



shalem

Mental Health Network

Advent 2018

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Handel's Messiah; Isaiah 40:11

Dear Friends,

In my Advent reading this year, I have been struck by the Bible's image of us as *sheep*, and of Jesus as both the Good Shepherd who protects his sheep and a lamb (who was led to the slaughter). *Sheep* figure prominently in the Advent story and in our Christmas celebrations.

These Advent images become poignant when we explore sheep, and the practice of caring for sheep, especially in the ancient near East.* Among animals, sheep have a special challenge. They are defenceless. Cats have teeth, claws and speed. Dogs, wolves and lions have teeth and speed. Horses can kick, bite and run. Bears can claw, bite and crush. Deer can run. But sheep have no claws, no bite, and they cannot outrun a predator. The sheep's *only* security is its shepherd.

The shepherd knows its name, and the sheep knows the shepherd's voice. A sheep may walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" (there were several such treacherous valleys in ancient Palestine that sheep needed to pass through, to graze and drink). But if a sheep gets terrified or lost along the way, it freezes under a branch and bleats for help. The shepherd needs to find it quickly or a predator will get there first. Too traumatized to move, the shepherd then drapes the sheep over his or her shoulder and carries it back to the flock.

At Shalem, we come alongside people who have been or are passing through "the valley of the shadow of death". They may be dealing with having been sexually abused—as a defenceless child. They may be living with domestic violence, harassment in the workplace, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, suicidal thoughts, relationship struggles, conflict, gender identity struggles, poverty, grief or loss. They may be targeted by the machinations of power, privilege and violence. Surrounded by such "predators", and supported by strong practices in mental health (*see the reverse side of this page*), it is a real privilege for us to discern with them, precisely in the midst of the struggles, the gentle voice of the Good Shepherd, who seeks to gather us in and carry us in his arms to a safer place.

Shalem's ministry—discerning the voice of the Good Shepherd in our dark valleys—is growing. *We need your ongoing partnership to help make it happen. Our goal is to raise \$60,000 this December to support this work.* Your gifts will allow us to offer supports to people who, because of deep poverty, cannot afford them. This Advent, as we celebrate Jesus' extraordinary arrival among us as a defenceless baby—as a lamb among wolves—will you connect with the people we serve in this way? Please use the enclosed envelope or donate through Canada Helps on our website (www.shalemnetwork.org).

Thank you for your support and prayers—we value them deeply and cannot do our work without them. And thank you especially for your discernment of the voice of the Good Shepherd in your community.

Yours in Christ,

Mark Vander Vennen, MA, M.Ed, R.S.W.
Executive Director

All gifts to Shalem Mental Health Foundation are tax deductible.
RN (Charitable Registration Number): 84513 0178 RR0001

*Drawn from Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*.



Making An Impact in Mental Health

Everywhere, it seems, our communities are dealing with an explosion of mental health needs. We hear tragic stories of random shootings where mental illness often seems to be a significant factor. The #MeToo movement is shining a light on just how endemic sexualized violence is in our society. A recent survey suggests that one in two Canadians has experienced bullying in the workplace. Too often we hear about suicide, domestic violence or people dealing with depression or anxiety. And too often we hear that people are not able to access the mental health supports they need.

How do you and I respond? Thanks to your engagement, you are a partner in Shalem offering mental health approaches rooted in *best practices* that create openings to hearing the Good Shepherd's voice:

Shalem Counselling Centre Our psychotherapy framework is *attachment*. We specialize in working with children and youth who have “attachment disorders” due to early trauma, and their caregivers, whether foster, kinship, adoptive or biological parents. Shalem has become an Ontario and national leader, with others, in this work. Similarly, our psychotherapy with couples zeroes in on spouses as *attachment figures* for each other, rooted in the latest developments in neuroscience, which show that we are wired by our Creator for relationship—we need it to survive no less than we need water, food or oxygen.

The demand for this counselling work is growing by leaps and bounds. In 2017 we worked with 626 clients over 3,500 sessions—and that number will be higher in 2018. *42% of our clients cannot pay the minimum \$50 fee per session.* They depend on your donation support to engage in this work.

RE-create Compelling research points to the use of art-making as a way of supporting at-risk young people to improve their mental health. RE-create is a drop-in art studio in Hamilton that works with 230 young people each year. Volunteers, including professional artists who act as art mentors to young people, are key.

WrapAround WrapAround supports people who have complex, simultaneous, mutually reinforcing challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, mental illness, family breakdown, and special needs. WrapAround focuses on people's strengths and their hopes and dreams, and it assembles a team of the person's own choosing to help them achieve their goals. WrapAround, considered a best practice, supports a community to look after its own most vulnerable members. Shalem is a WrapAround leader in Ontario and across Canada.

Restorative Practice Restorative Practice creates safe spaces for people to ask each other: what happened (or is happening)? Who is impacted and how? What needs to happen to move forward? Shalem facilitates these hard but healing conversations especially in congregations (*FaithCARE*, over 90 congregations to date), workplaces (*Centre for Workplace Engagement*) and schools (*EduCARE*)—across Canada, the U.S., and Central America.

Congregational Assistance Plan (CAP) CAP offers a church the opportunity to provide, for all of its members, the possibility of up to six counselling sessions per year from a local, Master's-degree level Christian psychotherapist, anonymously and at no cost to the client. 75 churches and schools are engaged in CAP, and Shalem contracts with over 150 Christian psychotherapists across Ontario and beyond to deliver CAP on our behalf.

Thank you for your support—one part of your impact in mental health! Your partnership helps to bring real healing in people's lives. Please contact us to find out more (www.shalemnetwork.org), or for a visit. May God bless you this Advent and throughout 2019.