

Healthy spirit helps fuel healthy living



FOCUS ON THEOLOGY
REV. RONALD P. BYARS
Why is it that so many people are having problems with depression? My guess is that if you have not had a problem with serious depression yourself, you know someone who has. In "The New Yorker" magazine for Jan. 12, Andrew Solomon describes his own struggle with depression ("Anatomy of Melancholy"). It's normal, of course, for all of us to feel "blue" once in a while. Clinical depression, however, is something else. It literally mows its victims down. They can't get out of bed, can't go about their ordinary routines, can't eat — and certainly can find no enjoyment in life. Fortunately, physicians can treat depression with a variety of tools, ranging from medication to talk therapy to electroshock therapy. No one should try just to "tough it out" without seeking help.

Since many cases of depression can be treated effectively with medication, a question arises: does depression stem from a chemical imbalance? Or are their life-situations that contribute to the chemical imbalance? Solomon's research leads him to believe that the answer is "Yes" to both questions. Studies in Britain show that single mothers experience twice the rate of depression as women raising children with a partner. Our personal environment is likely to exploit weaknesses in our brain chemistry, and make us more vulnerable to depression. In other words, not all depression is simply chemical in origin. Sometimes, depression is realistically based.

Solomon suggests that human beings have not yet adequately adapted to the changes brought about by the modern world. He cites as evidence that depression seems to occur far more frequently in cultures that are advanced technologically than it does in others. Our minds, quite possibly, have not been designed to handle the overload of sensory stimuli found in a society that offers us so many choices, requires us to decide so

many things and adapt to new situations so frequently.

This issues interests me, among other reasons, because it touches on the larger question of how people get sick and how they might get well. The human being is a complicated creature! It's an over-simplification to say that we are a combination of body, mind and spirit — but we are that. I have no doubt but that God made us to be well. At least, God made us to be well through the productive years of our lives, after which we're made to depart to make room for others. But something — or more likely, many things — has disrupted the plan. It's not too hard to understand how poisons in the ground water, or radiation in the atmosphere might disrupt the good health that would otherwise be ours. Nor is it too hard to understand how the stresses of modern life might cause us to crack — physically or emotionally. It's harder to understand how (or why?) various malfunctions occur genetically, quite apart from environmental factors. And it's hard to understand how good health might be disrupted by disease of the spirit — something that emerges out of our own hearts.

The Swiss psychiatrist and lay theologian, Dr. Paul Tournier, believed that his patients were most likely to discover all-round healthiness when they dug down deep to examine all the "nationalisms" of heart and present. Including their relationship with God. This is not to say that he believed that all illness proceeds from a faulty relationship with God. No, but some illness surely does — and other illness is made more complicated when we have fallen out of touch with significant others, or neighbors, or God, or the deepest part of ourselves. Prayer certainly is not substitute for good nutrition, some kind of exercise program, and consistent medical care. But neither can any of these things substitute for a healthy spirit.

"Listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right... for I am the Lord who heals you" (Ex. 15:26).
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BELIEFS & Values

First United is 'Church of the Year'

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

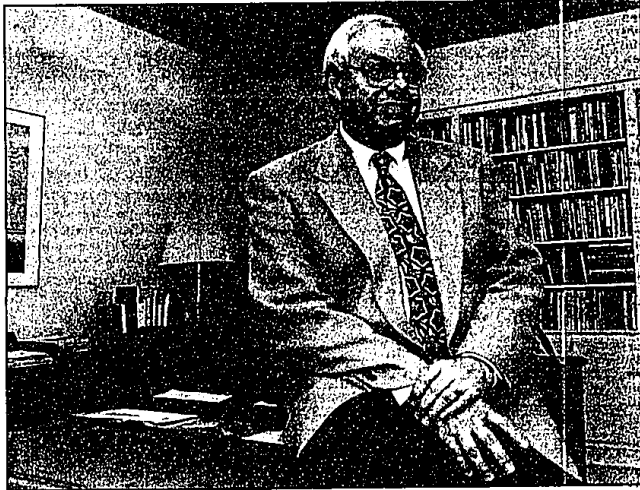
They set out from Oakland County to make a difference in Detroit with a full day of scrubbing, polishing, painting, papering, repairing roofs, stripping old rugs, tiling floors, roughing in walls and making toilets work again.

By the end of the day, the 250 members of First United Methodist Church of Birmingham had put a much needed face lift on the aging, economically struggling Cass Community United Methodist Church facility, expanded its adjoining Homeless Drop-In Center and joined the lunch team in preparing meals for the 400 Cass corridor residents who depend on the Center daily for sustenance.

"Cass was once a wealthy congregation with its tiffany windows in the sanctuary, yet it now serves some of the neediest people in the city of Detroit," said the Rev. Dr. William Ritter, pastor of First United Methodist Church of Birmingham. "It has a kind of buried beauty within it. Restoring something that once was always brings a sense of joy to people."

The inner city project undertaken as part of the Difference Day in October of 1996, marked the conclusion of the Birmingham church's year-long 175th anniversary celebration on the day after its grand banquet at the Marriott Hotel in Troy.

"Because of that involvement, a significant number of those people have made at least one return visit to complete projects



Helping out: The Rev. William Ritter and members of First United Methodist in Birmingham have helped restore downtown churches.

or to launch new ones," said Ritter, who serves the 2,626-member congregation with the Rev. Matthew Hook of Bloomfield Hills and Melody Hurley of Birmingham. "The ongoing relationship grown out of that day keeps feeding people into the city."

Cass is recognizing the Birmingham congregation's continued financial and volunteer support through the presentation of its annual "Church of the Year" award. Ritter, a native Detroit, will accept the tribute at Cass' fourth annual banquet at the Westin Hotel in Detroit's Renaissance Center on Jan. 31.

Master of ceremonies for the evening is WYUR celebrity Bob Hynes. Keynote speaker is comedian David Brenner, best known for hosting the "Tonight Show" and his own late night talk show, "Nightlife."

Profits from the fund-raising dinner support the Cass Community United Methodist Church.

See CHURCH, B7

B'Jazz Vespers at First Baptist Church Sunday

B'Jazz Vespers will feature Ron Kischuk and the Tartar sauce Traditional Jazz Band at 6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, at First Baptist Church, 300 Willets at Bates Streets, in downtown Birmingham.

Kischuk is one of metro Detroit's leading trombonists and big band leaders. He is an internationally acclaimed artist residing in the metro area. He has performed with many of the world's greatest artists, most notably Dizzy Gillespie, Rob McConnell, Henry Mancini, Marvin Hamlisch and Doc Severin-

sen with the Tonight Show band. His distinguished sound can be heard on many CDs and tapes, most notably those of the Tartar sauce Traditional Jazz Band.

The Tartar sauce Traditional Jazz Band has been a staple of the Detroit music scene for almost 20 years. The group formed as a throw together ensemble just to enter a competition, and has continued from that point on. The two original members are group leader and trombonist Ron Kischuk, and bassist Mike Karoub, whose Cello Jazz ensemble was fea-

tured in the May '97 B'Jazz Vespers performance. The group is rounded out with one of Europe's most favorite reedman, Charlie Gabriel, on the tenor saxophone and clarinet, Nate Paniciaci on the trumpet, Chuck Shermetaro on the piano and Bill Cairo on the drums. Each of these talented musicians are expert in their craft, and no finer music can be heard when the Tartar sauce Traditional Jazz Band takes the stage.

B'Jazz Vespers features 100 minutes of jazz performance and 20 minutes for a worship inter-

lude between sets. The service is non-denominational, and is intended to be positive and uplifting. A free will offering is taken for the musicians. The church is located in downtown Birmingham between the two Jacobson's stores, one block north of Maple and one block west of Old Woodward. The next B'Jazz Vespers is Feb. 15. It will feature Ursula Walker and the Buddy Budson Trio. On March 15, we will host the Gary Schunk Trio.

For more information, call (248) 644-0550.

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