



Be Well

Wellbeing and the love of God
Holy Rood Church



Welcome to 'Be Well'

This booklet accompanies our 'Be Well' teaching series (the talks can be found at croftonparish.org.uk). Here, you will find a summary of the teaching from the series. There are also some practical thoughts on particular challenges to our wellbeing.

During the 'Be Well' series, we are looking at 3 big ideas:

1) Our heavenly Father wants us well

As we read the Gospels, we are struck by the healing and help Jesus offers to those around. Jesus' life and ministry demonstrate God's love for humanity and how he wants us well. Jesus' death and resurrection provide for our forgiveness and for our healing. The Greek word we translate as 'salvation' is *sozo*, which means rescued, put right and healed.

2) We all have wounds

Very few people get through life without accumulating wounds and scars. For others, our internal disposition or chemistry means that we live with heightened levels of anxiety or struggle with depression. Part of the 'Be Well' series is removing stigma around talking about mental health and the wounds we carry. Learning to accept ourselves and each other is an essential step on the path to healing.

3) Modern life is toxic to wellbeing

Over the last fifty years in the West, we have become more prosperous than ever before. We have also become unhappier. It's important to recognise that our culture works against wellbeing and consider what we can do to support each other.

Important Notes

During this series, we will be addressing issues that may make you feel vulnerable or upset. If this happens, please talk to someone as soon as possible, either a trusted friend, your home group leader or a member of the team.

Generally, the topics we will be covering will be appropriate for people with mild to moderate challenges to their wellbeing. If you suffer from serious trauma or very poor mental health, it's important to find the professional help you need. Any of the staff team are happy to talk with you about where to go. There is also a 'Counselling Services' leaflet in the foyer.



Be Real: The Importance of Acceptance

We all have wounds. Many of us carry scars or struggle with poor mental or emotional health. The journey towards healing and managing our wellbeing begins with accepting our own particular story and struggle.

When Jesus asks the blind man, 'What do you want me to do for you?', he is asking the man to own and identify his struggle. It seems such an obvious question to ask. But, in asking it, Jesus' affirms the man's dignity and value and invites him to bring himself fully into the grace and love of God.

In Romans 15.7, we are invited to 'accept one another just as Christ has accepted you.' God accepts us as we are, but very often we can't accept ourselves. We wrestle with fear, shame, anger or bitterness. We worry that if others see our wounds, they won't accept us. So, we hide from ourselves, from each other and from God.

But the journey into wellbeing begins with acceptance. God accepts you as you are, so accept yourself and, in doing so, learn to accept others.

The consequences of trauma can be serious and lifelong. Many people who have suffered trauma develop coping mechanisms that themselves can be unhelpful or even self-destructive. Accepting the trauma we have suffered – and the ways we have tried to manage it – is crucial to any kind of journey towards healing.

Freedom
From
Trauma

If you have suffered trauma and live with the consequences of it, it's important to seek professional help, such as counselling or therapy. In doing so, you can come to a place of acceptance about what happened, and the consequences of it. You can also remember that God wants better for us than living in the shadow of trauma.

Jesus suffered unbelievable trauma at the cross. Now risen, he still bears the scars of what he suffered. Yet, his trauma is over and through what he suffered, he can help us on a journey to recovery.



Be Loved: The Father Heart of God

To know that we are loved is the foundation for good mental and emotional health. Poor mental health often derives from a lack of love expressed and experienced in our early years. Imagine a brick wall with gaps in the bottom row. The wall can sag into those gaps and we can spend the rest of our lives looking for things – relationships, experiences, substances – to fill the gaps.

The idea of God as ‘Father’ can be difficult if your own experience of family life was traumatic or painful. It is picture language to describe the perfect care of our loving Creator for each one of us. He loves you with a perfect love, accepts you completely and wants you to be well. Jesus’ acts of healing and help were a demonstration of the overwhelming love of God for humanity and our world.

God revealed himself in the Jewish Scriptures to Moses as ‘compassionate and gracious... abounding in love and faithfulness’ (Exodus 34.6). John, Jesus’ friend, said that ‘we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.’ (1 John 4.16).

Freedom From Anxiety

All of us worry. But for some people, worry and anxiety can become suffocating. If you are a Christian, Jesus’ words ‘Do not worry’ may only make you feel worse.

The Worry Book is an excellent place to start for anyone stuck in repeating patterns of worry and anxiety. Here are some helpful questions from *The Worry Book*:

1. What are your ‘worry themes’? What consistent themes and ideas underlie your patterns of worry and anxiety?
2. Worrying tends to assume the worst possible outcome. In the situations you worry about, what other, better outcomes or explanations might be possible?
3. What might you like to do if you were less of a worrier?

The Worry Book by Will van der Hart & Rob Waller can be ordered through the Parish Office.



Be Well: Wellbeing in a Toxic Age

Some sobering statistics:

- It used to be that 1 in 4 people experienced poor mental health in their lifetime, now it is 1 in 4 people every year;
- 1 in 10 Americans take anti-depressants;
- In 2018, only 25% of 18-34 Americans described themselves as 'very happy' – the lowest level ever recorded.

Even as we have become economically prosperous, our sense of wellbeing has been eroding. Psychiatrist Oliver James coined the term 'affluenza' to describe this apparent contradiction. There are numerous contributing factors, including:

- We are busier than ever, trying to 'have it all' and 'live our best lives';
- We are more secular than ever, lacking the sense of purpose, community and hope that faith in Jesus provides;
- We are lonelier than ever, a collection of atomised individuals;
- We are more confused than ever, unable to make adult life live up to the promises of childhood.

The modern world actively works against our wellbeing, while telling us that everything is being done for our good. Mass consumption, work/life balance and 'living in a material world' are toxic to our souls and our wellbeing.

As churches, we have a unique opportunity to model different, better ways of living, in response to God's call to us in Christ.



Freedom From Perfectionism

While high standards can be a good thing, it is possible to get trapped in perfectionism. Perfectionism is 'a mentality... that no result will ever be good enough.'

The Perfectionism Book is a helpful place to start for anyone stuck in this way of thinking. Here are some questions the book asks:

1. What fears does my perfectionism cover up? The fear of criticism, mediocrity, uncertainty or something else? What might it mean to confess those fears to God?
2. Perfectionists can be very rigid. What internal or external rules govern you? How might you build more flexibility into your life?
3. Perfectionist struggle with rest and retirement. If you could plan a complete 'day off', what would you do? How would you enjoy it?

The Perfectionism Book by W van der Hart & R Waller is available through the Parish Office.

Be Free: The Gospel and Changed Lives

How can we change? The message of God's saving love in Jesus offers us the chance to be put right with God, but also the promise of real change. Our reading from Romans 6 offers two pictures of how real change can happen.

Death to Life

The first picture from Romans 6 is of death and rebirth. 'We were buried with Christ through baptism in order that, just as Christ was raised... we too might live a new life.' (6.4) The wonderful truth of the Gospel is new lives for old – the 'old' you went into the grave with Jesus and the 'new' you reborn to live in his grace, truth and love.

Change is not trying to make ourselves new. Jesus has already done that. It is leaning in, living up to what God has already accomplished. It still takes thought and effort. But not the effort of trying to become a different person – you're already different! The effort is in seeking to live out what God has already done.



No Longer Slaves

It's very easy to feel trapped by poor mental health, trauma or addictive patterns of behaviour. The second picture in Romans 6 reminds us that, in Christ, we are no longer slaves to anything other than the righteousness and love of God. Paul reminds us (especially in Romans 7) that there is still a wrestling within us to live in this freedom. However, the 'deed of ownership' over our lives has changed hands and we now belong to God, not anything or anyone else.

Freedom will mean different things for each of us. Some of us may come to a place of healing, reconciliation and restoration, feeling like our lives have been put back on track. For others, it may mean that, while we still struggle, we understand ourselves better and get better at managing from day-to-day. The good news is that God is with us on our journey.

Addictive patterns of behaviour are a source of misery in many lives and homes. There is a difference between *substance* addictions (such as food, alcohol, recreational drugs) and *process* addictions (such a gambling or pornography).

If you are in an addictive pattern of behaviour, finding a friend to talk to is essential. You can ask yourself these questions:

- What need in me is this addiction meeting? Where has that need come from? How could I meet it in a healthier way?
- When I am most vulnerable? Is there an observable pattern of behaviour? What 'displacement activity' or healthy habits could I take on to get me through my moments of vulnerability?

Addictions are difficult to manage and often escalate. Seeking help and support sooner rather than later is essential.

Freedom
From
Addiction



Belong: The Power of Community

Isolation can be one of the consequences of living with trauma or poor mental health. Yet, community can be the very thing that helps bring healing and wholeness. We are all 'wounded healers', offering ourselves to each other warts and all. Learning to accept and serve one another helps us accept ourselves and restores some human dignity to each of us.

In relationships and meaningful community, we learn to:

Accept one another and, in doing so, accept ourselves more fully. Suffering makes us sympathetic to the suffering of others and can be a real gift. Christian community is not a place where we have to put a mask on, but a place where vulnerability and honesty can be managed in healthy, appropriate ways.

Serve one another and, in doing so, discover that we are more than our pain. In serving others we can be reminded that there is more to us than our own trauma or personal challenge. We remember that we have something of value to offer to others. We are all gifted by the Holy Spirit to serve each other.

Help one another and, in doing so, discover that 'none of us are islands'. The interdependence within groups and communities is a picture of what it means to be the Body of Christ. We need each other.

*We hope you found the 'Be Well' series
helpful and encouraging.*

God is with us on the journey!

*If you would like to talk to someone, please
find any of the team on Sundays or call the
Parish Office on (01329) 661154.*