



BRIGHT tomorrows.®

"Mobilizing the Church to better serve those with mental health concerns"

...dedicated to reflecting the compassion of Jesus Christ by promoting mental health and assisting those struggling with mental illness.



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope."

Jeremiah 29:11



Tim Reside
Executive Director

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In Memoriam

'An Assignment of Suffering'

By Joyce (Duckworth) Fitzwater

In the summer of 1983, I was teaching a junior high Sunday school class, teaching children's church, and working with a small group of young people. Our church at the time went through some difficulties that I had never experienced before. In the fall of that year, I went back to my second year of teaching in a middle school. With all of these factors presenting themselves, I now know that I went into a major depression. I had one fixed thought. I felt I had committed the "unpardonable sin." I took a leave of absence from my teaching job. At the end of December when I knew I was to go back to teaching, I took some pills, knowing I was not any better. The doctor who examined me told my husband that I would be all right but he was concerned as to "why I took the medicines." He sent me to a hospital where I spent two weeks but was not diagnosed. I stopped taking my birth controls pills thinking they might have been causing my depression.

In January of 1984, I became pregnant with my son. Now, I had two problems. I felt I had committed the unpardonable sin and I was pregnant. Those two things do not go together well. My depression lasted all through my pregnancy. During this time my mother bought Gloria Lundstrom's book and audio tapes Free at Last. I devoured every word hoping that I could find a solution to my problem. Although my situation was not resolved, I found solace in Gloria's testimony that others dealing with depression had found hope at the end of the tunnel. I "faked" my way through the pregnancy.

My son was born October 17, 1984 by emergency caesarean section. Two weeks after he was born, I began having what I know now to be manic symptoms. I had energy galore. I stayed up through the night doing laundry. I could not shut

the energy down. My mother and my husband knew that something was not right. My dad and my husband took me to a hospital where I was admitted to the psychiatric ward. My first stay lasted for 4 weeks. I was diagnosed at that time with manic-depressive illness (now termed bipolar disorder). It took a month to adjust to the medications to "bring me down" or to reduce my energy level and racing thoughts to a "normal range." I had manic cycles again in the spring of 1986, 1988, 1991 and 1998. Each stay became easier and not as lengthy.

Suicidal thoughts at times were a challenge. I had made a vow to God in the fall of 1977 at a Dave Wilkerson/Dallas Holm Crusade in Maryland; that I would not take my life, even if I "felt" like I had committed the unpardonable sin. Dallas Holm sang, "I know there are things in your life you think He can't forgive. But He'll forgive and forget my friend and show you how to live." I thought, "Could God forgive me?" I could not tell you what I had done that was so bad. I was just convinced that I was guilty. Concerned as to what my suicide might do to the faith of my friends, I promised God I would not follow through with that.

From the fall of 1998 to January 2001, I went through my third major depression and then cycled into a manic. Remember, during my depressed cycles I have the fixed thought that I have committed the "unpardonable sin" and during the manic cycles the fixed thought is that I am "saved" and everything is all right. My thoughts in 1998, however, had gotten to the degree that I felt everyone was going to "find me out." I was convinced that I had committed the unpardonable sin and with that thought I feel I have messed up Jesus' plan.

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7TH ANNUAL CARING FOR YOUR CONGREGATION'S MENTAL HEALTH SEMINAR: A REPORT

By Tim Reside

Bright Tomorrows is aware that pastors/ministers tend to be the "first-responders" to individuals and families in crisis. Often mental health concerns, inclusive of illness, caregiving challenges and stresses are brought to the doorstep of the pastor/minister. Bright Tomorrows recognizes the congregant's need for a continuing pastoral/ministerial presence as they work through their suffering experiences with crisis, grief and loss toward recovery.

Bright Tomorrows provides professional ministers, as well as lay ministry leaders, with practical information for better meeting the mental health concerns within their congregations. No-charge bi-monthly **Continental Breakfast Seminars** are designed to bring pastors/ministers together with their clinically-trained counterparts to discuss mental health related topics. The next seminar will take place on April 24th (note **Mission Update** page for further information).

Once a year Bright Tomorrows is proud to co-sponsor with University Village (in association with Hillcrest HealthCare System), Laureate (in association with St. Francis Hospital), and the Mental Health Association in Tulsa, a special seminar for pastors/ministers. This year it took place on March 7th and the theme was: **Lord Help Me, I Just Can't Stop: The Mind, Body & Spirit of Addiction.**



It was reported that 26.2 percent of Oklahomans, 18 or older, suffer from a mental health or substance use disorder in any given year. Drug and alcohol abuse often go hand-in-hand with mental illness. Statistics indicate that for every 10 men in the church, 5 are struggling with pornography. One out of every 6 women grapples with addiction to pornography. Almost 50 percent who responded to a 2003 Focus on the Family poll said pornography is a problem in their home. Two to three percent of Oklahomans who gamble have no control over their gambling or will have a problem in the future. Internet gambling is not only easily accessible to teens, but also a fast growing addictive behavior for the age group.

This data, together with other staggering statistical evidence of challenge, was presented at the no-charge seminar together with proposed solutions. The topics for presentation and discussion included: (1) **View from the Pulpit: A Pastor's Perspective on Addictions** presented by Rev. Beverly Paul, Greenwood Christian Center; (2) **Defining Addiction: Why People Feel Powerless to Stop** presented by Bright Tomorrow's board member, Tim Peterson, LPC, LMFT; Laureate Psychiatric Clinic and Hospital; (3) **A Personal Recovery Testimony from Pornography Addiction** presented by Josh Lawrence of Celebrate Recovery (Southern Hills Baptist Church); (4) **Hidden Addictions: Illicit Drugs, Alcohol and Beyond** presented by Joel Leitch, LPC, LADC; Family Medical Care; and (5) **Sex and the Brain: Sexual Addictions and Internet Pornography** presented by Stuart Holderness, Phd.

Tim Reside is the Executive Director of Bright Tomorrows and has been active in pastoral ministry for over 35 years. Tim received his M.A. in Practical Theology from Oral Roberts University and is currently a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Ministry program at O.R.U. Tim has been successfully coping with and overcoming bipolar illness since 1979.

MISSION UPDATE REPORT

BT continues to offer bi-monthly **Continental Breakfast Seminars** for professional and/or lay ministers and ministry leaders, at no charge. Our April 24th seminar entitled: **Alzheimer's Update: What Every Minister Needs to Know about Alzheimers** scheduled the well qualified presenter, Ruth Kolb Drew, MS, LPC, Director of Programs for the Alzheimers Association, Oklahoma/Arkansas Chapter. Ruth is a Licensed Professional Counselor with experience in both inpatient and agency settings. She has an MS in Counseling Psychology from Northeastern State University and a BA from Oral Roberts University.

BT is currently offering: (1) A weekly **Christian Depression and Bipolar Support Group** for adults that incorporates education and support for the person learning to manage their disorder within the context of their faith. Scriptural encouragement and prayer are utilized; (2) A monthly **How To Survive & Overcome Depression and Bipolar Disorders** program; (3) **Tuesday evening**

Family-to-Family Consultation Sessions— by appointment only; (4) **Bi-monthly Breakfast Seminars** for professional and/or lay ministers and ministry leaders— at no charge; and (5) A **Speakers Bureau** that provides qualified speakers for mental health education programs. For more information, please phone, email or check our website.

BT's monthly **How to Survive & Overcome Depression and Bipolar Disorders** program takes place the first Thursday of the month. This no-charge event (although donations are welcomed) is facilitated by PowerPoint; and follow-up notes are made available to attendees. This program is open to our regular attendees, caregiving family and friends, as well as to the general public. The location is in the Fire Side Room of the Family Life Center on the campus of Evangelistic Temple Church at 5345 So. Peoria Avenue in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (See website for map)

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED:

We are happy to announce that funds for a PowerPoint projector,

accompanying DVD/VHS player unit with extension speakers were provided by caring friends and supporters of this ministry. We are taking full advantage of this equipment and are upgrading the quality of our presentations as a result.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

We are in need of a professionally-styled portable display board unit that can be taken into educational forums for the purpose of displaying the BT mission and its services. The cost would be approximately \$300. If you or your organization would be able to make a tax-deductible donation to meet this need, please contact us. Thank you for your consideration.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CALENDAR UPDATE:

Tim Reside is now in the final year of his Doctor of Ministry program and fully invested in an applied research project. If you would like to invest in this educational effort, please make checks payable to Bright Tomorrows, designated "Education Fund." Tim has had several unique

speaking opportunities since the beginning of the year: (1) February 20th to several hundred Rhema Bible Training Institute students on **Bipolar Disorder: "Ministry Between Miracles"**; (2) March 25th to the North Tulsa Baptist Minister's Conference on the theme **From Victim to Victor: A Mental Health Recovery Story**; and (3) on March 27-28 he conducted a seminar/workshop for the Tulsa Cornerstone Assistance Network's men and women's recovery/rehabilitation program on **Healthy Christian Communication**.

BT TOP TWO NEEDS:

1. BT PRAYER PARTNERS!
2. BT SUPPORT PARTNERS!

*Thank You...
for caring
and sharing!*



"WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE KNOWN..."

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Thanks to all who are continuing to generously support the important mission of Bright Tomorrows!

If you have not supported this mission in the past, would you consider doing so today?

_____ Platinum Donors (\$5,000) Monthly: _____\$10 _____\$25 _____\$50
 _____ Gold Donors (\$1,000) One-Time: _____\$100 _____\$200 _____\$300
 _____ Silver Donors (\$500) Other: _____

Please make checks payable to "Bright Tomorrows." We are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation and all gifts are tax-deductable. You will receive an end-of-the-year letter of receipt.

SPECIAL NOTE

We send this newsletter to family and friends that we think are interested in the on-going growth of Bright Tomorrows. If, however, you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please contact us either by phone, mail or e-mail. Contact information provided on last page of this publication.

"An Assignment of Suffering"

I know that is not true when I am well but a depression brings on irrational thinking. One day I decided it would be the only day I had time to attempt at taking my life. My husband had gone to work and would not be back for quite a while. I went to the garage, started the car, and lay under the exhaust for several hours. Nothing happened to me. The electric garage door opened on its own accord. I do believe that there was enough air circulating around the base of the garage that caused me no damage. God and I had remembered my vow to Him over 20 years ago, and He was not about to let me break it. I had a psychiatric hospital stay that fall for depression. I did not get out of the hospital well. I went home only to "fake" my life again.

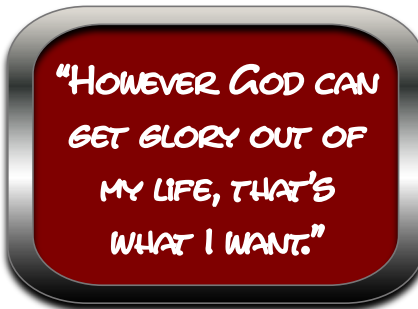
In January 2002, I received a booklet, "The Unpardonable Sin." The key thought I got from that booklet was "Your mind may be telling you that you have committed the unpardonable sin; but as long as your heart is after God, you have not committed it." I began to weep. I began speaking in the Holy Spirit. God broke through the depression with those simple words.

The consequence of realizing that I am not guilty, however, generally sends me to a high. Who wouldn't—for a year you think you've committed the unpardonable sin, bound for hell and no hope in sight. Now, you're saved and going to heaven. Who wouldn't get high? With the bipolar disorder and me, it requires hospitalization to regulate my medicines quickly. That way I do not have to deal with a prolonged cycle. Manic cycles for me generally last from 2-3 weeks in the hospital with about another month to readjust to the changes in medication. My hospital stay in January 2002 was my last. I have been stable since that time.

Pastor and author, Max Lucado, said the other day, "God may have chosen you with an assignment of suffering." Lucado

used the biblical story about the man born blind. He was blind for many years and it was presumed that this was because of sin in his life. Jesus said that this was not so "but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9). God chose his own moment in time for getting glory. I have said before, "However God can get glory out of my life, that's what I want."

I would like to be a testimony to the fact that God heals bipolar illness. I believe that God has given us psychiatrists, therapists and medicines for mental illness (or now being called "brain disorders") as part of a "healing" process. As mentioned earlier, I take my medications regularly; but I also pray for God's divine healing. Throughout the years I have come to realize that I need to continue taking my medications as prescribed all the time. Many individuals go off their meds because they "feel good". They become a "yo-yo" with problems waiting to happen. Over time, under medical supervision, I am happy to report that through the years the milligram dosage of my medication has been decreased.



Today I am often called to substitute in special education classes. I am able to reach out to these students who deal with "stigma" due to their handicaps. I can relate to their need of having to take medications for their illnesses. I only need 6 education credits to renew my Maryland State Certificate in Education. I have thought of taking these classes in special education or social work. I am part of a Mental Health Advisory Committee and a Suicide Prevention Committee. I have formed a Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Group helping individuals who have lost family members to suicide. My experience has enabled me to have compassion and comfort to those who grieve.

By Joyce (Duckworth) Fitzwater



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Contact us at:

Bright Tomorrows Fellowship
5630 South Boston Avenue
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105-7725

Phone: (918) 744-5761
E-mail: treside@brighttomorrows.org
Web site: www.brighttomorrows.org

Christian Depression and Bipolar Support Group

Thursday Evenings from 7:00-8:30 P.M.

This weekly event is held at Evangelistic Temple Church in the Fireside Room on the 2nd floor of the Family Life Center. E.T. is located at 5345 South Peoria Avenue • Tulsa, Oklahoma.

For a detailed map and complete driving directions please visit our web site.

To receive this free newsletter please call or e-mail us, or visit our website. We can also send this to you via e-mail when you provide us with your e-mail address.