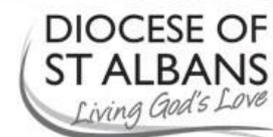


## St Albans Diocese – Mental Health Awareness Group (MHA Group)

Webinars for 2021 - April to August



### Mental Health Awareness Group



#### Overview

**It has been said of the Covid-19 Pandemic that everyone has been affected in some way.**

No one has completely escaped the Pandemic's grasp as we have all been in one way or another, deprived of the choices we would usually make for ourselves; chose whom to see and when to see them; where to meet; where to shop and the social freedoms we enjoyed.

It's true to say that in the main, the effects of the Pandemic have had a greater negative impact for some and has been a period of unwanted change and huge personal challenge. For others, it has been viewed as little more than an inconvenience although a period we certainly would not want to see repeated.

We are also aware that this period has presented a challenge for our mental health. This may not be the case for everyone, in fact a recent episode of the Life Scientific on BBC Radio 4, the psychologist Richard Bentall, spoke about the improvement in some people's mental health during the Pandemic. However, for those already living with mental ill health, around 25% had reported a deterioration during the Pandemic. Put simply, the factors influencing our

mental health, such as economic instability, low income, poor living conditions, family stress, difficult relationships etc, were situations exacerbated, not relieved, during the Pandemic. If these things caused mental distress and anxiety before March 2020, they certainly weren't going to disappear in the year that unfolded. The same is for us all, the Pandemic has brought in closer focus our anxieties, fears and life challenges.

The church throughout the Pandemic has played its part in many ways, from on-line worship services, coffee mornings, quizzes etc, running food pantries, leading and being involved in neighbourhood support schemes and offering telephone support. But the lack of physical connection between church communities in worship, fellowship and pastoral encounters has had perhaps the greatest impact. For some the re-adjustment to church life will be a challenge in different ways.

The question now facing us is 'where do we go from here'? How can we use our experiences as an opportunity to reflect on our own lives as we navigate the next months, possibly years of a Covid-19 world, or do we yearn to return to a pre Covid -19 world? As we start to navigate the government's new 'road map' our focus will be on recovery, from a perspective of our life and work, our communities, and for those of us who look to the bigger picture, our country and the world.

Whatever our situation, we have all in some way experienced physical separation from our families, friends, work colleagues and others generally and have been detached from many of the things we were doing before the Pandemic. None of us could have predicted what would unfold. But what did unfold, was quite unprecedented, having far reaching consequences for everyone, albeit affecting us in so many ways. We may be more bruised than we think!

The MHA Group webinars over the next five months will offer us all an opportunity to reflect on personal feelings of detachment from several perspectives (of course you may describe your own experiences in a different way). As has been in the past, our sessions are anchored in prayer with theological insights, to stimulate thoughts and ideas, so we hope that you will join us as you may have done before to reflect on our experiences of the Pandemic, how it has shaped us, and where we go from here?

### **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 3 – 4.30pm – Our Pandemic experiences – bruising, bracing or boring?**

The first of our MHA Group webinars will focus on our own experiences of the Pandemic and how this has affected us personally. As we move out of lockdown, this is perhaps a good time to ponder how we have adjusted our lives over the past year and what it has felt like to feel detached from our families, friends, work colleagues. As we consider what it means to return to a familiar way of living, how will our experiences influence our next steps?

### **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 7 – 8.30pm – Re-building Bridges – a move towards Reconciliation**

During the last year, we will all have experienced many different emotions, emotions that possibly we've never had to face before. Some people speak of a sense of feeling excluded, ignored or even

disregarded throughout the Pandemic. Others speak about feelings of resentment even anger towards their families or friends because the rhythm of their relationships has been affected by lockdown. The second of our MHA Group webinars will focus on situations we feel need to be repaired or bridges re-built.

### **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 7 – 8.30pm – What does it all mean? – a space to reflect and re-think**

So much change in the last year; so many losses, but perhaps some gains too. What's clear is that individual and community experiences have greatly differed; but have we really reflected on the impact they have had on us? How has the media, in all its forms, affected us? How has the pandemic affected our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and relationship with God? What has it meant for our corporate spirituality? As we move towards normalisation (whatever that means), this third webinar offers space and time for a deep **reflection** and perhaps a radical **re-think**.

### **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 1 – 2.30pm – A wilderness journey – but which way to turn?**

This last year has felt like an extended Lent for many of us, albeit one that has been forced upon us. Has this time of restrictions made us more aware of the things that separate us from God or those things that draw us closer to God? Are the Christian values we hold individually, and as a church, still relevant or do they need to be radically re-orientated? **Re-orientation** is at the heart of the Lenten journey and this webinar invites us to interpret what it means to 'turn away from sin and be faithful to God'.

### **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021 7 – 8.30pm – Raring to get going – but don't get too close!**

The last of the MHA Group Webinars will focus on how we re-engage with our lives after a long period of detachment. As we slowly return to our workplaces, churches and social spaces etc does the prospect of being again in close proximity to others, even our families, offer us a challenge or an opportunity? But it's not just the physical detachment, it's the mental and emotional detachment and weariness we may also be struggling with. What does it take to be re-energised?