

# Bright Tomorrows

*Reflecting the Compassion of Jesus Christ to Those with Mental Health Concerns*

## I'm Owning My Story...

Fifteen years ago I was a mental health clerk. Seeing what people went through really scared me to think that I would ever need any of that type of help. Lo and behold, I've had to access that kind of care because I have since been diagnosed with a mental health illness called Bipolar I.

This illness made my emotions go very high up and very low down. When I was high, I thought that I could do absolutely anything and when I was really down, suicide was a natural thought for me. It is very surprising that I'm still here.

After 5 years as a mental health clerk, I was made the Probate Assistant Supervisor for 5 years. The courthouse position was highly stressful—a job I never should have had as a Bipolar. At least once a week at lunchtime, I would go home, cry my eyes out and shake and shiver and cry before returning to work. The ladies in the office did not understand me and I did not understand them. The harder I would try to become friends and do a good job, the worse they liked me. I guess being Bipolar was difficult for them to understand.

In my desperate loneliness, I got the bright idea to re-marry my ex-husband. He convinced me to quit my job and move to TX where I got very ill. I got to the point that I couldn't get out of bed for months. My husband would come home from work,

pick me up out of bed, put me in the shower, wash my hair, dress me and put me back in bed.

Because of my move to Texas, my relationship with my mother was very strained, but I finally was willing to talk to her. Knowing how sick I was, Mom came and got me and brought me back to Tulsa. She took me to see the doctor who had diagnosed me with Bipolar. Besides having Bipolar, he also found out that I had pernicious anemia and low B12 levels. Instead of taking the medications that he prescribed for me, I ended up throwing a fit and getting rid of them. The police were called to come to my house, but it wasn't until the following morning that my Mom convinced me to let her in. At that time, the police put me in an ambulance and I was taken to St. John's Hospital. From there I went to Parkside Hospital where I found out more about Bipolar disorder and was put on a regiment of medications.

After Parkside, I was paranoid and petrified every time I heard an ambulance or siren. Unless Mom insisted, I wouldn't go out of the house. My home became my cave, my security blanket. I questioned if God even existed. How could He? How could I have Bipolar? Would I have to live a life of devastation?

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Bright Tomorrows is dedicated to reflecting the compassion of Jesus Christ by promoting mental health, helping those struggling with mental illness toward a healing-recovery lifestyle, and by assisting churches in their mission to better serve those with mental health concerns.

### JEREMIAH 29:11

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

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# Thanksgiving Isn't Just For Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving has long been extolled by religion. The word **gratitude** is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness or gratefulness (depending on the context). Whether spoken or unspoken, it amounts to an expression of thankfulness. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" wrote Paul to first century Christians (1 Thess. 5:18).

A gratitude attitude is not genetically predetermined, nor is it likely to be acquired by prayerful and/or wishful thinking. Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, have done much of the research on gratitude.\* Emmons summarizes the research in his book: ***Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier***. He says that those who practice grateful thinking "reap emotional, physical and interpersonal benefits." People who regularly keep a gratitude journal report fewer illness symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and are more optimistic about the future. This has been observed to be true for many who live with certain types of mental health challenges as well. Emmons' conclusion is that gratitude is a **choice** and a **practice** – one possible response to our life experiences.

Here are some practices suggested for proactively cultivating gratitude on a regular basis:

**Keep a gratitude journal.** Make it a habit to write down thoughts about the good things in your life—the gifts you've received each day. Acknowledge both the givers and the Ultimate Giver.

**Write a thank-you note.** Express your enjoyment and appreciation of someone's impact on your life. Make this a monthly practice. Once in a while, write a letter of encouraging appreciation to yourself.

**Count your blessings.** Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings—reflect on what went right or what you are grateful for. Perhaps decide to go for a list of three to five things a week. Be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.

**Pray.** Use prayer to cultivate gratitude. Devotional prayer books and/or readings can be helpful.

**Meditate.** Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word, phrase, or scripture, it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).

In the words of the ancient worship song: **"It is good to give thanks to the Lord."**— Psalm 92:1

\* You can Google and download their research conclusions in the 2003 "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" entitled Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life.



# MISSION UPDATE REPORT

BT offers three different types of **Christian Depression and Bipolar Support Group Meetings** (adults only) on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Thursday evenings (7:00-8:30 p.m.) of each month, September through May. (For more info on descriptions below, email us or visit our website.)

**THE FIRST THURSDAY NIGHT MEETING** of each month is an **Educational Support Group Meeting for Care Givers & Care Recipients**, ONLY for adults. **THE SECOND & FOURTH THURSDAY NIGHT MEETINGS** are **Share & Care Support Group Meetings**, ONLY for adult men and women who: (1) have been diagnosed with a unipolar disorder (major depressive disorder) or a bipolar disorder (manic-depressive disorder); (2) have a current medical, clinical and/or therapeutic care connection; and (3) are current with their medications.

**THE THIRD THURSDAY NIGHT MEETING** is a **Coping Skills Support Group Meeting**, ONLY for adult men and women meeting the criteria outlined above. The coping skills educational training course offered: **The "Mindful Prayer" Coping Skill**.

BT continues to offer bi-monthly **Breakfast Seminars (7:30-9:00 a.m.)** for professional and/or lay ministers and ministry leaders at no charge. Mental health related topics pertinent to church ministry and pastoral care concerns are

presented and discussed with qualified presenters.

BT's March 7th breakfast seminar, **Helping the Patient and Caregiver with a Chronic Life Threatening Disease**, was presented by David Wakefield, a licensed psychologist and marriage counselor. He has worked with Cancer Treatment Centers for 12 years. David provided 10 ideas on developing emotional resilience and also assisted pastors with their challenging responsibility for helping congregants dealing with life threatening illness, specifically cancer. In addition, he provided important resource information.

BT's June 20th breakfast seminar offered ministers cutting edge and relevant information on **Depression Update: What Every Minister Needs to Know** by Tim Peterson LPC, LMFT. Tim presented some fascinating new evidence linking depression to physical illnesses. He discussed the fact that depression is likely the most common mental illness that ministers encounter in their ministry. Tim focused on helpful ways to conceptualize this easily misunderstood malady and how you can utilize pastoral ministry gifts to provide healing support.

BT recognizes that at some point every church finds itself needing to deal with a person in a mental health crisis. On August 22nd we brought in Tulsa Police Department's Susannah Ralston, who

serves as the department's Mental Health Liaison, together with Tulsa Police Officer, Jon Cozad, who is also the Director of Security at Church on the Move in Tulsa. They dialogued on **Managing Mental Health Issues in Your Church with Safety and Sensitivity**. Questions explored included: "Do you know what to do if a person confides in you that they are having thoughts of harming someone or taking their own life?" "Do you have a plan if someone with delusional or psychotic behavior acts out during a worship service?" "Do you know how to respond to insure safety and compassion?"

BT attended and participated in the **19<sup>TH</sup> Annual Zarrow Mental Health Symposium** at the Tulsa Convention Center, September 26-27. The theme this year was: **"Implications of Brain and Biological Research on Clinical Practice."** In addition to attending many informative and beneficial sessions, BT was one of nearly 30 exhibitors with an exhibit booth presenting our vision and mission.

## BT TOP TWO NEEDS:

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

*Thank You...  
For Caring  
& Sharing!*

## OPPORTUNITIES OF SUPPORT



**Tim & Nancy Reside**  
**Work and Ministry Support**

Please indicate on check whether you are making  
*a monthly pledge OR a one-time donation.*

Make checks payable to Bright Tomorrows.

*Donations are tax-deductible.*

To make one-time credit card donations or recurring monthly donations by way of a PayPal account, please visit [www.brighttomorrows.org](http://www.brighttomorrows.org) and click the "donate" button on the left side of the web page.



# I'm Owning My Story...

That first year I kept wishing I had a brain tumor. At least with a brain tumor there is something you can actually SEE. With Bipolar, no one can see the illness—the broken brain. They only see the effects of it.

Mom then found a group called Bright Tomorrows for people with Bipolar and Depression. I've gone to it for 5 years and it has been a saving grace to find other people who have Bipolar and struggle with the same kind of struggles I do. I'm thankful that it's a Christian group where I can put a lot of my faith into my care and I can share my faith openly.

Tim and Nancy (group facilitators) encourage us. We pray and sing songs of faith. We read prayers for fear and worry and wisdom. We learn about things that trigger bipolar episodes. We learn

how to breathe and relax so that we can think clearly. We discuss things like "have you been taking your medications?" and "have you been assessed properly?" and "are you seeing your counselors and doctors on a regular basis?" We help each other. Now I'm hoping to someday write my story.

I am being healed, in the sense that I take all my medications and I see my doctor and counselor at regular intervals. I'm not cured but my thoughts are clearer. I now walk my dog, work out at the YMCA, do yoga, dance, work in the church library and am enjoying my life, as a whole person, for the first time. Lost friendships are being replaced with real authentic "safe" friends who love me and care about me as a person.

God, I thank You for this with all my heart!

## CHURCH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

**Bright Tomorrows:** [www.brighttomorrows.org](http://www.brighttomorrows.org)

**International Bipolar Foundation:** [www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org](http://www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org)

**Mental Health Grace Alliance:** [www.mentalhealthgracealliance.org](http://www.mentalhealthgracealliance.org)

**Mental Health Ministries:** [www.MentalHealthMinistries.net](http://www.MentalHealthMinistries.net)

**NAMI FaithNet:** [www.nami.org/namifaithnet](http://www.nami.org/namifaithnet)

**Pathways to Promise:** [www.Pathways2Promise.org](http://www.Pathways2Promise.org)



*Reflecting the Compassion of Jesus Christ  
to Those with Mental Health Concerns*

### **Contact us at:**

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### **Christian Depression and Bipolar Support Group Meetings For Care Givers & Those in Recovery Thursday Evenings at 7:00 P.M.**

These events take place at Asbury United Methodist Church at 6767 South Mingo in Tulsa, OK across from Union High School. Meetings are held in Room 2821 on the second floor of the main building (there is an elevator). Please enter through the main south covered walk entrance. This entrance is next to the "Faith Zone" children's entrance. For meeting descriptions visit our web site.

*For a detailed map and complete driving directions please visit our website.*

**To receive this free newsletter please 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.**