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VOLUME 3

M E N T A L H E A L T H

Toolkit

#breakthestigma



POWERED BY

THE **Lutheran**
Foundation

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

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INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Foundation is pleased to release this 3rd edition of our Congregational Mental Health Toolkit to help fulfill our mission to advance Gospel sharing and promote mental wellness that silences the stigma of mental illness.

With the rise in mental health needs due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people are looking to the Church for help, comfort, and hope. The 2022 Mental Health Toolkit is designed to help equip your congregation with practical and hope-filled faith-based mental health material all in one package.

We are especially excited that this year's toolkit includes the initial release of a hymn related to mental health! We hope that this hymn will become a new favorite among your congregation members.

We are also excited to offer two visual faith tools from Visual Faith Ministry in this year's toolkit, which allow for a contemplative, meditative approach for God's Word through art. We extend a special thanks to Visual Faith Ministry artist Ann Gillaspie, who created artwork around the theme of the toolkit's Bible study as well as a page of fun bookmark designs. We hope you enjoy these faith enhancing tools and invite you to explore additional ones on the Visual Faith Ministry website: <https://www.visualfaithmin.org/>

While these materials were created in recognition and celebration of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, many of the resources within this toolkit can be used at any time during the year as your congregation strives to reach out to those in your midst living with mental illness and their families.

In addition to this toolkit there are faith-based mental health resources available on the Look Up Indiana website: www.lookupindiana.org. You can access these materials by clicking on "Faith & Mental Health" on the homepage.

We pray that these ready-made materials will be a blessing to you and to your congregation and community as you reach out to them with the love of Christ.

In Christ's Service and Yours,

Deaconess Carole Terkula

MINISTRY ASSOCIATE AT THE LUTHERAN FOUNDATION

MARCH 2022

BIBLE STUDY INTRODUCTION

Companionship Exemplified: Biblical Examples of the 5 Practices of Companionship

This Bible study was originally written as a complementary piece to the Companionship workshop by Pathways to Promise, but it can also be used as a stand-alone topical Bible study on mental wellness. It is ideal for congregations seeking to create a more caring community, especially in forming authentic relationships with people struggling with mental health concerns in their congregation or neighborhood and supporting them in their wellness journey.

Why do this study on Companionship? Because people living with mental health concerns can thrive when they feel a sense of belonging and purpose, have meaningful connections with others, and participate in community. And there is no better place for people to experience this than in the Church! This Bible study will help you and your congregation learn the building blocks for creating deeper connections and community.

The Bible study contains five sections, one for each of the five practices of Companionship: Hospitality, Neighboring, Side-by-Side, Listening, and Accompaniment. Each section contains at least one Bible verse related to the Companionship practice, at least one Biblical account which exemplifies that Companionship practice, and some discussion questions. It is recommended to go through one section at a time; therefore, this Bible study could take five weeks to complete depending on the length of your meeting/class.

This Bible study will flow best if there is a designated Bible study leader who guides the group discussion. One person can serve as the Bible study leader for the entire study, or you may have people take turns leading it each week. The designated leader should go through the lesson in advance, looking up the Bible passages and preparing his/her own answers in order to be well-prepared for group discussion and anticipate any questions that people may raise during the study.

If you have already been trained in the Companionship Model, this Bible study would be ideal for use in your Companionship Team meetings as a continuing education piece which can deepen your understanding of your work and provide encouragement in it. If you have not yet had the opportunity to be trained in Companionship, but would be interested in doing so, please contact Deaconess Carole Terkula: Carole@thelutheranfoundation.org; or call 260-458-2115. More information about Pathways to Promise Companionship training can be found on their website: <https://www.thecompanionshipmovement.org/>

Finally, we recommend using the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible for this study, as it most closely captures the precise wording of the original text. God's blessings to you as you delve into this Bible study!

Companionship Defined

Companionship is a practice of presence rooted in our natural capacities as human beings to act on our concern for another person. The Companionship Model was developed in 1987 by Rev. Craig Rennebohm when he founded the Mental Health Chaplaincy organization in Seattle, Washington as a way to engage with people experiencing homelessness and emotional and mental health challenges. Over time the practice of Companionship has been extended to a wider array of people, including those who are survivors of trauma, those with substance use disorder, those in crisis, and even those experiencing age related memory loss and dementia. Offering Companionship, however, is not exclusive to our engagement with strangers, but can be offered as well to our friends, families, work associates, and anyone we encounter who may be feeling socially isolated or distressed in some fashion. A Companion is a person who shows kindness to those they encounter; they are a neighbor who walks alongside another person in distress, offering encouragement and hope.

We all face times of adversity in life. Companionship training helps equip us to understand the suffering of another on some level, offer compassionate care, and help connect the other person to resources beneficial to overall well-being. (This is a summary of ideas captured on pages 7-11 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)

Note: The organization Pathways to Promise manages and disseminates The Companionship Movement trainings and resources. Please visit their website for more information: <https://www.pathways2promise.org/> or email their Executive Director Jermine Alberty at jalberty@pathways2promise.org.

Exploring the Five Practices of Companionship through Biblical Examples

Hospitality

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” (Romans 12:13)

Providing a welcoming, friendly atmosphere that is safe, comfortable, and inviting is the hallmark of hospitality. Indeed, warmly receiving people into our houses of worship makes them feel valued and provides the foundation for fellowship and community-building. And we know that healing happens in community; hope happens in connection with one another. (This is a summary of the section on Hospitality on page 17 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)

Opening Discussion Questions

1. When someone visits your home, what are some things you usually do to extend hospitality to your guest(s)?

2. Do you know someone with the gift of hospitality? If so, how has that person exemplified being a good host/hostess in your opinion?

3. Think of some of the ways hotels, restaurants and other service-based businesses try to show hospitality to their customers/clients. Share some of them here.

4. Have you ever had an experience where you did not receive hospitality? If so, how did that make you feel?

5. If you were a first-time visitor to your church, how would you like people to show you hospitality?

Biblical Examples of Hospitality

Read: Genesis 18:1-8

Hospitality is about welcoming people with respect and dignity and offering a safe and comfortable environment where they can find rest and refreshment.

6. Describe how Abraham offered hospitality to his three guests using the description of hospitality above as your guide. Then think of specific ways your congregation offers hospitality using the same guidelines.

HOSPITABLE ACTIONS	ABRAHAM	YOUR CONGREGATION
Welcoming people with dignity and respect		
Offering a safe and comfortable environment		
Offering rest and refreshment		

7. The Latin root for the word “Companionship” is “cum panis,” which means “with bread.” Indeed, food aides in fellowship building. Jesus knew this truth and often enjoyed table fellowship with his disciples and others, where He broke bread with them, taught them, and built relationships with them. Try to list at least 3 Biblical accounts where Jesus practiced this kind of companionship with others:

A.

B.

C.

8. It is especially important to extend hospitality to people experiencing mental health concerns or who are in some sort of emotional distress because they often feel ignored, avoided, isolated, and marginalized. Hospitality acknowledges their inherent dignity and worth as human beings made in the image of God. **Read Luke 19:1-10.**

A. Why would Zacchaeus have been despised by religious leaders in his day?

B. When Jesus reached the spot where Zacchaeus was, what was the first word out of Jesus' mouth?

C. Why is it important to call people by name, especially visitors? When people appear in church whom you have not yet met, you can approach them and say: "Hello! I don't think I have had the pleasure of meeting you yet. My name is _____. How do you like to be called?"

D. How did Jesus view Zacchaeus? How did the way Jesus treated Zacchaeus communicate to Zacchaeus and others his dignity, value, and worth in God's eyes? How can we do likewise to everyone we encounter?

9. In his book *Mental Health and the Church*, Dr. Stephen Grcevich points out several ways congregations can help make their environment most welcoming for people with anxiety and other mental health issues. He offers the following questions to help guide congregations in creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Consider these questions and discuss as a group:

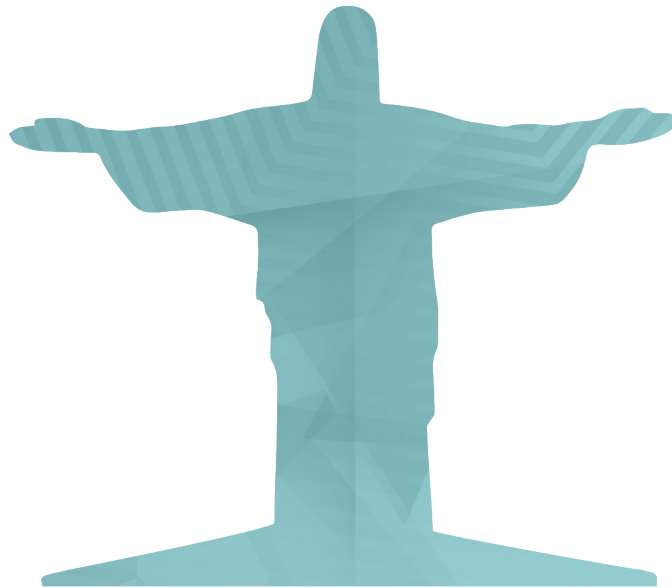
- A. Does our congregation offer a private tour of our facility upon request so that people could walk through our building sometime prior to Sunday worship service in order to reduce anxiety about where things are located and know what to expect? Do we announce that these private tours are available upon request on our website for those seeking a church?
- B. Would a first-time visitor to our church struggle to find where they (or their children) need to go from our signage (both indoor and outdoor)? How can our signage be as clear as possible to reduce stress, anxiety, and frustration?
- C. Can someone predisposed to severe anxiety/panic attacks in crowded or confined spaces inconspicuously find a comfortable place to sit during worship service? How do we communicate the existence of this space?
- D. Can we identify a quiet place (or spaces) within our facility where an adult or child might go to experience privacy while regaining emotional self-control/composure?

10. Based on your reflections on this section on hospitality, how can your congregation improve the hospitality it extends to people who visit as well as to long-time members?

Neighboring

The practice of neighboring invites us to discover our common humanity—that is, focusing on what we have in common with one another, setting aside our power and privilege, and meeting as equals. In neighboring, we view the other person as one who is created in the image of God and someone for whom Christ died. Therefore, the other person has great inherent value, worth, and dignity.

Neighboring allows us to come alongside those who may be in distress and offer them care in some fashion. Oftentimes the care comes in the form of building a relationship and then connecting the other person to available resources which may assist them in their time of need. (This is a summary of the section on Neighboring on page 18 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)



“‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Matthew 22:36-39

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

1Thessalonians 5:11

Opening Discussion Questions

11. Some of the most common questions we tend to ask another person when meeting them for the first time tend to put people in pigeonholes, or create a sense of hierarchy and power that is detrimental to the mindset of seeing the other person as being of equal value in God's sight. Some of these questions include, "Where do you work?" "Where do you live?" "Are you married?" "Do you have any children?" "Which church do you attend?"
 - A. Can you think of some other questions we commonly ask others that tend to "put people in boxes" or that stereotype them, or that we ask to see how we "stack up?"
 - B. Open-ended questions that allow for the other person to share that with which they feel comfortable are often best. For example, try asking: "Tell me a little bit about yourself." Or, "Tell me a little bit about what's going on in your world these days." These types of open-ended questions come across as less intimidating and allow the other person to reveal what they feel comfortable sharing. Practice asking these questions with a partner in your Bible study group now. How did it feel to ask these questions? How did it feel to respond?
12. Can you think of a time when you were asked a direct question which made you feel as if you were on the spot/uncomfortable and you were made to feel "less than?" Describe that situation and the range of emotions you may have experienced, sharing as you feel comfortable.
13. Personal reflection question: If a person experiencing homelessness, wearing shabby clothes and with personal hygiene issues were to enter your church on Sunday and approach you for help, what would your initial thoughts and reactions be? Be honest! The practice of neighboring attends to the preconceived notions, opinions, and biases we hold. How could you lay aside any hierarchical thoughts and pigeonholing tendencies and see the person Jesus sees? Read Matthew 25:34-40 and discuss as a group.

Biblical Example of Neighboring

Read: Luke 10:25-37 (again, we recommend using the ESV for this passage)

*Before beginning this section, take time to review and discuss how the story of the Samaritan in Luke 10 was used as an anchor for the overall Companionship Model in the Companionship workshop.

Some historical context: In Jesus' day there was bitter hostility between Jews and Samaritans, whom some Jews believed were inferior half-breeds. Samaritans were a mixed race resulting from the intermarriage of the Israelites left behind during the exile and the Gentiles who were in that area. Many Jews tended to view the Samaritans as "unclean" and avoided contact with them even to the point of going around Samaria rather than walking through it, even though it would have been the shorter route between Jerusalem and Galilee.

Furthermore, some Jews viewed Samaritans as spiritual inferiors because their sacred writings only included the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch), and the Samaritans rejected the other inspired writings included in the Old Testament. Because their sacred writings did not contain the full prophecy of the coming Messiah, the Samaritans' view of the Messiah was very limited; they tended to think of him merely as a teacher rather than a savior.

The Pharisees were some of the powerful Jewish leaders and teachers in Jesus' day who devoted themselves to strict observance of God's Law. Unfortunately their zealousness for keeping God's Law led to self-righteous thoughts which often overshadowed love for their fellow man.

14. A. In this passage, who does Jesus declare to be the neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

B. Why would this have been both shocking and humbling to the Pharisee who posed the question to Jesus and to Jewish listeners?

15. How did the Samaritan view the man who had been beaten and left by the side of the road?

16. The Samaritan's compassion for his fellow human being spurred him to action. How did the Samaritan care for the man who was left for dead on the side of the road? How was this an enactment of Jesus' words in Matthew 22:36-39?
17. In Matthew 9:13 Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 when he states, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'"
- A. What do you think Jesus means by this statement?
- B. How is the Samaritan an exemplar of Hosea 6:6? Discuss the irony.
- C. How is Jesus ultimately the Good Samaritan to us?
- D. Having received God's great mercy towards us, we are then able to extend mercy to one another. Discuss the connection between our Baptismal union with Christ and the good works we do in His name (Consider John 15:5).
- E. As Christians, how can we show mercy by helping "bandage the wounds" of those God places in our midst?
- Share some specific ways we can care for those with physical ailments:
 - Share some specific ways we can care for those with mental and/or emotional hurts:
 - Share some specific ways we can care for those with spiritual sickness:

18. Note that the Samaritan gave what assistance he could at that particular time using the resources at his personal disposal, and then he entrusted the beaten man's care to others who could best care for the man long-term. That is, the Samaritan connected the beaten man to others who could help him too. It is reassuring to know that we don't have to be the sole "hero" for someone else in need—we can and we should employ the help of others who can create a circle of care around that person.

A. Does your congregation have a referral list of a variety of resources that you can share with people in need? If your church does not have a list of local mental health resources, you might consider creating a binder of such materials for ease of access for those seeking community assistance. Pathways to Promise's *Mental Health Ministry: A Toolkit for Faith Communities* has a useful template for creating a list of community helps on p.34.

LookUpIndiana.org, created by The Lutheran Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana, also has a local provider search button on the homepage where you can enter your zip code to find agencies and organizations which can provide assistance to those in need.

B. Do you know when your congregation's referral list was last updated?

C. It has been said that a referral list is only as good as it is shared. Are people in your congregation aware that this referral list exists?

D. Having a referral list is important; however, being able to provide a warm hand-off to resources for people who are struggling is even better. A "warm hand-off" means you help people needing assistance by directly connecting them to the source(s) of care. That could include making a phone call or email to an organization with their permission on their behalf, or even arranging for their transportation to the agency(ies) where they can get further connected to help. Consider how your congregation can provide a warm hand-off utilizing your referral list.

E. How can your congregation let people know that you can connect them to helpful resources?

**Discuss why you think the Samaritan story was used as the Biblical exemplar piece for the practice of Neighboring in this study. Can you think of other Biblical examples which would fit Neighboring? Explain.*

Side-by-Side

The Companionship practice called Side-by-Side reminds us to be mindful of how we position ourselves in the physical space surrounding another person and also our relational stance with that person. Side-by-Side involves walking in love alongside the other person on their wellness journey. Sharing the journey side-by-side helps us to look out at the world together, not imposing our ideas or agenda on the other person. The side-by-side stance allows two people to walk in their relationship with mutuality together. As Companions, we do not push or prod or lead the other person into taking steps he/she is not ready or willing to take. We simply walk alongside, helping create a greater sense of respect and agency as we honor the capacity of the other to act with autonomy. (This is a summary of the section on Side-by-Side on page 19 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)



"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Ephesians 5:1-2

Opening Discussion Questions

19. The practice of Side-by-Side reminds us to be mindful of how we position ourselves in the physical space surrounding another person.
- A. How might direct face-to-face, eye-to-eye contact come across to someone who already feels marginalized?
 - B. Can you recall a time when you felt uncomfortable with the proximity or stance of another person towards you? Share what that experience was like for you.
20. The practice of Side-by-Side also deals with our relational stance to others, and the importance of letting the other person take the lead in his/her journey. As much as we are able, we can help equip them to take the lead and also encourage them as they take those steps forward.
- A. Can you think of a time in your life when you were pushed or prodded into doing something you now wish you had not done? How did that make you feel at the time? Share as you feel comfortable.
 - B. Describe a time in your life when someone simply walked alongside you in a particular situation or circumstance in your life. How did the way that person related to you during that time impact you?

Biblical Examples of Side-by-Side

Read: Luke 24:13-16

21. Note that on the road to Emmaus Jesus walks alongside the two disciples in their bewilderment, disappointment, and sorrow. Sometimes the greatest comfort we can give someone is simply being present with them in their pain.
- A. As he walks with the disciples, what does Jesus ask in verse 17?

 - B. Note how Jesus then simply listens to the disciples' story. Explain how listening to another person with undivided attention and genuine concern is one of the best gifts we can give.

 - C. Now read **Luke 24:28-29**. Note that Jesus' staying with his disciples, His abiding presence with them is the key point. List at least 3 Bible verses that come to mind that remind us of God's abiding presence with us always. Use these verses to help encourage someone who may be feeling isolated and alone at this time:

1)

2)

3)

D. In Luke 24:30-32, Jesus reveals Himself in the breaking of the bread. According to His Word, Jesus is present in the bread and wine at The Lord's Supper, and we receive Him and remain connected to Him when we partake of His body and blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins.

- 1) How does the certain promise that Jesus comes to us in Communion provide us comfort?

- 2) What does this reveal to us about the importance of directing people to the worship service in the sanctuary where they can hear God's Word and participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, especially when they are feeling lonely and isolated? (See also Matthew 18:20).

- 3) It is difficult to walk side-by-side with another if we do not have the opportunity to be in fellowship with one another. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 has certainly underscored this fact. **Read Hebrews 10:25** and discuss its implications and some of its challenges in light of your current ministry context.

- 4) Brainstorm some ways in which you can still walk alongside someone as a Companion even when you cannot physically be by their side.

Read: Matthew 20:29-34 and Mark 10:46-52

22. It is important to note in these passages that Jesus asks the other people what they would like done for them. Why do you think He did this?

23. Often we are quick to assume that we know precisely what the other person needs or wants without asking first. As a Companion, it can be helpful to ask, “What do you need?” “What would you like me to assist you with?” Discuss how these questions correlate with maintaining the dignity, agency and autonomy of the other person.

24. Sometimes the other person may ask us to assist them in ways in which we are not able or in ways which may not be appropriate. Even Jesus experienced this. **Read Mark 10:35-45.**

A. Indeed, giving what the other person asks for may not always be in their best interest (or ours!) Discuss some instances in which this may be true.

B. As Companions, we learn that we have graciously been given limits and boundaries. It is okay to simply say, “I’m not able to do that.” You may be able to add, “Nevertheless, I am able to do X, Y, Z for you instead.” Discuss how acknowledging our limitations actually creates mutuality with another person.

C. As Christians who practice Companionship, we always point to Jesus Christ as the One who attends to our needs of body and soul. Christ alone is the Savior, Provider, and Healer. List 3 people who come to mind who may need an extra measure of comfort in knowing Christ’s abiding presence and care:

1)

2)

3)

Then plan to share with them the verses of comfort you chose in question 21C. Consider including these verses in an email, text, or card to the other person, or include it in prayer as you are praying with and for that person.

LISTENING

The practice of listening opens us up to another's story, allowing us to hear the account without passing judgment. It is truly a gift to listen to someone without interruption or without offering our immediate opinion or advice. Listening in such a way honors the other person and helps pave the way for developing an authentic relationship with him/her. (This is a summary of the section on Listening on pages 20-22 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)



*"Know this, my beloved brothers: Let every person be quick to hear,
slow to speak, slow to anger."*

James 1:19

Opening Discussion Questions

25. Comment on James 1:19 above. How does this verse rank the skill of listening?

Why do you think listening is so highly valued by our Lord?

26. Recall an instance when someone took the time to simply listen to you. How did that make you feel? What affect did that have on your relationship with the other person?

27. Brainstorm and list some ways in which we can show with our body language and brief utterances that we are actively listening.

Biblical Examples of Listening

Read: Proverbs 20:5

28. Discuss how the “man of understanding” in Proverbs 20:5 comes to understand the purposes of another man’s heart.
29. Active listening as a Companion involves more than simply hearing the other person. In fact, drawing more information out of people usually requires active listening over time. To encourage people to share more of their experience, feelings, and thoughts, it may be helpful to ask: “Tell me more about that. . .” or “What was that like for you?” or “Help me better understand what you meant when you said. . .” Can you think of other helpful phrases you have used to draw more information out of people as they tell their story?

It is wonderful when we have a companion who will listen to us and provide comfort and encouragement in time of need. God is our ultimate Companion when it comes to listening! In fact, God invites us to be in frequent conversation with Him! God loves His children and as a caring Father, He listens to us when we pray to Him. God’s Word reminds us repeatedly that He hears us when we pray, listens to our concerns and pleas, and answers us according to His good will. Let’s read a few passages that remind of us God’s promises to hear us.

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-12; Psalm 18:6; Psalm 66:19-20; Isaiah 65:24

30. What stood out to you in God’s promises in the verses above?
31. When we are Companionship people, it is always good to remind them that we are not the only one who listens, but that God also desires to listen to their story. It is good to encourage them to pour their hearts out to the One who promises to lovingly hear anytime they call upon Him. Moreover, because Jesus was fully man, He can relate to what we are going through and compassionately listens to us and pleads our case before our Heavenly Father.
- Read Hebrews 4:14-16.** What makes these verses so comforting?

32. **Read 1 John 2:1-2.** According to these verses, besides listening to us, what else does Jesus do on our behalf? Discuss the significance of these verses and the impact they have on you.

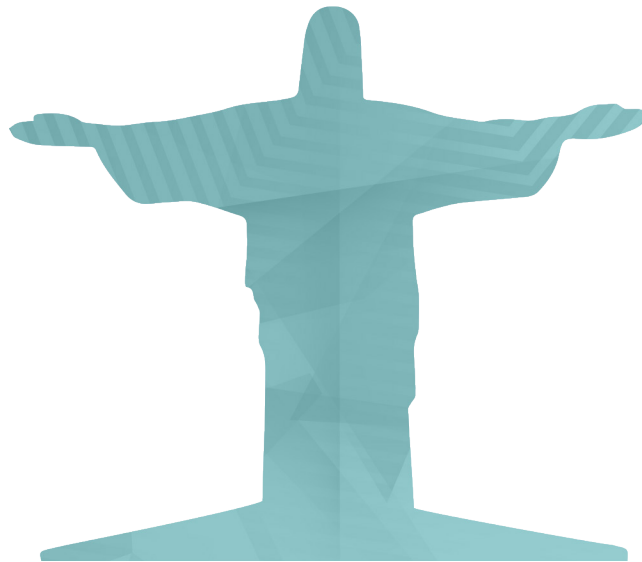
As Companions, we are given the privilege of giving voice to another’s need by communicating the need with others who can help. This occurs in the practice of Accompaniment.

ACCOMPANIMENT

The practice of accompaniment is simply walking alongside the other person, recognizing the material capacity you may have to help that person, and further supporting that person through connecting him/her with community resources to build a circle of care.

Indeed, one of the main reasons why Companionship is practiced in public spaces is so that you are more readily able to connect others who can help to the person in need. That is, Companionship is ultimately meant to be done in community, and maintaining a public relationship provides greater opportunity for such community to exist.

In Question 18 in the section on the practice of Neighboring above, we have already addressed the importance of connecting the person in need to local community resources and having a referral list to these resources handy. In this section, we will be focusing on the wealth of resources that exist within one of your closest circles of influence—the people you know in your church community! God has given many gifts and talents to the Body of Christ to be a blessing to others and to give God glory. (This is a summary of the section on Accompaniment on page 24 in your *Companionship Training Guidebook*.)



"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; be warm and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

James 2:15-16

Opening Discussion Questions

33. Share with the group a talent, gift, hobby, or area of expertise that you have which others may not already know about you.

34. Share some specific ways you are currently using your God-given talents/gifts (or have used them in the past) to help care for the Body of Christ and further His kingdom.

Biblical Examples of Accompaniment

Read: Luke 8:1-3 and Mark 15:40-41

35. What were the names of the some of the women who comprised the circle of care for Jesus and His disciples?

36. According to the passage in Luke, how were they caring for Jesus and His disciples?

37. A. According to the passage in Mark, besides financially supporting Jesus' ministry, how were the women caring for Him and His disciples?

B. Here are some possible ways they may have been practically caring for the needs of Jesus and His disciples: Preparing meals, providing housing, making clothing, doing laundry, etc. How else might they have created a circle of care around Jesus and His disciples?

Now Read Luke 23:55-24:3

38. How were the women continuing to care for Jesus in very practical and tangible ways even after His death?

One of the oils used to anoint bodies for burial in Jesus' day was myrrh. It comes from the sap of a tree which only grows in the Arabian peninsula and because of its high demand it was very costly in Biblical times. In fact, some historians believe that myrrh was just as costly as gold in ancient times.

Read Acts 9:36-43

39. In the passage from Acts we learn of a dedicated Christian lady named Dorcas who used her gifts to care for those in need. What specifically did she do to care for people based on these verses?

40. What are some of the ways in which your congregation cares for each other and for people in need in your community? How might these same gifts be shared with those whom you companion?

41. Does your congregation utilize a time and talent survey to ascertain what the specific talents and gifts of your members are and how they might be used in Christ's service within your congregation? If so, when was this survey last updated? Have all your new members received this time and talent survey? Does the head of each board or committee within your congregation use the results of this survey to reach out to new and existing members to include them in the work and life of the church? If your congregation does not have such a time a talent survey, you may wish to use or modify one such as this : <https://www.freechurchforms.com/support-files/timetalentsurvey.pdf> from the Free Church Forms.Com website: https://www.freechurchforms.com/survey_examples.html (see the "Time, Talent, Etc." survey).

In the practice of Companionship, it is truly helpful to be acquainted with the talents and abilities of other congregation members so that you can include them in the circle of care supporting the person you're companioning. How well do you know the God-given gifts of those next to you in the pew on Sunday? How might their gifts bless others and the Lord?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

42. What stood out to you the most in this Bible study on Companionship and why?
43. What insights have you learned from this study which you can apply within your personal life and/or congregational life?
44. A. Which practice of Companionship do you think is the easiest one for you to practice? Why?
- B. Which practice do you think is the most challenging? Explain.
45. How do you envision your congregation embodying the practices of Companionship going forward?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are our greatest Companion in life now and for all eternity! Thank you for making this possible through Your death on the cross for the sins of the whole world and Your resurrection from the dead. Forgive us when we neglect to show compassion to those in need around us. Give us courage to love and engage with others who are struggling with mental health issues and other concerns of body, mind, and soul. Help us connect them to appropriate resources and to always point to You, the Great Physician, as our ultimate source of comfort, encouragement, and hope. In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.

**Note on using the Visual Faith Ministry artwork that accompanies this Bible study: On the next page of this toolkit you will find a piece of art designed by Ann Gillaspie, an artist with Visual Faith Ministry. This piece captures the theme of Companionship, and we hope that it provides you with an additional way to process what you learn from God's Word in this study. You can color in the piece as you go through the sections of the study or use it as a piece for overall reflection at the end of your study.*

This Bible study was written by Deaconess Carole Terkula, Ministry Associate at The Lutheran Foundation, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, April 2021, in collaboration with Pathways to Promise. Carole@thelutheranfoundation.org

**Pathways to Promise permits you to reproduce and distribute this Bible study as is. This Bible study may not be modified in any way.*



BOOK CLUB

Suggested Readings on the Topic of Mental Health

Consider forming a book club in your congregation where you could read and discuss the following books. Or use these books for continuing education for your church staff, Stephen Ministry team, mental health ministry team, etc.

Are You Really Ok?: Getting Real About Who You Are, How You're Doing, and Why it Matters

By Debra Fileta, 2021

In *Are You Really OK?* author and licensed counselor Debra Fileta challenges you to get real with who you are and how you're doing spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically so you can recognize where you need growth and healing.

Checking In: How Getting Real about Depression Saved My Life—and Can Save Yours

By Michelle Williams, 2021

After decades of sweeping her anxiety and depression under the rug—even during her years in the spotlight with Destiny's Child—Michelle found herself planning her own funeral. Realizing that she needed immediate help and could no longer battle her anxiety and depression alone, she checked herself into a treatment facility. When she came home, she was energized and determined to check in on a regular basis with herself, God, and others. Practical, engaging, and full of wisdom, *Checking In* reminds you that you are not alone, and that God is not yet finished writing your story.



BOOK
DISCUSSION
GROUP

Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament

By Mark Vroegop, 2019

This book seeks to restore the lost art of lament in order to help readers discover the power of honest wrestling with the questions that come with grief and suffering.

Finding Jesus in the Storm: The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges

By John Swinton, 2020

Finding Jesus in the Storm is a call for the church to be an epicenter of compassion for those experiencing depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and related difficulties. In each chapter, Swinton gives voice to those experiencing the mental health challenges in question, so readers can see firsthand what God's healing looks like in a variety of circumstances. The result is a book about people instead of symptoms, description instead of diagnosis, and lifegiving hope for everyone in the midst of the storm.

Healing the Wounds of Trauma: How the Church Can Help, Expanded Edition 2016

By Harriet Hill, The Trauma Healing Institute at American Bible Society

This book offers a practical approach to engaging the Bible and mental health principles to find God's healing for wounds of the heart. It provides core mental health principles within a biblical framework. Topics include: the nature of suffering, grief, suicide, addictions, caring for the caregiver, and forgiveness. Each lesson begins with a story depicting its topic, followed by discussion questions and participatory exercises. Its roots go down deep into the work of Christ on the cross and the truths of God's Word.

Helping Those Who Hurt: A Handbook for Caring and Crisis

By Barbara M. Roberts, 2009

Whether you're a layperson or a professional counselor, *Helping Those Who Hurt* will help you care for others encountering life crises such as:

- Addiction
- Suicide
- Trauma
- Illness, Hospitalization, and Death
- Grief

Mental Health Care at Church and Beyond: The Stigma Free Church

By Pastor Bill Reese, 2018

With scenarios drawn from community stories and Biblical examples alike, Dr. Bill Reese applies wisdom and compassion to tackle the complex issues of emotional and mental wellness in the context of the Church, with emphasis on the critical role that churches play in the overall well-being of the African-American community.

Of Good Comfort: Martin Luther's Letters to the Depressed and Their Significance for Pastoral Care Today

By Stephen Pietsch, 2016

Pietsch examines 21 of Luther's "letters of comfort" to explore Luther's pastoral care for souls suffering with depression. Pietsch's volume underscores the conviction of the early church that individual soul care is an essential response to serve those who despair. Offering pastoral care insights that are often lost, discredited or entirely absent in the work of caring for those who suffer with depression, Pietsch concludes that Luther has given us excellent tools to examine, learn and to teach as we assist souls to find hope, strength and healing in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression

By Zack Eswine, 2015

Christians should have the answers, shouldn't they? Depression affects many people both personally and through the ones we love. Here Zack Eswine draws from C.H. Spurgeon, 'the Prince of Preachers' experience with depression to encourage us. What Spurgeon found in his darkness can serve as a light in our own darkness. Zack Eswine brings you not a self-help guide, rather 'a handwritten note of one who wishes you well.'

Take Heart: God's Care for Anxious Thoughts

By Lindsey Hausch, 2021

Author Lindsay Hausch is no stranger to real-life struggles with anxious thoughts. She knows that, even with the power of God's grace, overcoming anxious thoughts is not as simple as praying enough or having enough faith. Instead, the struggle can be a training ground for spiritual growth. Each chapter has a section for digging into God's Word on the chosen topic with questions to consider, making it well-suited for personal devotion, a group Bible study, or a book discussion group.

The Art of Invitation: Building Enduring Relationships and Connecting Community

By Debbie Teike, 2021

It is of immeasurable value to invest time and energy into our personal, professional and social relationships, which are essential for mental and emotional wellbeing, stability, pleasure and satisfaction. Ironically, companionship, connection, and collaboration seldom happen without some degree of conflict and tension. Many struggle to navigate relational roadblocks, bumps and hurdles in relationships. Integrating skills from science and spiritual practice, The Art of Invitation is designed to steer through such obstacles toward the destination of renewed relationships, resulting in a healthy and restored heart, mind, and spirit for all parties.

When Life Goes Dark: Finding Hope in the Midst of Depression

By Richard Winter, 2012

Psychiatrist and theologian Richard Winter explores the complex medical and psychological issues surrounding depression. He sorts through recent scientific research on its biochemical and genetic causes and examines social and cultural factors. Winter also dispels common Christian misunderstandings of depression and looks at how Biblical characters experienced severe despair. Throughout he offers ways to help the suffering. This book is a helpful guide for those who find themselves, their loved ones or those they counsel vulnerable to depression. Find here a framework both for understanding depression and for rediscovering hope.

Note: These synopses taken from the book descriptions on Amazon.com.

12 Contemporary Christian Songs of Hope and Comfort

“Best News Ever” by Mercy Me

“Even at My Worst” by Bianca

“Even Then” by Micah Taylor

“Faithful God” by I am They

“God Who Listens” by Chris Tomlin

“Help is on the Way” by Toby Mac

“Image of God” by We are Messengers

“Nobody Loves Me Like You” by Chris Tomlin

“No Hopeless Soul” by Stephen Stanley

“Survivor” by Zach Williams

“Truth Be Told” by Matthew West

“What a Friend” by Matt Maher



Original Hymn Commission – Mental Health

In Fall 2021, The Lutheran Foundation commissioned the composition of an original hymn that would speak to mental health. Several hymn lyricists submitted texts, and a small committee reviewed the submissions and selected a hymn text written by Rev. Dr. Wilfred Karsten, Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Moline IL. The title of the hymn he composed is “Father of Body, Mind and Spirit.”

In the conversation we had with Rev. Karsten prior to him composing the text, we emphasized that, in the church, we comfortably talk about our spiritual health, and we are usually comfortable talking about and praying for our physical health. However, there is often stigma or silence in the church related to our mental health. Nevertheless, God has created us with spirit, body, and mind. Recognizing our mental and emotional senses, Rev. Karsten references in his hymn such words and phrases as, “make ev’ry anxious worry flee,” “spare me from hopelessly despairing,” and “calm my emotions, hear my plea.”

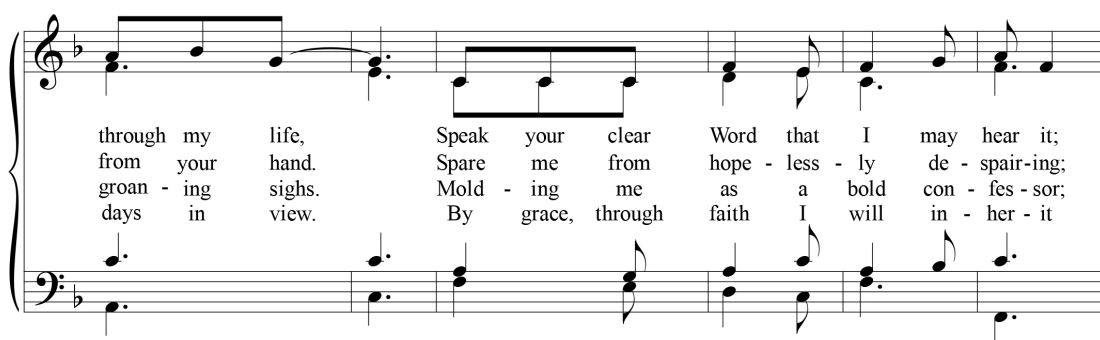
Additionally, an original tune was composed for this hymn by Matthew Machemer, Associate Kantor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Kantor Machemer’s musical arrangement reflects a calming presence and bold confession of the words we sing. The last three measures add a strong exclamation point to the truth of God’s promised peace that He provides to His people.

The Lutheran Foundation commends this hymn text and tune to you for use in worship, as an opportunity to break the stigma of mental illness and acknowledge the importance of mental wellness. We look forward to this original arrangement being a blessing to the church at large alongside of sermons, prayers, litanies, Bible studies, etc. that acknowledge the significance of mental wellness among us all.

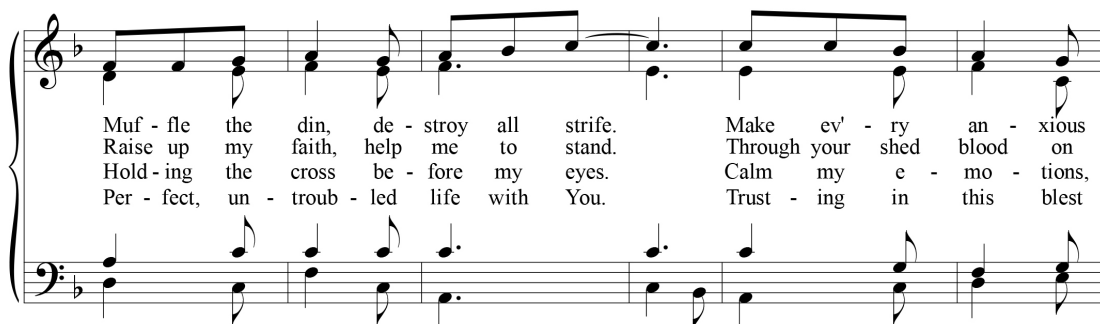
Father of Body, Mind, and Spirit



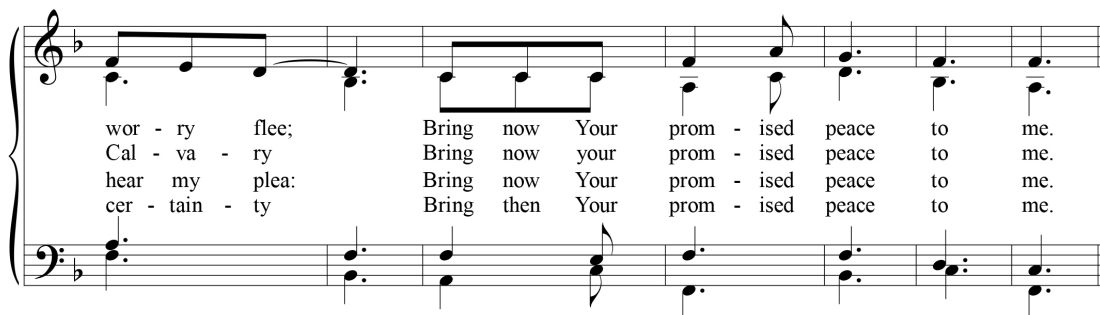
1. Fa - ther of bo - dy, mind, and spir - it When trou - bles thun - der
 2. Sa - vior, my Shep - herd, strong and car - ing Noth - ing can pluck me
 3. Com - for - ter Spir - it, In - ter - ces - sor Pray - ing for me with
 4. O Fa - ther, Son and Ho - ly Spir - it You hold my fu - ture



through my life, Speak your clear Word that I may hear it;
 from your hand. Spare me from hope - less - ly de - spair-ing;
 groan - ing sighs. Mold - ing me as a bold con - fes - sor;
 days in view. By grace, through faith I will in - her - it



Muf - fle the din, de - stroy all strife. Make ev' - ry an - xious
 Raise up the faith, help me to stand. Through your shed blood on
 Hold - ing the cross be - fore my eyes. Calm my e - mo - tions,
 Per - fect, un - troub - led life with You. Trust - ing in this blest



wor - ry flee; Bring now Your prom - ised peace to me.
 Cal - va - ry Bring now your prom - ised peace to me.
 hear my plea: Bring now Your prom - ised peace to me.
 cer - tain - ty Bring then Your prom - ised peace to me.

Text: © 2022 Wilfred Karsten
 Tune and setting: © 2022 Matthew Machemer

PROMISED PEACE
 98 98 88

1 Thessalonians 5:23, John 10:28, Romans 8:26

STIGMA BUSTERS

Mental Illness Stigma Busters for Bulletin and Media Announcements

Education and open communication about mental health are the first step toward helping cure the stigma associated with mental illness. We invite you to use these mental illness stigma busters in your bulletins, newsletters, email announcements, social media posts, etc. during the month of May to help combat stigma.

WEEK 1

Click on image to download

Bulletin 5" x 8"



Social Media 1080 x 1080 pixels



At least **8.4 million** people in the U.S. provide care to an adult with a mental health issue.

Together we can #BreakTheStigma #MentalHealth #LookUpIndiana

All facts from www.nami.org

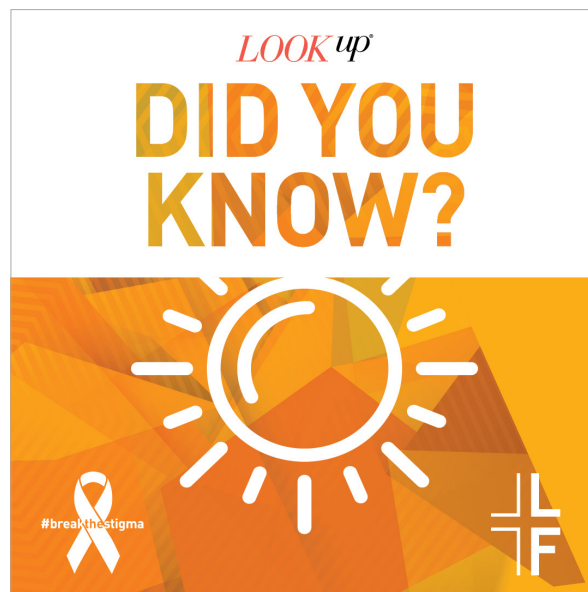
WEEK 2

Click on image to download

Bulletin 5" x 8"



Social Media 1080 x 1080 pixels



Mood disorders are among the **most common causes** of hospitalization for people in the U.S. under age 45.

Together we can #BreakTheStigma #MentalHealth #LookUpIndiana

All facts from www.nami.org

WEEK 3

Click on image to download

Bulletin 5" x 8"



Social Media 1080 x 1080 pixels



Almost 3.5 million teenagers ages (12-17) suffered from at least one major depressive episode in 2021.

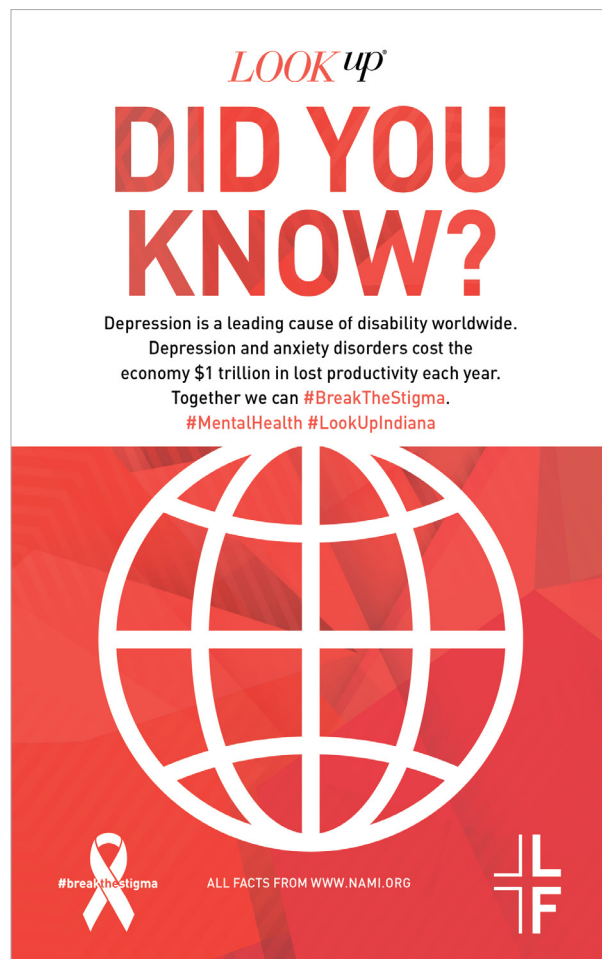
Together we can #BreakTheStigma #MentalHealth #LookUpIndiana

All facts from www.nami.org

WEEK 4

Click on image to download

Bulletin 5" x 8"



Social Media 1080 x 1080 pixels



Depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide.

Depression and anxiety disorders cost the economy \$1 trillion in lost productivity each year.

Together we can #BreakTheStigma #MentalHealth #LookUpIndiana

All facts from www.nami.org

WEEK 5

Click on image to download

Bulletin 5" x 8"



Social Media 1080 x 1080 pixels



Research has shown that **90%** of people who died by suicide exhibited symptoms of a mental health condition.

Together we can **#BreakTheStigma** **#MentalHealth** **#LookUpIndiana**

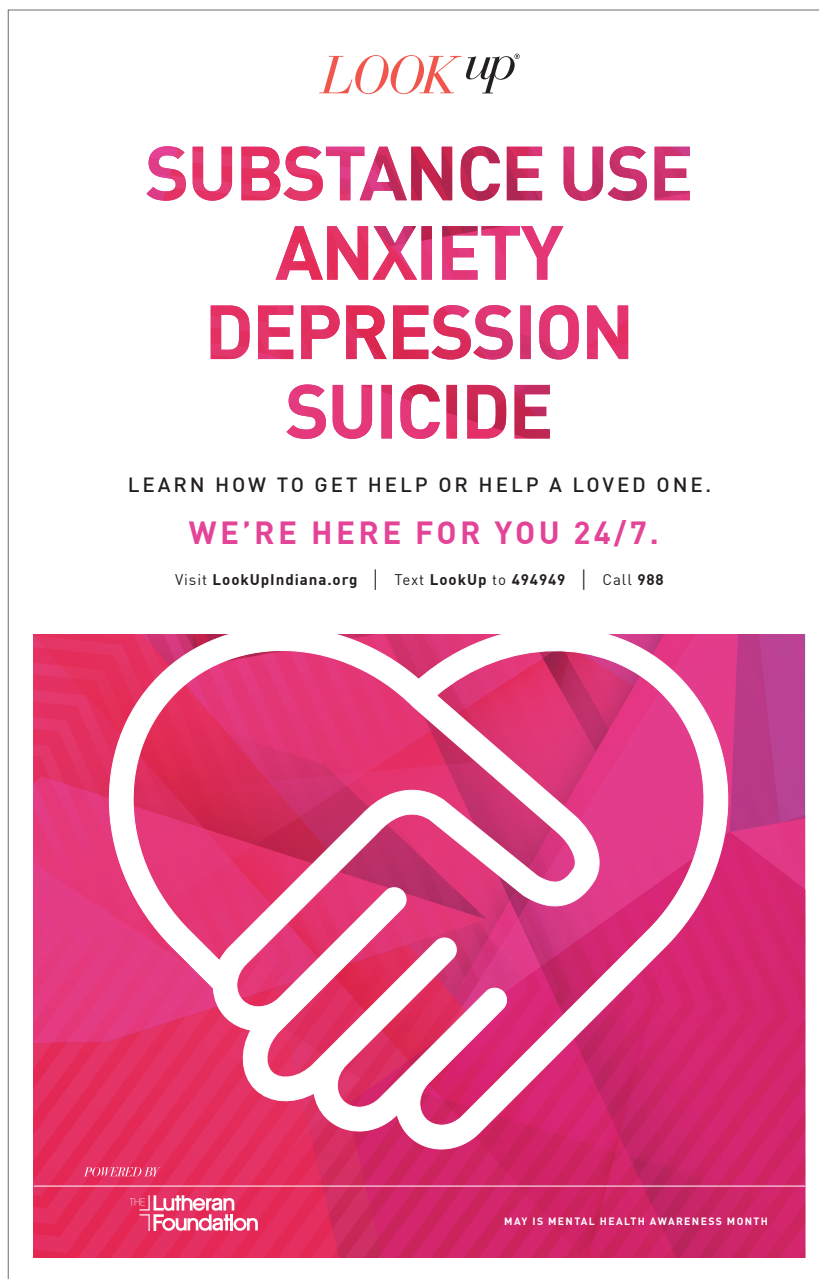
All facts from www.nami.org

POSTERS

Posters for Mental Health Awareness

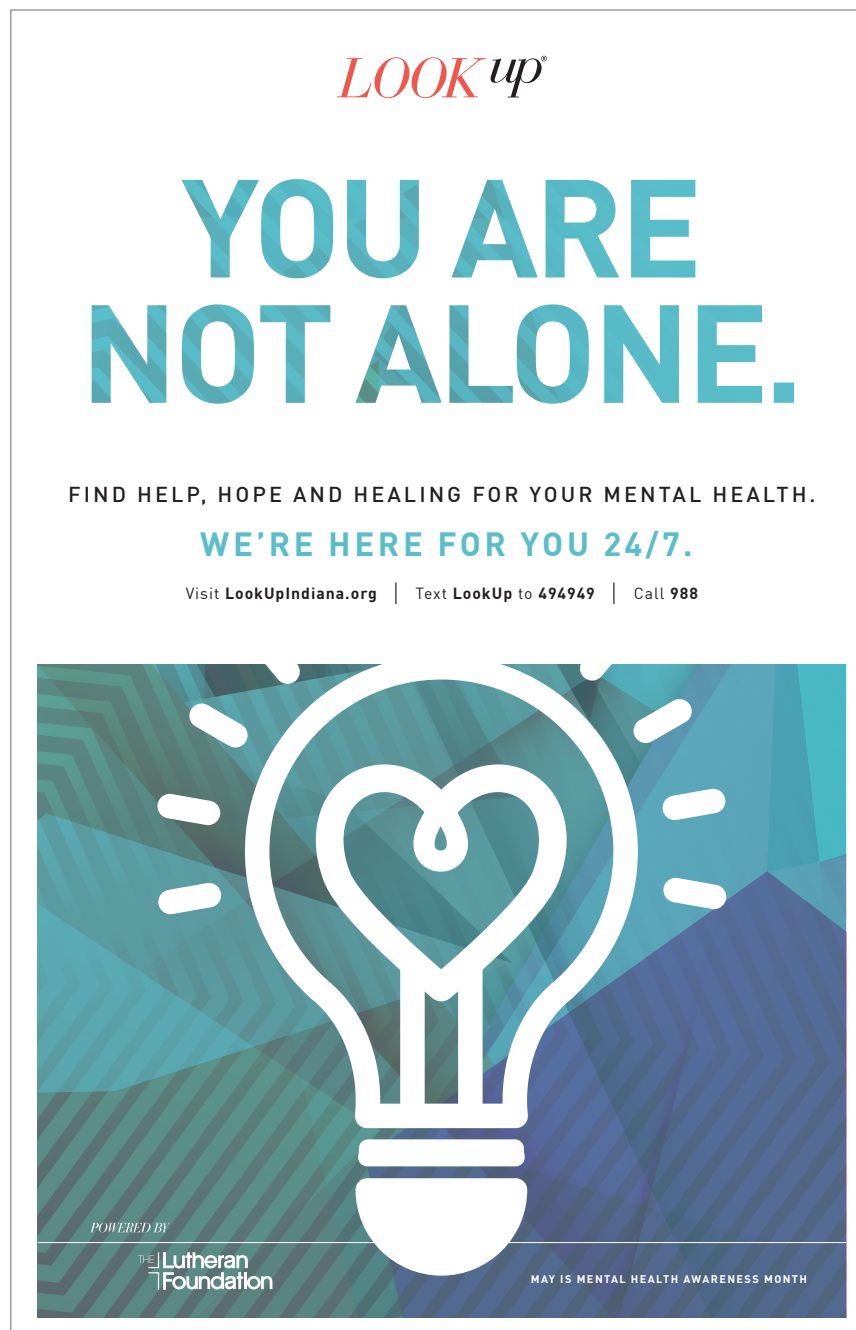
Click on image to download

Poster 11" x 17"



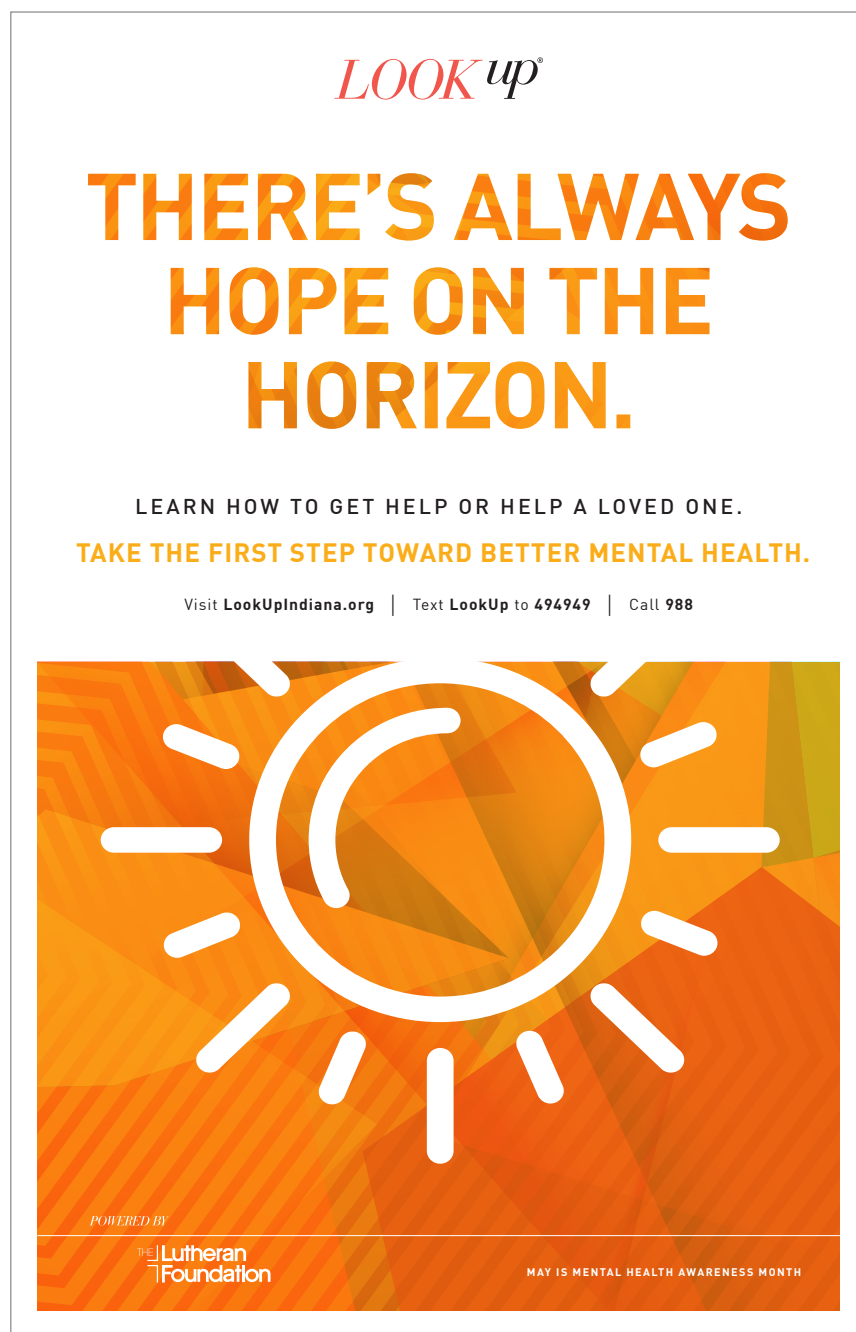
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Poster 11" x 17"



Click on image to download

Poster 11" x 17"



PRAYERS

Prayers Related to Mental Illness

The following prayers are from “The Inspirational and Healing Prayers” on NAMI’s website:

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet/Inspirational-and-Healing-Prayers>

Used with permission.

An Advocate’s Prayer from NAMI FaithNET (Read Responsively)

O God of Light and Knowledge,—we pray that darkness, fear and ignorance about serious mental illnesses might be dispelled by the light of knowledge.

We pray for Peace and Wholeness – for those with troubled minds and hearts, that broken lives and relationships might be mended.

We ask for Understanding—that the walls of stigma, labels, exclusion and marginalization might be broken down through education and advocacy.

We pray for Healing—for men, women and children living with mental illness, for better treatment, for steadier recovery, for greater opportunity to work and serve.

We ask for Faith and Hope—for those who feel no one cares. Dispel their despair through a cup of cold water, an outstretched arm, a listening ear, a committed advocate.

We offer our Thanks - for new discoveries in medical research, for faithful caregivers, for dedicated mental health professionals and persistent researchers.

Most of all, O God of Steadfast Love, we thank you for your Love—that sustains the weary, that defends the weak, that sets the lonely in families,

That brings beauty out of ashes, that brings a song in the night—that inspires courage to hope, to watch, to work for a new and brighter Day. Amen.

A Prayer for Those With Mental Illness from NAMI FaithNET

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need: We humbly ask that you behold, visit, and relieve those who suffer from depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses. Look upon them with the eyes of your mercy; comfort them with a sense of your goodness; preserve them from the temptations of the enemy; and give them patience under affliction. In your good time, restore them to health, and enable them to lead the rest of their life in reverence of you, and to your glory. Grant that finally they may dwell with you in life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Recovery from Mental Illness from NAMI FaithNET

O God, the strength of the weak and the comfort of sufferers, mercifully accept our prayers, and grant to your children who suffer with mental illnesses the help of your power, that their sickness may be turned into health, and our concern into joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Strength and Confidence for Those Living with Mental Health Conditions and Their Families from NAMI FaithNET

Heavenly Father, giver of life and health, comfort and relieve those living with serious and chronic mental and emotional illnesses. Give your power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that they may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Doctors and Nurses/Mental Health Care Providers from NAMI FaithNET

Sanctify, O Lord, those whom you have called to the study and practice of the arts of healing, and to the prevention of disease and pain. Strengthen them by your life-giving Spirit, that by their ministries the health of the community may be promoted and your creation glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer for The National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness**Recovery and Understanding from NAMI FaithNET**

(The National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding has been designated as the Tuesday of Mental Illness Awareness Week which is the first full week in October of each year).

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 as people of all creeds and all nations seeking your presence, comfort and guidance. We come as consumers, 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 just as we are 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 and you weep with us.

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.

–Written by: Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder

SUGGESTED RESOURCE GUIDE

Starting Out: Some Fundamental Mental Health Resources at Your Fingertips

The Look Up Indiana website

<https://lookupindiana.org/>

This website has information and resources to help raise awareness about a variety of mental health concerns, reduce stigma surrounding mental illness, and find hope and help for yourself or others. Consider using the faith-based mental health resources as sources of information for your bulletin inserts, newsletter content, continuing education pieces for your staff or ministry teams, materials for your mental health ministry bulletin board/display area, church website, social media, etc. There are also Bible study and worship materials related to mental illness on this website.

The Look Up Indiana Mental Health Toolkit

2021 edition: <https://lookupindiana.org/resources/toolkit-2021>

2020 edition: https://big.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/lookup/general/Look-Up-Mental-Health-Toolkit_FNL.pdf

Each edition of the Look Up Indiana Mental Health Toolkit contains a Bible study, sermon, prayers, book list, bulletin and media announcements, posters, and more all related to mental illness.

Hope for Mental Health Ministry Starter Kit

<https://store.pastors.com/resources/church-health/mental-health/hope-for-mental-health-starter-kit.html>

This comprehensive kit by Saddleback Church contains sermons on mental illness, 6 mental health video testimonies, a mental health resource guide, a DVD video series for youth, the book *Freedom from Anxiety and Depression, the Journey Toward Hope* book which can be used by individuals or in small groups, thumb drives with various mental health ministry resources, and more. Cost: \$80.00

The RemedyLIVE Soul Medics: A Mental Health 24 Hour Interactive Chat Center

<https://www.remedylive.com/>

RemedyLIVE is a faith-based organization in Ft. Wayne, IN which has trained Soul Medics to chat with anyone struggling with their mental health. Soul medics provide encouragement and hope and can connect people to appropriate care.

Call: 877-257-0208

Text: LookUp to 494949

Online Mental Health Screening Tools provided by Mental Health America

<https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/>

These screening tools are provided to give people a quick snapshot into their current mental health. After taking the screening, people are provided with information, resources, and tools to help them better understand and improve their mental health. People are encouraged to share their results with their doctor or therapist for follow-up care.

Mental Health-Related Educational Workshops, Trainings and Resources

Addiction/Substance Use

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana offers a training called “The Brain and Science of Addiction,” which provides an overall understanding of addiction and its impact on the brain from a biological standpoint. Participants will walk away with a new lens through which to understand the complexity of the issue.

Cross Connections Counseling, Ft. Wayne

<https://www.crossconnectionsounseling.com/>

260-373-0213

Cross Connections Counseling in Ft. Wayne can work with your congregation to hold an educational presentation by one of their Christian counselors on the issue of substance abuse, including discussion on the spiritual roots of addiction and the role faith plays in a person’s wellness journey. Ask to speak with their Clinical Director Gary Younghans to help make arrangements to have one of their counselors speak to your group.

Basic Mental Health and Stigma Reduction

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

MHA offers a variety of educational trainings, including “Understanding Mental Health” and “Stigma and Mental Health” which provide a good general overview of mental health and mental illness. MHA also offers Mental Health First Aid Training and Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, which are 6.5 hour-long trainings providing a more in-depth look at mental illness.

NAMI Ft. Wayne

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

260-447-8990; faithnet@namifortwayne.org

NAMI offers their FaithNet “Bridges of Hope” presentation for faith communities to advance knowledge of mental disorders and promote the vital role of faith in recovery. They also have educational programs for those living with mental illness to better understand their condition, as well as a separate educational experience for family members of those with mental illness. In addition, NAMI Ft. Wayne offers a free Education Night open to the public every fourth Tuesday of the month featuring an educational talk by a professional on a topic related to mental health. Registration is required. Please call NAMI Ft. Wayne for more information.

RemedyLIVE

<https://www.remedylive.com/>

260-422-1958; tonya@remedylive.com

RemedyLIVE offers a technologically interactive educational experience on mental health for adults called WIRED, and a similar program called The Get Schooled Tour for kids in grades 1-12. Their Trends and Teens workshop equips parents to engage teens on the topic of mental health. They can also provide a guest speaker on the topic of mental wellness for your church service, youth group event, or parenting event.

Companionship Training

Pathways to Promise Companionship Workshop

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

260-458-2115; Carole@thelutheranfoundation.org

This 4-hour workshop is designed to help individuals learn to gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage in genuine relationships with people in need, including those facing emotional and mental health issues, and connect them with appropriate care. This is an ideal workshop for greeters, elders, Stephen Ministers, mental health ministry teams, small group leaders, and those in your congregation involved with outreach activities.

Parenting with Mental Health in Mind

Building a Stronger Family

<https://buildingastrongerfamily.org/>

260-797-5892

Building a Stronger Family is a local organization which offers parenting classes and other educational events and workshops aimed at helping individuals and families identify and overcome past hurts, traumas, negative influences, and poor decision making in order to strengthen the family unit.

Living Compass

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

This organization provides individuals, families, and congregations with free tools toward better whole person health, including a free wellness self-assessment tool for parents: <https://www.livingcompass.org/assessment-introduction>, along with a corresponding parent wellness book and workbook, which can be used by individuals or in small groups called “Wellness Circles.” A faith-based supplement for the material is available. They also have free materials for a 4-week class on wellness for parents:

<https://shop.livingcompass.org/collections/topical-wellness-classes>

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

MHA offers a training called “Parenting with Mental Health in Mind,” which provides parents with practical information and tools to begin fostering positive mental wellness at home. They also offer Parent Café, a fun, free, supportive and educational parent-led group where parents can talk openly with one another about the struggles of parenting and ways to strengthen their families: <https://mhanortheastindiana.org/our-services/parent-cafe>

Stress Reduction

Living Compass

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

This organization provides individuals, families, and congregations with free tools toward better whole person health, including a free wellness self-assessment tool for teens, parents, and adults: <https://www.livingcompass.org/assessment-introduction> along with corresponding workbooks which can be used by individuals or in small groups called “Wellness Circles.” Faith-based versions of the wellness circles are available. They also have free 4-week topical class materials on a variety of topics related to mental health: <https://shop.livingcompass.org/collections/topical-wellness-classes>

Mental Health America (MHA) of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

MHA provides many mental health related trainings, including “The Science of Stress.”

Parkview Health, Healthy Living Center’s Free Stress Consultation

260-266-6500

Participate in a free one-on-one, 20-minute chat over the telephone with Dave Johnson, PhD, Parkview Health, to help you with your personal stress management goals, which can include additional programs, materials or referral, if needed. Registration required.

Run Hard. Rest Well.

<https://runhardrestwell.org/>

260-239-1297; info@runhardrestwell.org

This organization, based in Albion, IN, educates and advocates on the vital importance of rest. They equip people to embrace a pace and passion for work and rest that is transformative and sustainable. They offer free resources, a book called Vantage Point, and retreats. They also have a new video-based curriculum for teens on restorative wellness called Run the Race that helps youth learn about the impact of stress in their lives and teaches them how to reduce stress and cultivate connections for health.

The Art of Invitation

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

The Art of Invitation is a curriculum which creates a path to build, restore, and sustain thriving relationships. All too often strained relationships create stress in our lives. The Art of Invitation provides practical relationship skills towards better communication and connection with others, creating a sense of community and connectedness. Participants may go through the material on their own, but it is recommended for small groups.

Suicide Prevention and Intervention Training

LivingWorks Faith

<https://www.livingworks.net/faith>

Blending Scriptural wisdom and evidence-based practices, LivingWorks faith is an online program designed for Christian ministry leaders who want to learn to effectively prevent, intervene, and minister around the issue of suicide in their congregation and community.

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

MHA offers a variety of different suicide prevention trainings: QPR, safeTALK, and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training.

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

<https://theactionalliance.org/>

The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention has free resources for faith communities through their Faith.Hope.Life Campaign. They offer a set of assembled and ready-to-use communications aids and spiritual resources to help congregations prevent suicides: <https://theactionalliance.org/communities/faith-communities>

Stop Suicide Northeast Indiana

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

This local organization offers a variety of resources on the topic of suicide, including training using the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), two helpful toolkits with suicide resources, and links to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline crisis chat line.

Trauma Informed Care Education and Training

Bruised Reeds and Smoldering Wicks: An 8-Week Bible Study for Small Groups in Trauma-Informed Ministry and Compassionate Outreach to Individuals with Adversity in Childhood

<https://www.amazon.com/Bruised-Reeds-Smoldering-Wicks-trauma-informed-ebook/dp/B07QGMB8JJ>

Bruised Reeds and Smoldering Wicks by author Chris Haughee is a study on the intersections between the science of adversity in childhood (ACEs), trauma, and ministry. Suitable for individuals exploring how their faith and the science of brain development, toxic stress, and spiritual formation are connected, this study is best explored by small groups that want to begin trauma-informed ministry interventions and outreach within their faith communities.

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana offers a training session called “Understanding Trauma and ACE’s (Adverse Childhood Experiences).”

Park Center, Ft. Wayne

Melissa.Blackmer@parkview.com

Missy Blackmer, MEd, LMFT, LMHC, TFCBT

Manager of Community Based Services - Park Center

260.481.2700 extension 2494

260.247.8288 cell

Melissa is a licensed counselor with training in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy who can provide an educational workshop for your congregation and/or staff on basic information on trauma and how you can help those experiencing trauma.

REBOOT Recovery

<https://rebootrecovery.com/>

REBOOT Recovery helps people overcome trauma through their online faith-based trauma healing courses and online community.

Spiritual First Aid

<https://www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com/>

Spiritual First Aid offers an online training and certificate course along with a manual which instructs people in the BLESS Method to provide spiritual and emotional care to those who have experienced trauma, particularly as a result of natural disasters, civil conflicts, humanitarian crises, and public health emergencies.

The Trauma Healing Institute

<https://traumahealinginstitute.org/>

The Trauma Healing Institute offers a variety of trauma resources using a unique method that unites proven mental health practices and engagement with God through the Bible.

Support Group Information

Addiction/Substance Use Support Groups

Celebrate Recovery

<https://www.celebraterecovery.com/>

Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, 12 step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain, or addiction of any kind. Use their website to find a local Celebrate Recovery group in your area or learn more about how to begin a group in your congregation.

The Mom of An Addict, Inc., Ft. Wayne

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

260-209-4686

The Mom of an Addict provides education and support to families who have been affected by a child's or loved one's substance use disorder. Support groups meet in Ft. Wayne and Warsaw, IN. Please visit their website for more details.

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)

<https://palgroup.org/>

PAL is a support group of parents helping parents. They meet every week to offer addiction education and support, at no charge, for parents who are trying to save a son or daughter from addiction. Use their "Find a Meeting" button on their homepage to find a support group near you.

Anxiety/Depression Support Groups

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana offers a free anxiety and depression support group on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. No formal diagnosis is required. The group is currently meeting via Zoom. Email Lacey Holt to sign up at: lholt@mhanortheastindiana.org

Mental Health Grace Alliance

<https://mentalhealthgracealliance.org/your-personal-journey>

Mental Health Grace Alliance offers Bible study books that combine relevant Bible studies, neuroscience, and practical tools to help those experiencing a mental health difficulty to manage stressors, increase calm through rest and joy, reframe negative thoughts and nurture healthy relationships. These books are best used in small groups. *Living Grace* is a 16-week study for adults, and *Redefine Grace* is a 10-week study for high school and college age students. Group facilitator training and materials are available online.

NAMI Fort Wayne

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

260-447-8990; faithnet@namifortwayne.org

NAMI Ft. Wayne provides free support groups for those living with mental illness and also for adult family and friends of people living with mental illness. Call the NAMI Ft. Wayne office to find out their current meeting schedule.

Caregiver Support Groups

The Aging & In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana

<https://agingihs.org/programs-resources/family-caregiver-center/family-caregiver-support-groups/>

260-745-1200

The Aging & In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana offers family caregiver support groups. There is no cost to attend any of the Family Caregiver Center Support Groups. Pre-registration is requested by calling 260-745-1200, extension 307. Respite care is available upon request. <https://agingihs.org/programs-resources/family-caregiver-center/family-caregiver-support-groups/>

The Alzheimer's Association, Greater Indiana Chapter, Northeast Indiana Office

<https://www.alz.org/indiana>

Caregiver specific resources: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving>

Northeast Office

260-420-5547

*The following congregations offer caregiver support groups through NE Indiana Alzheimer's Association:

- Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm

3425 Crescent Ave.

Ft. Wayne, IN 46805

260-483-3173

- Trinity English Lutheran Church, 2nd Thursday of each month from 10:00-11:00 am in the church library

450 West Washington Blvd.

Ft. Wayne, IN 46802

260-426-3424

Mental Health Grace Alliance

<https://mentalhealthgracealliance.org/store/family-grace-group-workbooks>

Mental Health Grace Alliance offers Bible study books that combine relevant Bible studies, neuroscience, and practical tools to help family members who have a loved one experiencing a mental health difficulty to reduce caregiver stress and provide encouragement and hope. *Family Grace* is a 16-week study for adults, which can be done individually or in small groups. Group facilitator training and materials are available online.

Grief Support Groups

Erin's House for Grieving Children, Ft. Wayne

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

260-423-2466

Erin's House provides support for children, teens, and their families in northeast Indiana who have experienced a death.

Living Compass

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

Living Compass offers free materials for a 4-week topical curriculum called "Living Well in the Midst of Grief and Loss." The curriculum includes educational pieces, self-reflection and goal setting sections, and time for group discussion and community building. A facilitator guide and handouts are available via download, making it easy for someone in your congregation to lead this group on grief with confidence. Many other 4-week topical materials are also available through Living Compass:

<https://shop.livingcompass.org/collections/topical-wellness-classes>

The Peggy F. Murphy Community Grief Center, Ft. Wayne

<https://www.vnfw.org/about-the-peggy-f-murphy-community-grief-center/>

260-435-3261

The Peggy F. Murphy Community Grief Center provides grief counseling, grief programming, and grief support groups for adults who have experienced a loss. These support groups are free and open to the public. Click here for their grief support group calendar: <https://www.vnfw.org/grief-support/>

GriefShare

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

GriefShare is a Biblical, Christ-centered grief recovery support group ministry which has grief support groups that meet across the country. You can check their website to find a local grief group in your area. If your church would like to begin a GriefShare group, they offer resources to help you equip a lay-led team for effective and ongoing grief ministry in your congregation.

Mental Illness Support Groups for Individuals and Families

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

<https://mhanortheastindiana.org/>

260-422-6441; info@mhanortheastindiana.org

Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana has a variety of support groups available for individuals living with a mental health condition as well as support groups for families of those living with a mental illness. Contact MHA for more information.

Mental Health Grace Alliance

<https://mentalhealthgracealliance.org/store>

Mental Health Grace Alliance offers Bible study books that combine relevant Bible studies, neuroscience, and practical tools to help those experiencing a mental health difficulty to manage stressors, increase calm through rest and joy, reframe negative thoughts and nurture healthy relationships. These books are best used in small groups. *Living Grace* is a 16-week study for adults, and *Redefine Grace* is a 10-week study for high school and college age students. *Family Grace* is a 16-week study for caregivers. Group facilitator training and materials are available online.

NAMI Fort Wayne

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

260-447-8990; faithnet@namifortwayne.org

NAMI Ft. Wayne provides free support groups for those living with mental illness and also for adult family and friends of people living with mental illness. Call the NAMI Ft. Wayne office to find out their current meeting schedule.

Suicide Support Group

The Peggy F. Murphy Community Grief Center, Ft. Wayne

<https://www.vnfw.org/about-the-peggy-f-murphy-community-grief-center/>

260-435-3261

The Peggy F. Murphy Community Grief Center provides two suicide specific grief support groups for adults who have lost a loved one to suicide: Finding Hope and We Are the Living. These support groups are free and open to the public. Click here for their grief support group calendar: <https://www.vnfw.org/wp-content/uploads/grief-schedule-august-2021-1.pdf>

Trauma Support

Cross Connections Counseling, Ft. Wayne

<https://www.crossconnectionsounseling.com/>

260-373-0213

Cross Connections provides Biblical counseling for people living with various mental health diagnoses, including PTSD.

Lutheran Social Services of Indiana (LSSI), Balance Works Program

<https://lssin.org/our-programs/balance-works-emdr-therapy/>

260-323-3293

LSSI Balance Works provides faith-based mental health services for children and adults, integrating mind-body-spirit therapy, including EMDR, to empower individuals to overcome barriers and traumatic life experiences.

REBOOT Recovery

<https://rebootrecovery.com/>

REBOOT Recovery helps people overcome trauma through their online faith-based trauma healing courses and online community.

This Suggested Resource Guide was prepared by Deaconess Carole Terkula at The Lutheran Foundation on 8/10/21. carole@thelutheranfoundation.org; 260-458-2115.

SCRIPTURE

SCRIPTURE FOR ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

*The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. **Numbers 6:24-27***

*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. **Deuteronomy 31:8***

*For the sake of his great name, the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. **1 Samuel 12:22***

*But you are a shield around me, O Lord; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. To the Lord I cry aloud, and He answers me from his holy hill. **Psalms 3:3-4***

*I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. **Psalms 18:1-2***

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. **Psalms 23:4***

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. **Psalms 46:1***

*Find rest, O my soul, in God alone, my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. **Psalms 62:5-8***

*Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. **Psalms 63:7-8***

*Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the pit enclose its mouth over me. Answer me, O LORD, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me. Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly for I am in trouble. **Psalms 69:14-17***

*Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay. **Psalms 70:5***

I lift my eyes unto the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. **Isaiah 40:20**

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. **Isaiah 41:10**

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” **Isaiah 43:1-2**

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. **Jeremiah 29:11**

For nothing is impossible with God. **Luke 1:37**

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one. **John 10:27-30**

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

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Romans 8:38-39**

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. **Romans 15:4**

May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 15:13**

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. **2 Corinthians 12:9**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:6-7***

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **1 Peter 1:3-5***

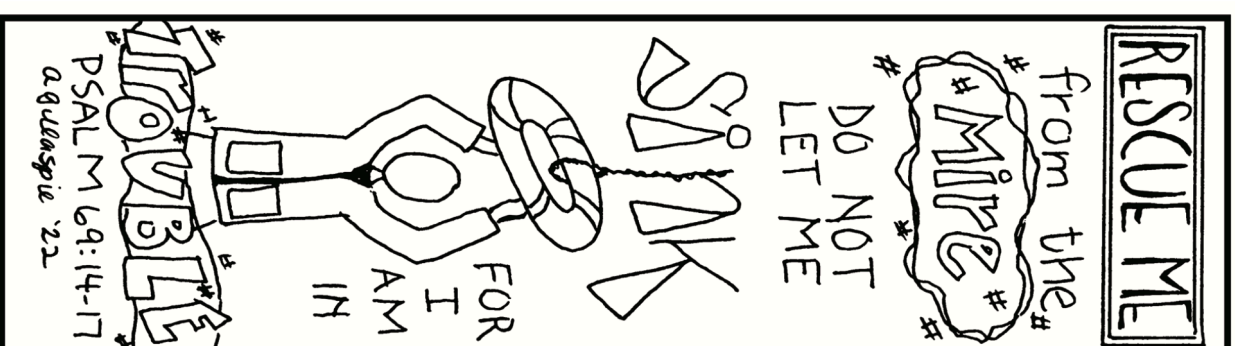
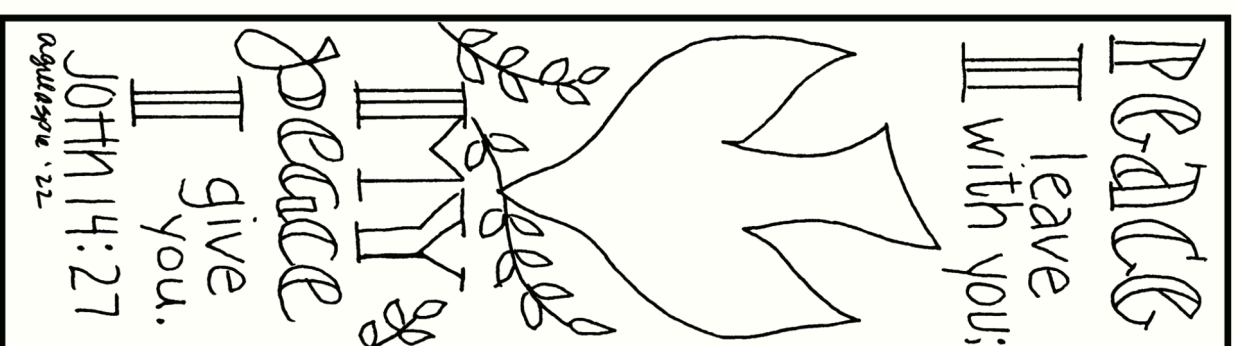
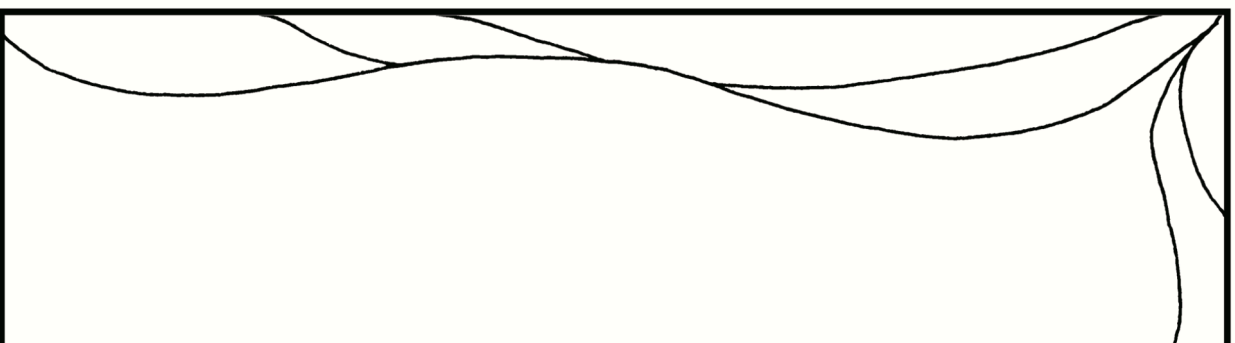
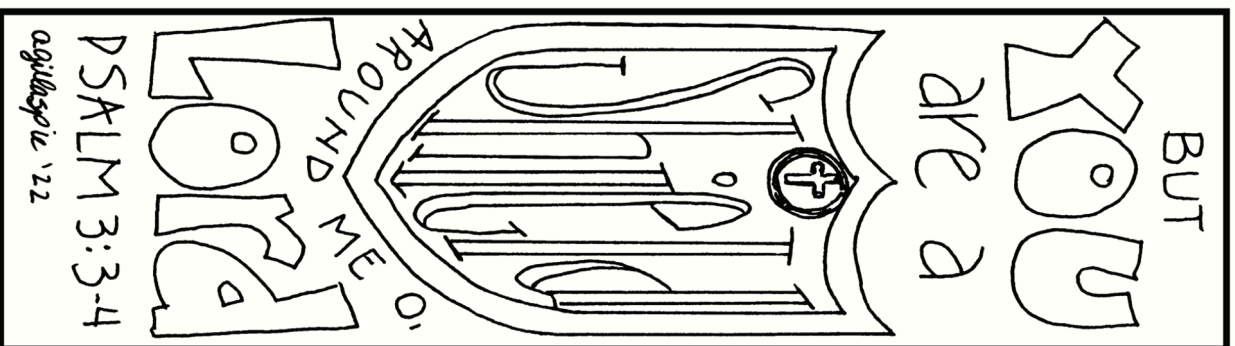
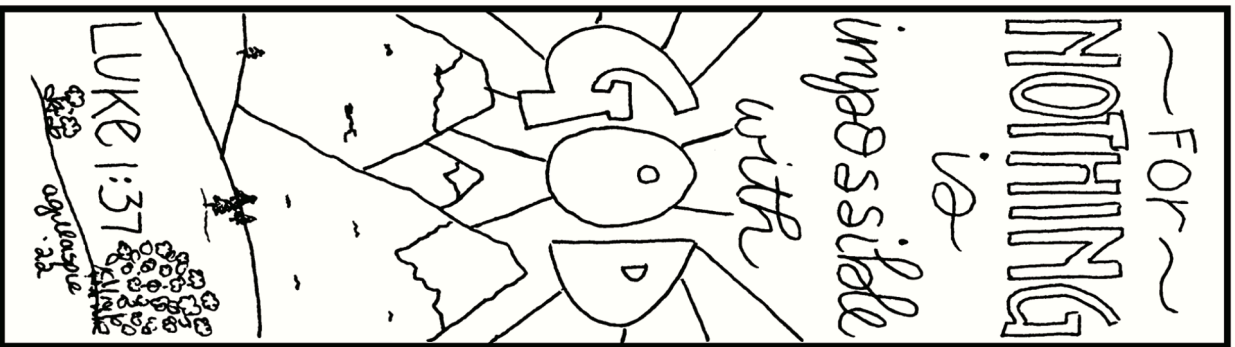
*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. **1 Peter 5:7***

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **Hebrews 10:23***

Some Practical Ways to Implement These Scripture Verses

- Create bookmarks using the bookmark template by Visual Faith Ministry included on the next page of the toolkit. Have these bookmarks available in your mental health ministry display area or in the pews at church, hand them out to shut-ins or those needing some extra encouragement, etc.
- Include one of the verses in a thinking-of-you card or “We’ve missed seeing you” card and send it to someone you know who could benefit from some encouragement.
- Text a verse to someone you know who needs to be remembered and uplifted to let them know you are thinking about them and care about them.
- Meditate on one verse as a basis for your daily devotion.
- Print out this list and distribute it as a resource for your church’s Stephen Ministry Team, Christ Care or small groups ministries, Parish Nurses, Nursing Home Visitation Team, Food/Clothing Pantry Volunteers, Church Café Ministry Team, Evangelism Canvassing Team, Comfort Dog Ministry Team, LERT (emergency response team), or other volunteers who come into contact with people who may be in distress or need extra encouragement.
- Put one verse per week/month on your church’s/school’s website homepage or Facebook page.
- Select a few verses and use them for discussion in one of your Bible study groups.
- Use some of the shorter verses as memory verses for Sunday School kids.
- Have the Sunday School kids use them on handmade bookmarks or other artwork that can be given to your shut-ins or those in the hospital.
- Print out some of the verses and attach them to the bags/boxes of food you distribute through your food pantry.
- Print out some of the verses and attach them to the quilts, baby blankets, other knit items or handicrafts that your LWML/women’s group creates for distribution.
- Print out some of the verses and affix them to the coffee cups used in your church’s coffee fellowship/ministry.
- Use them on your church’s bulletin cover(s).
- Use them on your church sign.

The possibilities for sharing these Bible verses are only as limited as your imagination!



SERMON

“Father of Body, Mind and Spirit” 1 Kings 19:1-18

By Rev. Dr. Dennis Goff

DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAMS AT THE LUTHERAN FOUNDATION | FORT WAYNE, IN

The people in the community where I live and work know that it’s not unusual for me to talk about mental health. After all, mental health/mental wellness is a strategic focus for the work we do at The Lutheran Foundation. However, I have frequently acknowledged that in my 30+ years of serving as a congregation pastor, I don’t remember giving much attention to the issue of mental health. I wish that were not true, but it’s an honest reflection. However, I am more convinced than ever it is essential that the church be a part of the mental health conversation for several reasons.

Statistically we know there are one in five (since the pandemic it is more likely one in four) adults living with a mental health concern. That also means there are one in five (or more) worshipping in our churches each weekend. Additionally, we also know more people who initially seek help for a mental health concern will go first to their own pastor (or another pastor) before going to a doctor, counselor, therapist, or mental health professional. It’s no wonder that when it comes to mental health care, some people see the church as the “gateway to hope.”

So, what do we do? Maybe it’s not all that difficult. I say that because, rather than mental health being a silent topic in the church, it’s time to talk about it, preach on it, pray for it, and discuss it openly. As I say that, I firmly believe Scripture gives us plenty of opportunities to begin that discussion.

On the one hand, while no one can diagnose the mental health status of any Biblical character, on the other hand there do seem to be signs or examples that certain people in the Bible show indications of depression, anxiety, despair, hopelessness, etc. That shouldn’t be surprising to us. After all, the God of creation has created us all with body, mind, and spirit. And if God has created us with body, mind, and spirit, then it’s not surprising that all three are attended to in the Word of God. I think Elijah is an example.

The focus of Elijah’s story I want to highlight is 1 Kings 19:1-18. However, before going there, it’s important to recall what all this prophet of God has experienced. Elijah was called by God to bring the northern kingdom of Israel to repentance. And in doing so, time and again he witnessed the incredible power of God upon his life and the lives of God’s people. For instance, he was miraculously fed bread and meat by ravens in the middle of the desert. In the home of a widow and her son who were about to have

their last meal, the Lord provided oil and flour that didn't run out. In an altercation with the false prophets of Baal, Elijah challenged them to a match to test the power of Baal over the God of Israel. A bonfire-like mound of wood was stacked up and the prophets of Baal appealed to their god to bring fire down upon it. Over and over, they cried out, but nothing happened. But then, Elijah steps up and drenches that stack of wood with water again and again and calls for the God of Israel to bring fire upon it, and it was consumed. In the wake of that miraculous act, the false prophets were slaughtered one by one.

Now if you were Elijah at that point, called by God to bring the people of God back to faith, you would have to feel like you're on top of the world after witnessing what he saw God do. But surprisingly, that's not how he's feeling. Even after such incredible victory, Elijah descends almost immediately into the pits. Why? Because the very next thing that happens is wicked queen Jezebel has put a price on his head. She is violent and vindictive. And when she did that, here's what we read next in I Kings 19:3-5 – "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When Elijah came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep."

Now here is the prophet Elijah, who if anyone has any reason to testify to the almighty power of God, he does. But here he is literally saying, "Lord, I've had enough. Take my life." Let me ask you, have you ever felt that way? Have you ever found yourself saying, "I've had enough? I've had enough pain. I've had enough doubt. I've had enough of feeling this way." Well, if you have, here is one of the prophets of Israel, someone we might consider a "hero of the faith," who has felt the same way too. He may have been on the mountain at one point, but right now it seems like he's in the valley of the shadow of death.

Maybe sometimes we think the people in the Bible are just so different from us. Maybe one of the reasons we don't think we can't talk about things like depression or suicide ideation or bipolar disorder or anxiety or feeling hopeless is because we have told ourselves people of faith don't experience things like that. And if that is what we have told ourselves, then that can keep us from telling anyone else. But in the pages of Holy Scripture there are faithful followers of the Almighty God who it appears may also be living with issues related to their emotional or mental well-being. And if so, why should we be surprised? After all, God has created us with body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, the church must be a place where spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally – whatever it may be, it's okay to say I'm not okay. After all, here in the 19th chapter of the Old Testament book called I Kings, which is a part of the inspired inerrant Word of God, we have a prophet of God saying just that. "God, I'm not okay."

You have likely heard of Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of the 19th century. In an era when it was even more unlikely to admit to struggling with your own emotional or mental wellbeing, Charles Spurgeon wrote this: "Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may

be, we are at intervals cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy.” Spurgeon’s acknowledgement of those emotions was not unlike Martin Luther, who himself expressed much the same several centuries earlier. The point is, it can happen to any of us.

Now let me pause for a moment with what Elijah may be going through emotionally and recognize what is going on with him physically. Look at chapter 18:46 – “The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezrel.” But then, look at chapter 19:3 – “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness.” Now, I don’t have the miles added up here, but Elijah was literally on the run for days. It’s not surprising then that, at the very least, he is physically exhausted at this point, even to the point he has fallen asleep, which we read about in the first half of verse 5. But listen now to the latter half of verse 5, “All at once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’” Elijah gets up and eats, and then goes to sleep again only to be awakened a second time with the offer of more food and water. “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you. So, he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights.” (1 Kings 19:7-8) You see, aside from anything Elijah was feeling emotionally, physically he was exhausted. Here in this text, we see an illustration of God’s physical care for this prophet.

In the first part of the chapter, Elijah’s emotional state was fragile at best. But physically he was in need as well. And now with renewed physical strength, Elijah shares more with us about the state of his mental and emotional wellbeing, and here’s how he describes it: “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” (1 Kings 19:10) On the top of everything else, Elijah feels all alone. And it’s just like the enemy to attack us when we’re alone. After all, it was when Eve was by herself that Satan sowed the seed of doubt in her. Feeling alone has emotional and spiritual ramifications.

Here in this text God revealed the importance of community in how He responded to Elijah. The Lord knew Elijah wasn’t alone. But Elijah didn’t know that. So, to reaffirm he wasn’t alone, the Lord said, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah, to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19:15-18)

In other words, Elijah, you’re not alone. Coming out of the pandemic, feelings of isolation and loneliness are part of the collateral damage of what we’ve all been through. And for any of us who feel that way,

especially these days, how important it is that there are people in our life. Sometimes that's another family member. Sometimes that's a friend. Sometimes it may need to be a doctor, a counselor, a therapist, a pastor, a Stephen Minister. How important it is for all of us to know we aren't alone.

And that also includes knowing God's presence in our lives. One of the basic tenets of the Christian faith is that we believe in the incarnational nature of God. God with us. When we needed a Savior, God didn't send a picture. He didn't send an image. He didn't send only a written account. He sent Himself. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. Taking on human flesh, God took our place on the cross. He died our death. He endured our pain. He atoned for our sins. He returned to new life with the proclamation that because He lives we shall live also.

God with us. And to reinforce that further, God inscribed His very own name on your life in the waters of baptism. He also comes to you not symbolically or magically, but in the real presence of His very own body and blood that is in, with and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion. And as a baptized, redeemed child of God, the very Spirit of God, the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters in Genesis 1 dwells in you. God the Father who created you, God the Son who took your place on Calvary's cross, God the Holy Spirit who dwells in you is a clear demonstration that God has not left you alone.

I think it's important that we recognize that when it was obvious that Elijah was at a point in life when he clearly needed help, notice what God did not say to Elijah. God didn't say, "Come on Elijah, for crying out loud you're a prophet. Quit complaining." God didn't say that. God didn't say, "Elijah your faith should be stronger than that." God didn't say, "I'm disappointed in you. I expected more out of you than this." He didn't say that either. And the reason God didn't say that is because whether it's one of the Lord's own prophets, or you or me, it's okay to ask for help – spiritually, physically, or mentally, because after all, God has created us with body, mind, and spirit.

To affirm our faith in that truth, let's sing the hymn, "God of Body, Mind and Spirit." Amen.

RESOURCES

List of National Resources for Mental Health Ministry

The Lutheran Foundation offers the following as a sample of national resources to assist your church or faith community with developing a mental health ministry focus. For local resources, visit www.LookUpIndiana.org.



Mental Health Ministries is an interfaith web-based ministry which provides educational resources to help erase the stigma of mental illness in faith communities.

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



The Hope for Mental Health Ministry was developed by Rick and Kay Warren at Saddleback Church. This ministry provides the transforming love of Jesus Christ, support, and hope through local churches to people living with mental illness and their families.

<https://hope4mentalhealth.com>



Pathways to Promise is an interfaith cooperative committed to creating an atmosphere in the faith and mental health communities which promotes recovery from mental illness and invites people with mental illnesses to enrich the community through actively sharing their gifts and interests..

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



Mental Health Gateway is a comprehensive, faith-based mental health resource serving the Houston community and beyond.

<https://mentalhealthgateway.org/>



Fresh Hope for Mental Health is an international network of Christian peer-to-peer led support groups for those who have a mental health diagnosis and for their loved ones.

<https://www.freshhope.us/>



My Quiet Cave

My Quiet Cave strives to provide people everywhere with a safe space to pursue both mental and spiritual wellness. Their programs are designed to create community, model vulnerability, empower self-care, and embrace each person's innate value as a beloved child of God.

<https://myquietcave.org/>



**Key
Ministry**

Key Ministry promotes meaningful connection between churches and families of kids with disabilities for the purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

<https://www.keyministry.org/mentalhealthandthechurch>



GRACE ALLIANCE
HEALTHY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR MIND

Mental Health Grace Alliance is a Christian mental health recovery and support organization that provides resources, support groups, and training to pastors and community leaders so they can help those affected by mental illness. They develop Christ-centered, curriculum-based models for family and peer support groups, trauma and PTSD groups, and young adult groups.

<https://mentalhealthgracealliance.org/>



Full Strength Network is a nonprofit ministry created to strengthen Christian pastors and their families for their overall well-being. They are a growing national network of caregivers and service providers passionate about helping pastors and their families thrive in ministry life.

<https://fullstrength.org/>



The National Action Alliance For Suicide Prevention provides every faith tradition and denomination with a set of assembled communications and aids in spiritual resources to help prevent suicides in their communities.

<https://theactionalliance.org/communities/faith-communities>



The Interfaith Network on Mental Illness offers written and web resources, consultation, free presentations, and guidelines for starting Mental Health Ministries and/or Spiritual Support Groups for Mental Health and Wellness.

<http://inmi.us/>



NAMI FaithNet 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.

<https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet>



Run Hard. Rest Well. introduces restorative wellness to organizations and individuals through transformative seminars and half-day retreats. We help people rediscover simple and strategic commitments that reduce cortisol overload, feed the soul, and fuel joy and vibrancy through preventative care practices, crisis, and recovery.

<https://runhardrestwell.org/>



RemedyLIVE helps create meaningful conversations about mental health through interactive educational experiences designed for congregations, schools, and business organizations. RemedyLIVE also helps connect people who may be struggling with their mental health with a trained Soul Medic who listens compassionately, offers hope, and shares resources that can help. Soul Medics are available 24/7 for text to chat conversations by texting 494949, Keyword: Remedy.

<https://www.remedylive.com/>



Living Compass provides resources, coaching, education, training and support to individuals, families, and congregations as they seek the wholeness God intends. Living Compass materials address 8 inter-related areas of wellness, with a focus on faith. Most of the resources are free, and Living Compass grants permission for congregations to adapt the materials as needed to fit their ministry context.

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