



New Book by Marja Bergen, A Firm Place to Stand, Dispels the Lingering Stigma Towards Mental Illness Still Present in the Church

In her sincere and candid style Marja Bergen reflects on her 42 years with bipolar disorder, showing how faith in God can help a person with a serious illness turn weakness into strength. This is a must-read for Christians who struggle with mental health challenges and the faith communities who minister to them.

Vancouver, Canada, September 05, 2008 --(PR.com)-- A recent Ipsos-Reid survey, commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association and released on August 18th, "shines a harsh, and frankly unflattering light on the attitudes we Canadians have concerning mental health," CMA president Dr. Brian Day said in a release. "In some ways, mental illness is the final frontier of socially-acceptable discrimination." Yet 15 per cent of adults who were polled reported having been diagnosed with clinical depression, the most common mental health problem.

Canadian writer Marja Bergen's book *A Firm Place to Stand: Finding Meaning in a Life with Bipolar Disorder* is her contribution to reducing this stigma that she considers is still so prevalent. It is her second book about living with this painful mental illness that affects 3 - 5% of the population. She speaks about her struggles in an honest and engaging way, describing what she learned about faith and life as a result of it.

Bergen wrote her first book, *Riding the Roller Coaster*, for a general audience. This new book is specifically for a Christian audience. She has narrowed her focus to this community because even here, where Christ's unconditional love is a model for living, she says "there is all too often a lack of acceptance and a judgmental attitude. As a result, many Christians with mental health problems don't feel at home in the church." Bergen finds this tragic. People who suffer should be encouraged in their faith, not driven away through the effects of stigma.

The author traces her forty-two years with the disease, describing her hospitalization at the psychiatric facility, Riverview Hospital, and her repeated episodes of depression, mania, and psychosis. She recounts her years of searching for meaning in the midst of a life that did not give an opportunity for a career. She always knew she wanted to make the world a better place. In early adulthood this meant creating beautiful needlework pieces, later it became photography and publishing handmade inspirational booklets for seniors. Eventually she found fulfillment in helping others who, like herself, suffer from mental illness.

With the help of her church, Bergen became a pioneer in establishing faith-based support groups called Living Room. She believed in the importance of this form of Christ-centered support and created a website and manuals to help more groups start up. The movement is growing. Soon there will be seven Living Rooms, one as far away as New Zealand.

In the words of John Toews, psychiatrist and author of *No Longer Alone, Mental Health and the Church*, "Bergen's new book is a gift to Christians who struggle with mental health issues. This is a splendid resource to be read, not only by those who struggle, but by their friends and families, and by counselors



and church leaders.”

A Firm Place to Stand is distributed by Word Alive and is available for order from bookstores, online from the author at www.marjabergen.com and from Amazon.

###



Contact Information:

Marja Bergen

Marja Bergen

604-291-6254

marja@livingroomsupport.org

www.marjabergen.com

Online Version of Press Release:

You can read the online version of this press release at: <http://www.pr.com/press-release/103744>