

Number of lone parents to triple

The most recent figures from the Government's General Household Survey show that the proportion of lone-parent families is set to rise from 12% of all families in 1986 to 33%, almost three times as many, by 2011. That's a huge increase over just 25 years.

Other figures show that most lone parents become such because the husband or male partner leaves. 93% of lone parents are so because of a split with their partner, and just 9% occur when the two people concerned were never living together.

The proportion of lone parents attending church is much less than in the population as a whole (1.8% to 8.0%) but this still equates to 80,000 lone parents in our churches. Hopefully they are finding love, affection and appreciation there.

World Mental Health Day – October 10th

This is a day to highlight the worldwide problem of mental illness. Mental ill health is a major global concern. According to the World Health Organisation it is projected to reach 15% or the global burden of disease by the year 2020, by which time depression will disable many more people than AIDS, traffic accidents, heart diseases and war combined.

Too often, people who are mentally ill are shunned by others who are afraid of them, or isolated from the community for their own protection. Even now, some mentally ill people, in countries such as India and Ghana, may be kept in chains and denied their basic human rights. Throughout the centuries, people have been feared and mocked, or even regarded as evil spirits. Such was the attitude when Jesus was on earth. He recognised their isolation, spoke to them without fear, and was able to calm their troubled spirits. We pray for that same healing influence now, on all who suffer from sickness of the mind and for those who have become victims of mentally disturbed people.

The charity BasicNeeds works specifically with mentally ill people in developing countries, where there is a clear link between poverty and mental illness. The first essential is for people to be seen by a mental health professional, ensuring that they get the right medication – an opportunity that many have never had before, because they live in isolated areas and are too poor to travel. BasicNeeds and its local partners organise rural health clinics, where mentally ill people can be diagnosed and treated locally by visiting psychiatrists.

BasicNeeds also helps provide employment opportunities, so that once stabilised, mentally ill people can contribute to the family income, for instance through horticultural projects, and begin to overcome the stigma that their illness attracts. Many others, once treated, are able to return to their former jobs. This has a knock-on benefit for carers, many of whom are children, and for other family members.

Please remember in your prayers mentally ill people worldwide and those who are working to help them.

***Further information on the work of BasicNeeds from Jane Cox, BasicNeeds,
158A Parade, Leamington Spa, Warks. CV32 4AE. Tel: 01926 330101.
jane.cox@basicneeds.org.uk www.basicneeds.org.uk***