS. John Swinton, Professor in Practical Theology and Pastoral Care in the University of Aberdeen has described it as “a book for our times. Reading it is a blessing “. I agree with him.

Lorna has produced an accessible, narrative approach to an important topic, that of building community well-being and resilience which she suggests is a natural activity for the Church, along with other partners, to be involved in. The book was begun before the pandemic but she has been able to make helpful connections in it to our current experience with Covid, and she suggests the pandemic only draws greater attention to our inter-dependence on one another for our health and well-being. As disciples she suggests, “our commitment is to follow faithfully the way of living that Christ has shown us: trust in God and love of people”.

In her exploration of mental health and well-being Lorna explores simply, but profoundly, how faith can encourage and guide us as we encourage one another into living mentally healthy lives and move together towards fullness of life and human flourishing. The book is practical and direct in addressing how to support those experiencing a period of poor mental health and those living with a diagnosed mental illness and in doing so, to participate in developing, with others, communities characterised by care, acceptance and welcome. The peppering of vivid and memorable stories, which characterises the book is handled carefully and they are woven skilfully into theological reflection tackling subjects such as prejudice and acceptance, difference and “othering”, inclusion and participation. There is no hectoring in this book, and there is no overtly didactic approach to the topic of mental health and human flourishing, rather it is an encouraging and hopeful book. Lorna’s openness about her own experience models something remarkable which will encourage others to own their own experiences as positively and openly. It would make a splendid Lent study for churches and small groups who wish to take seriously the Methodist Way of Life and explore how they might make a practical difference in supporting, with other partners, communities of acceptance, resilience, welcome and well-being.

Helen Dixon Cameron