



WALKING alongside strengthening congregational community ministries

»» Mental Health Ministry ««

»» RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

Historically, the church has impacted communities through programs and services designed to meet the needs of the people within and outside of the congregation. Despite great strides in mental health practice, many churches struggle to address the needs of individuals experiencing the devastating symptoms of mental illness. Addressing mental illness is a highly rewarding opportunity to serve people who often feel isolated by their symptoms and distress. As congregations, we can provide a loving and nurturing environment that combines the compassion of Jesus with pastoral support, care, and counseling. These are a few resources to assist your ministry to individuals with a mental illness.

Books

- *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth* by Howard Clinebell (published by Abingdon Press). Many consider this the standard text in for pastoral care and counseling. In addition to the basics, the text includes chapters on crisis intervention, the emergence of lay caring groups, the feminist movement, and numerous others.
- *Grace for the Afflicted: Viewing Mental Illness through the Eyes of Faith* by Matthew Stanford (published by Paternoster Press). Dr. Stanford provides a compassionate look at mental illness, examines the role of the church, and integrates psychiatric practice in the context of the Christian community.
- *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and the Care of People with Mental Health Problems* by John Swinton (published by Abingdon Press). This book offers a biblically based model of care through friendship with those with mental illness and helps churches implement practical change in their ministry.

Journal Articles

- Stanford, Matthew S. (2007). "Demon or Disorder: A Survey of Attitudes Toward Mental Illness in the Christian Church." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 10(5), 445-449. (This article is available for download from the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion website, <http://www.isreligion.org/publications/recent/stanford.php>)

This research study examines the responses that individuals with mental illness received when they approached various people in their churches. Around 30% report a negative interaction. The findings reported in this study demonstrate a need for the church to better connect with people in the mental health community.

- Stanford, Matthew S. and McAlister, Kandace R. (2008). "Perceptions of Serious Mental Illness in the Local Church." *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, 12, 144-153. (This article is available for download from the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion website, <http://www.isreligion.org/publications/recent/stanford.php>)

MORE ON BACK

» Mental Health Ministry «

This article also reports the results from a research study designed to determine how individuals diagnosed with a mental disorder are received by local churches. This study found that the church dismissed the diagnoses of over 40% of study participants. This study reveals the poor responses by churches that people with mental illness often face.

Video

- Shadow Voices: Finding Hope in Mental Illness (produced by Interfaith Broadcasting Commission)

An inside look into the everyday existence of individuals and families dealing with mental illness, this program follows the lives of 10 people and their quest to further understand these issues. Experts in the field offer insightful perspectives. Bonus material adds historical background and provides help for families, churches, and individuals who are either afflicted with a mental illness or supporting a mentally ill person.

Websites

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness – www.nami.org

This is one of the largest organizations working to improve the lives of individuals with serious mental illness and their families. NAMI organizations exist in every state, and they work together through advocacy, research, support, and education. The website also includes a vast amount of information pertaining to issues of mental illness and those affected by it.

- The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. – www.acpe.edu

This professional organization promotes experience-based theological education for seminarians, clergy, and lay persons who want to enhance their pastoral care and counseling skills. The ACPE seeks to promote effective pastoral ministry to the changing context of spiritual care in society. This organization also establishes standards and certifies clinical pastoral education supervisors and centers across the country.

- American Psychological Association – www.apa.org

The American Psychological Association, based in Washington DC, is the professional organization for the psychology profession. It provides numerous resources on psychological disorders and other mental illness issues.

Stepping Stones

Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.

Pathways

Learn from the first-hand account of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.

Food for the Journey

A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.