



# St. Matthew's Cathedral eNews

Christ \* Compassion \* Community



## *From the Dean*

### **Reflections on the Death of Robin Williams**

**The Western World was shocked this week to hear of the death by suicide of Robin Williams. Robin Williams was funny, brilliant, adept at both comedic and dramatic roles equally, and kind. His humor was never directed at insulting others. We as Episcopalians like to claim him as one of us. He once did a routine in which he proudly proclaimed himself as an "Episcopal." (By the way, "Episcopal" is always an adjective; "Episcopalian" is a noun.) I think there are a couple of things we can learn from this beloved and sadly self-tortured man that I believe are helpful for our reflection.**

**First, depression and other forms of mental illness are serious business and not to be taken lightly. We can, at times, feel a great impatience with people who deviate from the norm of average mental health. If you know someone suffering from depression, please be patient with them, and, if you are in a position to speak into their life, direct them to someone who can help.**

**Depression can be extremely lonely. And people suffering from depression can become isolated. This isolation can lead to despair and, eventually, suicide, as it did in the case of Robin Williams.**

**Second, it is the broken and wounded areas of our lives that can help us to form relationships that give life. Sharing our brokenness and hurts with a caring person helps us to be not quite as broken and not quite as hopeless as we were. Henri Nouwen wrote that a preacher's goal is to describe the brokenness of the human condition and the healing power of Christ in such a way that the listener says about that preacher, "You know what I know; you feel how I feel; yes, you can speak into my life." The same can be said for any healthy, life-giving relationship. As Christians, we have a power within us to help us to overcome the brokenness and woundedness of our common humanity: it is the power of the resurrection of Christ (Philippians 3:10). We share in the brokenness of the Cross and the power of the resurrection.**

Third, we as Christians ought to be the safest people on the earth for people to share their brokenness and pain with. The redeemed Christian is one who would never say, "I would never do that." The redeemed Christian is also free to acknowledge the broken areas of his or her life and share them in such a way as to give hope to the person they are sharing with. And that's why we need each other in Christian community: to share our hurts and joys together, and to be grateful together for the grace of God in our lives.