

THE UNWANTED CHRISTMAS GUEST



While for some of us, Christmas is a time of joy...
...that is not the experience of Christmas for all of
us...

... or perhaps even for most of us...

For many people, Christmas will be a time of
increased isolation and loneliness.

Guilt, fear and feelings failure come calling.

Disappointment in life is exaggerated.

Doubt and spiritual questioning become painful.

There are unwelcome guests for many at the
'Christmas Table':

Depression, which comes in many guises,

Renewed grief, for those who have lost loved
ones,

Trauma, for those re-living family dysfunction,

Painful memories, for those carrying past trauma,

Seduction, for those struggling with addiction,

Temptation, for those contemplating suicide.

As communities and people of faith we need to be
attentive to the pain that is guest in many homes at
Christmas, and remember our spiritual practices of
hospitality, healing, diversity and worship.

A 'Blue Christmas Service' may be helpful.

Talking about this reality
and the legitimacy of
people's pain may open
a door for the Spirit.



○ Come Emmanuel, for we are lonely for God,
Bring the assurance of God-with-us.

○ Glorious shoot from the Jesse tree, renew and
green our spirits by your presence.

○ Word of love made flesh lead us in the paths of
peace.

○ Bright Morning Star, shine your bright truth in
our darkened world

○ Rose that blooms in the snow of winter, bloom
in us the promise of hope.

○ Love made flesh, come to we who are grieving,
who struggle with the dragon of addiction
or dogs of depression and anxiety, and
who live with trauma . Give us peace.

○ Child of Mary, touch overburdened care givers
with healing restoration.

○ Child of Peace, make of us vessels and servants
of peace.

○ Only begotten One, come...
to the created world you cherish ...to
make of us a people committed to life in
abundance for all creation,

May the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears
of the deaf unstopped, so that the lame shall leap
and the speechless sing for joy.

Come Emmanuel, come. Amen.



Toward Daring Discipleship



HAMILTON
CONFERENCE
The United Church of Canada

December 2009 Christmas Guests



Vacation
Celebration
Decoration
Addiction
Depression

Belief



Grief

Christ

crisis

Silent Night
Santa
Star
Sadness
suicide

AND WHEN THE BLUE SNOWFLAKES START FALLING
 THAT'S WHEN THOSE BLUE MEMORIES START CALLING
 YOU'LL BE DOING ALRIGHT WITH YOUR CHRISTMAS OF WHITE
 BUT I'LL HAVE A BLUE CHRISTMAS

BILLY HAYES AND JAY W. JOHNSON.



Signs of Depression

Changes in appetite and weight

Sleep problems (too much or too little)



Loss of interest in work, people, hobbies... loss of feeling for family members and friends

Feelings of hopelessness, uselessness, excessive guilt

Preoccupations with failures and inadequacies, and loss of self esteem

Obsession

Agitation or loss of energy

Slow cognitive skills

Decreased sexual drive

Tendency or urge to cry

Suicidal or homicidal thoughts

Delusional thinking

A major impediment to people seeking help when they/we need it is...

Shame!

...the stigma of mental illness.

How can we work to change that in our community?

Over the course of a lifetime 5% of adults will experience generalized anxiety disorder. (www.mypeaceofmind.ca)

17% of adults will experience depression. (www.mypeaceofmind.ca)

1 in 5 children and youth struggles with their mental health (Children's MHO)

For Youth 15-24 years of age, suicide is the second leading cause of death.(ASIST)

7-10% of the population think about suicide in the span of a year. (ASIST)

Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario:
<http://www.ontario.cmha.ca/>

Other sites: 1. <http://www.camh.net>
 2. www.mooddorders.on.ca 3. www.camh.net

HELP LINES - Gambling: 1-888-230-3505 www.opgh.on.ca
 Addictions: 1-800-565-8603 www.dart.on.ca
 Mental Health: 1-866-531-2600 www.mhsio.on.ca
 Telehealth: 1-866-797-0000



Do you know the mental health resources available in your area?

suicide warning signs

Feeling hopeless, helpless, sad, depressed, lonely

No sense of purpose in life

Anxiety, agitation



Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time

Anger, rage, revenge

Feeling trapped, like there is no way out

Withdrawing from friends, family, society

Recklessness

Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide

Dramatic mood change

Increased drug or alcohol use.

(Suicide prevention community Council of Hamilton)

Perhaps your church could use someone with ASIST training!

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

<http://www.livingworks.net>