

# Preparing for the Unexpected

## Pastoral Care Guidelines

- **‘Caring for the needs of people living with mental health problems is not an option for the church. Rather it is a primary mark of its identity and faithfulness.’**

(Swinton, 2000, 52)

# Mental health: some pastoral problems

- an elderly man in your congregation is found wandering about in the street in his pyjamas
- a young girl is self-harming
- a young man is talking about committing suicide
- a person with bipolar illness has got into severe debt
- a woman is heartbroken because her husband is having a psychotic episode

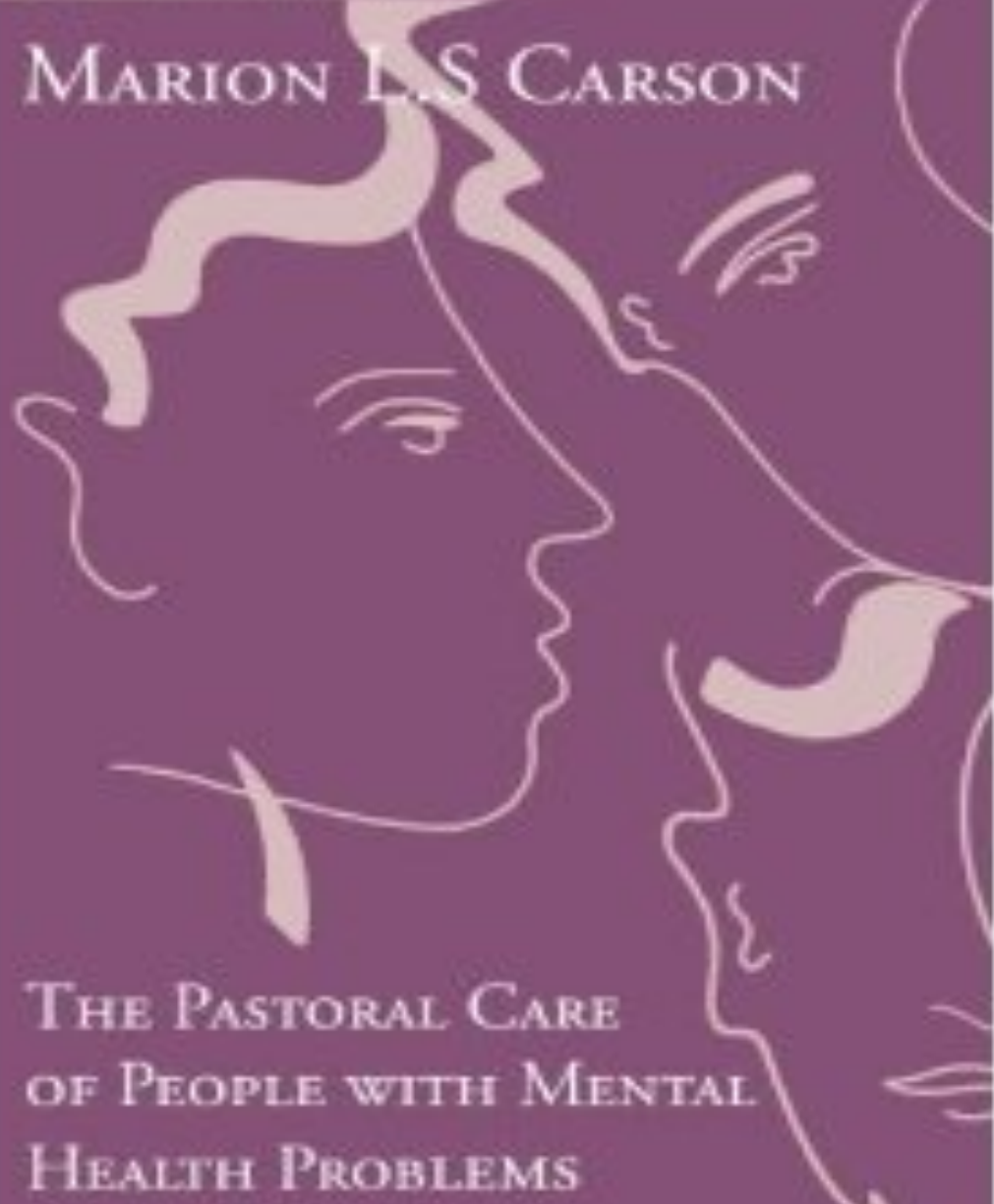


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OF PASTORAL CARE

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MARION L.S. CARSON

THE PASTORAL CARE  
OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL  
HEALTH PROBLEMS



# Prerequisites for an effective response to mental health problems

- Attitudes
- Awareness
- Action

# Attitudes

- What is your attitude to mental health problems? – Fear? Amusement? Disapproval? Avoidance?
- Second class Christians?
- “of the devil”?
- Does your church community (unwittingly) add to stigma?

# Awareness

- local resources
- expertise in the congregation
- your own gifts and limitations
- the needs of families
- you are not there to “fix” things
- listening skills

# Action (1)

- Befriending
- Drop-in centre/lunch club
- Neutral ground
- Acceptance and tolerance (within limits!)



# Action (2)

- Boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Training
- Pastoral care teams - contingency plans