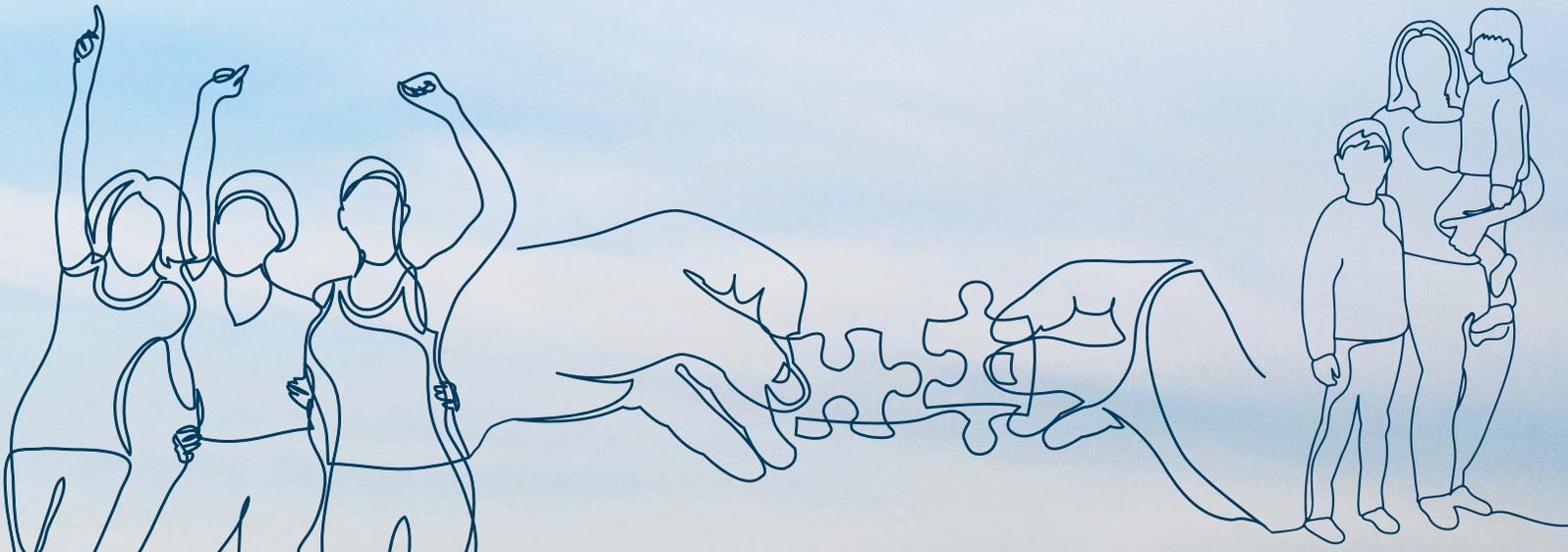




OESTERLEN

Empowering Individuals to Thrive

Congregational Resources for May 2021 Mental Health Awareness Month



This May, join the national movement to raise awareness about mental health. We at Oesterlen, a mental health agency in Springfield, OH, have compiled this resource to help your congregation fight stigma, provide support, educate the public, and be an advocate and ally for people with mental illness and their families. With thanks for the support of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.



937-399-6101 x141 • www.oesterlen.org



OESTERLEN

Empowering Individuals to Thrive

Oesterlen serves approximately 1,000 children, youth, adults and families annually as a comprehensive, multi-program, social services agency with a focus in mental and behavioral health.

Mission Statement

On behalf of the church, in witness to Christ, Oesterlen's mission is to serve children and adults in need to promote their mental, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. To carry out this mission, Oesterlen is dedicated to promoting healthy families and utilizing the highest possible standards within the professional fields of our service. The provision of services by this agency shall be consistent with its mission, and all persons shall have equal access to such services and to employment by the agency in accord with all applicable affirmative action and equal opportunity policies.

Oesterlen's Agency Credentials

Oesterlen is licensed and/or certified by Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Ohio Department of Youth Services, as well as nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation. Oesterlen is a founding member of the Ohio Children's Alliance and Lutheran Services in America. Oesterlen is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its synods in Ohio.

Ways to use Mental Health Awareness Month Resources

This packet includes sermon prompts, web links with many resources, a litany, and links to articles, books, and memoirs that can enhance awareness and understanding.

Congregations can start with small steps:

- Mention mental illness in prayers in May
- Share one story from NAMI's personal stories archive in a sermon
- Focus on mental health awareness and recovery one Sunday in May
- Post on your bulletin board the enclosed posters and rack cards, or others, to fight stigma and invite awareness
- Provide information for your local NAMI chapter and local support
- Include a different infographic page from NAMI each Sunday in May in the bulletin
- Advertise national hotline information such as 1-800-950-NAMI; Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- Share the enclosed "31 Prayers for 31 Days" prayer sheet with your congregation for guided prayer in May

Your congregation can also plan larger events:

- Invite the community to an evening service for Mental Health Awareness and Recovery (sample litany enclosed)
- Invite NAMI to lead a **Bridges of Hope** workshop in your congregation
- Host a 1-1/2 hour QPR suicide prevention training or a day-long Mental Health First Aid training in your church for the community
- Open your doors to a NAMI support group
- Host a "blue Christmas service" around December 20-21, to provide a quiet place of calm, especially for those who are struggling with anxiety, depression, grief or loneliness during the holidays.

Other important dates throughout the year to build awareness:

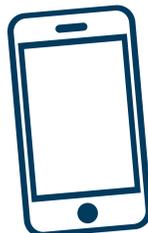
May – Mental Health Awareness Month and Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (May 6)

July - National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month (see <https://mhanational.org/bebemoorecampbell>)

September - Suicide Prevention Awareness Month/ World Suicide Prevention Day (Sept. 10)

October - Mental Illness Awareness Week (first full week)/World Mental Illness Awareness Day (Oct. 10)

If you have any questions, or would like help accessing these resources, please contact Pastor Rachel Tune, Oesterlen Church Relations rtune@oesterlen.org



Use the camera app on your smart phone to scan the QR Codes and connect directly to the web address provided.



Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Oesterlen is grateful to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for their financial support of this initiative.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS

These resources will also be listed on Oesterlen's website by mid-April, under "Mental health resources"

Comprehensive links on Mental Health and Faith/Congregational Life



1) NAMI FaithNet

<https://www.nami.org>

This site is an interfaith resource network of NAMI members, friends, clergy and congregations of all faith traditions who wish to encourage faith communities who are welcoming and supportive of persons and families living with mental illness, and to promote the vital role of spirituality in the recovery journeys of many who live with mental health conditions, those for whom faith is a key component.

It includes information on mental illness, awareness on how to become more welcoming and inclusive, tips for how to help someone with mental illness, sample services and sermons, inspirational healings and prayers, information about National Day of Prayer for mental illness, and other resources. Some of these resources are included in this packet.

It also has links to a Faith and Spirituality Discussion Group and Faith Support Groups.



2) Mental Health Ministries

<http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/index.html>

This is a site rich with resources, from a variety of denominations. Begun by the Rev. Susan Gregg-Schoeder, a United Methodist minister and person who lives with mental illness, the website produces "high quality resources to reduce stigma of mental illness in faith communities and lift up the important role of faith/spirituality in the treatment and recovery process."

It includes litanies and prayers; a variety of denominational sites with information on mental illness; video clips; information on specific mental health conditions and relevant material on COVID-19 and mental health; articles, books, handouts, bulletin inserts, and fliers; information on how to organize a conference and training curriculum.

*It has a section on "what worked for us," where congregations share their ideas.
http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/it_worked_for_us/your_ideas.html*

*And bulletin inserts on topics such as "How Faith Communities Can Support Veterans and their Families," "Mental Illness in Children and Adolescents," and "Mental Health in Challenging Times."
http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/resources/bulletin_inserts.html*



3) The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org>

This site has a wealth of information and stories that can be helpful to build awareness and understanding. An example is this blog post, which speaks to the role of the church in improving mental health in the African American community, citing one study that says over 90% of African Americans reported the use of religion in coping with mental health issues. <https://afsp.org/story/the-role-of-the-church-in-improving-mental-wellness-in-the-african-american-commu>



4) Mental Health and Faith Community Partnership

<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency/engagement-opportunities/mental-health-and-faith-community-partnership>

This guide from the American Psychiatric Association provides information to help faith leaders work with members of their congregations and their families who are facing mental health challenges.



5) Pathways2Promise

<https://www.pathways2promise.org/>

Founded in 1988 by fourteen faith groups and mental health organizations, this program facilitates the faith community's work in reaching out to those with mental illnesses and their families. They provide training, consultation and other resources for faith groups who want to become supportive, caring communities for people with mental illnesses and their families.



6) Mental Health America

<https://mhanational.org/>

A leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all. Includes mental health and stress screening tools.



7) Litanies/Sermons



NAMI FaithNet and Mental Health Ministries
<http://moredomainsforless.com/mhnucc/MentalHealthSunday2019Liturgy.pdf>

Here is an entire service in the UMC tradition, from the invocation to the benediction.



Complete sermon with helpful statistics for Mental Health Awareness Month
<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet/Sample-Services-and-Sermons/Mental-Health-Awareness-It-Is-Important>

8) Articles, stories, other websites



Personal stories provided by NAMI
https://www.nami.org/personal-stories?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-aGCBhCwARIsAHDl5x9RDe_48x348z40NUxqU6DaSH6sZhQKXzrLC5jEct6wS07e6TgHn0MaAklUEALw_wcB



The Silent Stigma of Mental Illness in the Church, by Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, Sojourners magazine
<https://sojo.net/articles/silent-stigma-mental-illness-church>

Topic: The church can be best and worst place for support....The importance of giving space to share story



The Church and Mental Health: What Do the Numbers Tell Us?
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/april/church-and-mental-health.html>

By Ed Stetzer, Christianity Today, this is an excellent article that summarizes a study of the impact of mental illness on congregations, including on pastors, and gives practical advice on how to support people. The author boils down the research on what members are asking for to two central points:

- 1) *talk about the issues*
- 2) *make sure the congregation knows exactly what resources are available to them, both within the local church and community.*

This article originally appeared in the Vol. 21, No. 2 issue of Christian Counseling Today magazine, a quarterly publication of the American Association of Christian Counselors.



"No Casseroles for Schizophrenics: The Church and Mental Illness,"
<http://www.eminnews.com/wp/2015/07/10/no-casseroles-for-schizophrenics/>

By The Rev. Kathryn Greene-McCreight, along with other resources from the Episcopal Mental Illness Network to bring awareness and fight stigma.



Mental Health Ministries – Support and Education
<http://www.miministry.org/support.htm>

A Chicago-area resource created by the Catholic church, this resource contains pastoral resources on holy listening, an outline of a 5-part series for the parish, and 16 specific actions for the parish.



Mental Illness and Ministry with Children
<https://childrensministry.com/mental-illness/>

A blog provided by Group Publishing, Inc, discussing ways to help de-stigmatize mental illness and grow awareness in children's ministry in congregations.



ELCA Social Statement on The Body of Christ and Mental Illness
<https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Mental-Illness>

9) Books



Fireflies: Finding Light in a Dark World by Heather Gordon-Young
<http://www.eminnews.com/wp/2015/07/10/fireflies-finding-light-in-a-dark-world/>

A review of this spiritual memoir of a sister who shares her quest to help her brother face a mental illness. Recommended by pastoral leaders with experience working with people with mental illness:

Anxious: Choosing Faith in a World of Worry, Amy Simpson, IVP Books, 2014.

Blessed are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family & Church, Sarah Griffith Lund, Chalice Press, 2014.

Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness, Kathryn Greene-McCreight, Brazos Press, 2015.

Mental Health and the Church: A Ministry Handbook for Including Children and Adults with ADHD, Anxiety, Mood Disorders, and Other Common Mental Health Conditions, Stephen Grcevich, MD, Zondervan, 2018.

Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families, Robert H. Albers, William H. Meller, and Steven D. Thurber, editors. Fortress Press, 2012.

Spirituality and Mental Health Care: Rediscovering a 'Forgotten' Dimension, John Swinton, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001.

Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission, Amy Simpson, IVP Books, 2013.

Understanding Mental Illness: A Comprehensive Guide to Mental Health Disorders for Family and Friends, Carlin Barnes, MD, Marketa Wills, MD, Skyhorse, 2019.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

SERMON PROMPTS



May 2, 2021 – Easter 5B

Acts 8:26-40; Psalm 22:25-31;
1 John 4:7-21; John 15:1-8

and



May 8, 2021 – Easter 6B

Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98;
1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

In Acts 8:36, the Ethiopian asks “what is to prevent me from being baptized?” and Phillip immediately baptizes him. In Acts 10:47, Peter asks, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing...?” and then they were baptized.

Sometimes we put up barriers to discipleship, to involvement in the church, even to baptism. Sometimes, due to stigma, misunderstanding, or lack of awareness, mental illness can seem to be one of those barriers. Personal stories of people who have faced mental illness are available at the web address below, and reveal the many ways stigmatization of mental illness impacts getting help and full inclusion.

But the stories are also powerful reminders of the power of community. Our congregations can be places of welcome and affirmation, places where people who live with mental illness themselves or loved ones can live out their faith, follow Jesus, and find support and compassion in the body of Christ.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) provides some ways to start to provide a welcoming congregation and many other tools at the web address below. NAMI also has a program called “**Bridges of Hope**,” in which presenters can come to your congregation to partner in the journey of becoming more welcoming congregation.

These are ways that we can “love one another” as 1 John 4:7 says, for “love is of God,” and to be a place that affirms the gifts of everyone to “bear fruit” (John 15:8) in Christ. The love Jesus shows us is one that “lays down one’s life” for others (John 15:12-13). Perhaps for us as congregations, this means allowing space for people to be themselves, to go outside of our own comfort zone and to simply allow people to be human? To recognize that mental illness, along with physical illness, can be part of the human journey? In these tasks, we are never alone, for Christ is the vine, and we abide in him and he in us (John 15:5).

<https://www.nami.org/Personal-stories>

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet/How-To-Be-Inclusive-And-Welcoming>



May 15, 2021 – Easter 7B

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1;
1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

There is a theme of “being sent” in these scripture, as Matthias is called to be one of the disciples in Acts 1:26, of the language of testimony in 1 John 5:9-13, and of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:18, “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”

Each of us is called to share the Gospel with others. Those of us with mental illness and/or addiction are also called to share God’s good news in our lives. Often times, God is able to use our testimony to help others see God’s love in the midst of difficult times. But there are many other aspects and gifts to our identity as well: a gift for story telling or song, a gift for building things or crunching numbers, a gift for teaching or hospitality, and by God’s grace, we are sent out in to the world to share the good news. People from all walks of life and all areas of vocation have mental illness. (Statistics, definitions, and other information are available at the web address below.)

It is also important to remember that one of the most important things we can do when we are “sent” is to listen! It is a great gift to listen to others, to hear their story. As one pastor has said, “We receive the Word, Jesus, by encountering, by hearing. It is important that we stop, look, and listen to a greater picture before us before we launch into our testimony.”

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness>



May 22, 2021 – Day of Pentecost B

Acts 2:1-21; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:22-27;
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

“Can these bones live?” the Lord asks in Ezekiel 37:3. A friend who lives with mental illness read those words and took heart in the story of the valley of dry bones coming to life. She said, “The fact that I’m feeling despair in this moment does not mean that it will always be so.” A similar theme can be found in the other lessons: That God is always at work creating (Psalm 104), and the present moment is not all there is; that we hope for what we do not see (Romans 8:25). In John 15, Jesus promises to send us an “Advocate,” also translated a “comforter,” a “counselor,” or simply, “someone to stand by you.”

Sometimes we think we are called to “fix” mental illness, when what really might be most helpful is to stand by another, to be an ally and advocate. The video about



the Life Skills Center at Oesterlen Services for Youth, a mental health agency in Springfield, OH, which is affiliated with the ELCA, shares a story about long-term recovery, trauma-informed care, and what accompaniment means in their therapeutic garden. You will find it at the bottom of Oesterlen's home page, www.oesterlen.org. Jesus, of course, is speaking about the Holy Spirit, who is always with us, and is the source of our faith, hope, and love as the body of Christ.

May 29, 2021 – Trinity Sunday B

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5;
John 16:12-15

On Trinity Sunday, we celebrate the Oneness of God, the mystery of the Trinity, who comes to us in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is a God of relationships, embedded in the very idea of what it means to be a Triune God,

and in the Love that God shows us in each person of the Trinity. In the same way, we as the body of Christ are about relationships. God did not create us to be alone, and Jesus called forth the disciples as a group to serve, and speaks about the church as the body.

Romans 5:5 says "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given us." This comes after Paul's testimony that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Often it does not help someone to be told that their "suffering is for a purpose," or "God does not give us more than we handle," or other phrases that might oversimplify the situation. To be sure, our suffering might ultimately produce character or any other fruit, but it is usually something we come to understand over time, on our terms, rather than someone telling us it is so. Yet one thing we can be sure of is that hope does not disappoint us, not because of our strength or valor, but because "God's love has been poured into our hearts."

Written by Pastor Rachel Tune and Olivia Riddle, Oesterlen Intern. Please use freely as needed.

LITANY FOR DAY OF PRAYER FOR MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS AND RECOVERY

Lord, you are the great Healer.
Today we pray for those who live with mental illness.
For those overwhelmed by depression and anxious feelings,
bring healing, bring peace.
For those who suffer from the high and lows of severe mood swings,
bring healing, bring peace.
For those who are tormented by voices and hallucinations,
bring healing, bring peace.
For those who find it difficult to cope with tasks of daily living,
bring healing, bring peace.
For those who struggle with suicidal thoughts,
bring healing, bring peace.

God of great gifts,
thank you for the courage of those who live with mental illness.
Thank you for the patience of family and friends who support.
Thank you for our health system and all who work to
bring healing, bring peace.
Give us wisdom and insight as a church,
as a community, as a society,
to be places that can
bring healing, bring peace.

<https://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship/2010/09/litany-for-mental-illness.html>

LITANY FOR DAY OF PRAYER

Scripture

Psalms 57:1 "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by."

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

A Prayer by Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder

Loving Creator, we come to you on this National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding because we know that you are a God of love and compassion.

We come seeking your presence, comfort and guidance. We come as people with mental illness and mental health needs, as family members, friends, co-workers and mental health professionals. We come this day because we believe that you, Divine One, love each one of us fully, you have created us in your image, and you walk with us on our individual journeys through life. You see the ignorance and injustice that divides and separates persons struggling with mental illness; change our hearts and our communities by the gift of your Holy Spirit to break down these barriers and harmful actions.

Give us courage to face our challenges and open us today to the many ways you are already working in our midst. Help us to identify mental illness as the disease it is, that we might have courage and wisdom in the face of ignorance and stigma. Inspire us as we seek to overcome fear, acquire knowledge, and advocate for compassionate and enlightened treatment and services.

Lead us as we open our hearts and homes, our communities and job opportunities, our houses of worship and communities of faith. Enable us to find ways to be inclusive of persons living with mental illness in our everyday lives. Be with doctors, therapists, researchers, social workers, and all those in the helping professions as they seek to overcome ignorance and injustice with care and compassion.

Sometimes, Divine Spirit, we feel discouraged and hopeless in the face of so many challenges. Help us to see ourselves as you see us...persons of value and worth...persons of creativity and potential. May we come to understand the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit in bringing about health and wholeness. And may we go forward into our communities with a renewed sense of vision, hope and possibility for the future. Amen.

(Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder)

(Candles may be lit and personal reflections may be shared; Psalm 130 may be read)

Sending

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet/Inspirational-and-Healing-Prayers/National-Day-of-Prayer-for-Mental-Illness-Recovery#:~:text=All%3A%20O%20God%2C%20our%20liberaon,Amen>.

Psalm 130—A Pilgrim Song, from *The Message*, a paraphrase by Eugene Peterson

¹⁻² Help, GOD—the bottom has fallen out of my life!

Master, hear my cry for help!

Listen hard! Open your ears! Listen to my cries for mercy.

³⁻⁴ If you, GOD, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance?

As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit, and that's why you're worshiped.

⁵⁻⁶ I pray to GOD—my life a prayer—

and wait for what he'll say and do.

My life's on the line before God, my Lord, waiting and watching till morning, waiting and watching till morning.

⁷⁻⁸ O Israel, wait and watch for GOD—

with GOD's arrival comes love,
with GOD's arrival comes generous redemption.

No doubt about it—he'll redeem Israel,
buy back Israel from captivity to sin.



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