



# Christianity

## Story of Hope and Healing

Deborah [substitute a name common to your community's ethnicity] had struggled with depression for much of her life, although she had managed to stay active and involved. However, after the birth of her first child, Deborah went into a depression so severe that she couldn't leave the house. Her husband Dave called their minister and said he was worried that Deborah's depression was getting worse. Based on what David shared, the minister told him she was concerned that Deborah might be suicidal and urged him to take her to the emergency department. Then the minister asked to speak to Deborah. After talking with the minister for a while, Deborah finally agreed to go to the hospital, where the minister joined them.

Following an evaluation, Deborah entered into a program of intensive psychiatric care that was appropriate for a mother of a newborn. The doctors and nurses worked to regulate her medication and help her talk about her feelings and her fears. She was then able to resume her life with the help of outpatient treatment.

What happened with the church was also very important. With Deborah's permission, the minister shared with the congregation that she was in treatment and encouraged church members to help as they would have had if she was dealing with a physical illness. They helped Deborah care for her baby, brought meals for the family, and wrote notes. They included Deborah and her family in prayers and when she regained her health, she was given a warm welcome back into the community. That was 12 years ago. While Deborah still has occasional "blue" times, she has never gone back to the severity of that time. Nor has the church gone back to its previous silence about mental and emotional illness. One could say that new life came in all kinds of ways.\*

(\*True story from the experiences of a faith community leader)