

Ideas for a Service of Prayer for Healing and Hope

Scriptures (Can be read in unison or divided and read responsively)

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalm 103: 2-5

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my god, in whom I trust.” ...He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. “Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.” Psalm 91

A Meditation or Homily (Can be offered by a clergy or lay person)

A Song of Response

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Candle Lighting Ceremony (Seven candles are prepared on a table; people read the bold sections)

We light this candle of Hope to dispel the darkness of discouragement and despair.

Let us pray for those who have serious illnesses of mind and body. (*Silent prayer*)

We light this candle of Grace to dispel the darkness of guilt, blame, and loss.

Let us pray for those with broken lives and broken relationships. (*Silent prayer*)

We light this candle of Truth to dispel the darkness of stigma and misinformation.

Let us pray for ourselves and others as we learn more about their journey.

We light this candle of Justice to dispel the darkness of inequities and injustice. (*Silent prayer*)

Let us pray for those who are incarcerated and untreated with mental illness.

We light this candle of Faith to dispel the darkness of doubt and discouragement. (*Silent prayer*)

Let us pray for those who have lost hope and are in despair.

We light this candle of Peace to dispel the darkness of trauma and torment. (*Silent prayer*)

Let us pray for those who have experienced violence or abuse.

We light this candle of Love to dispel the darkness of indifference and judgment. (*Silent prayer*)

Let us pray for ourselves, family members, care givers, health professionals, church leaders and lay counselors. (*Silent prayer*)

Prayer Vigil – (*People write short prayer concerns on a small card received when they entered. While quiet music is played or sung, clergy and/or lay leaders are standing at various locations around the room, ideally with kneeling rails. Without being directed by ushers, those who wish to receive individual prayer go to one of the leaders, handing them the prayer card. The leader whispers a short prayer only heard by the congregant. Anointing with consecrated oil is optional. Music continues until no one else comes forward.*)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Commitment:

O God of Love, Light and Peace, thank you for spiritual healing that goes beyond the physical, for eyes to see beyond the here and now, for faith to claim your promises. We pray for all who dwell under the shadow of illness –mental or physical.

Give us courage to face the challenges and darkness that come uninvited, unpredictably. Make us willing to serve in ways we never envisioned. Through us, shine your light of faith into the lives of those who have lost hope. Open our minds to learn more about their needs and dreams. Make us channels of your love and mercy, to the praise of your glory. Amen.

From National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org), 2012 MIAW Resources, FaithNET Materials

Scripture Citations with Sermon Starters

These scripture citations and Sermon Starters are part of the Resource Guide that accompanies the DVD, *Mental Health Mission Moments*. From Mental Health Ministries (www.mentalhealthministries.net), National Day of Prayer Sermon Starters.

“Coming Out of the Dark” (Length: 30 seconds)

Isaiah 58: 8, 9 (Isaiah 58:1-12 – Ash Wednesday, Years A, B and C)

John 1: 1-5 (John 1: 1-14 – Christmas Day, Years A, B and C)

John 8: 12

The creation story from the first chapter of Genesis tells of God creating light out of the darkness. Light is a symbol of hope and new life throughout our sacred scriptures. The Gospel of John proclaims, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1: 5) The foundation of our faith is God’s victory over darkness and the ultimate triumph of light. Darkness can be terrifying for those experiencing mental illness. But love comes out of the darkness and this love gradually draws us back into the light of this world. For persons experiencing a mental illness, we can be instruments of God’s love by extending care, compassion and hope to those in the grip of darkness and despair.

“Mental Illness and Families of Faith” (Length: 2:54 minutes)

Luke 15: 1-10 (Proper 19, Year C)

When mental illness strikes in young adulthood, families of faith often tell how they experience being “lost” from their faith communities much as the lost son, the lost sheep, or the lost coin in these parables. Jesus’ parables image the housewife leaving nothing undisturbed to find the lost coin, and the shepherd risking the entire flock to find the lost sheep. The parables set an example of how we care for persons with a mental illness and their families. They lead us away from our impulse to blame those who are struggling and to focus instead on acceptance and support. When we surround them with our love and care, everyone can celebrate a time of healing and recovery in the family of faith.

“Understanding Depression” (Length: 2:25 minutes)

1 Kings 19: 1-16a (Proper 7, Year C)

After a dramatic showdown with the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah was victorious, Queen Jezebel, sympathetic to Baal worship, threatened Elijah’s life. Elijah left his servant and fled to the desert where he took refuge under a broom tree. He wished he would die. Instead of gathering his friends around him for support, he isolated himself. Elijah was experiencing many of the symptoms of depression, which are still so very common today, such as lack of sleep, physical exhaustion, feeling rejected and worthless, isolation and irrational negative thoughts about his own death. An angel of the Lord ministered to Elijah until he was ready to return to his community.

“Addiction and Depression” (Length: 2:17 minutes)

John 4: 7-30 (Lent 3, Year A)

In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus asks for water from an outcast woman - a woman who has had five husbands and is living with still another. Jesus boldly initiates the conversation with the woman at the well knowing the cultural taboos of a man speaking to a woman and a Jew addressing a Samaritan. Their lengthy

conversation centers on the theme of “living water,” which Jesus promises to the woman. Persons struggling with addictions that are often brought on by mental illnesses such as depression, also thirst for “living water.” Jesus did not dwell on the Samaritan woman’s past. Rather he gave us an example of how the faith community can initiate a relationship with those struggling with these illnesses. Jesus clearly understood that all persons of faith, and especially those who are separated from their faith community for whatever reason, need to be offered a drink from the deep well of “living water” so they may find the gift of new life.

“Teenage Depression and Suicide” (Length: 3:11 minutes)

Luke 15: 11-32 The Prodigal Son (Lent 4, Year C)

When a young adult has a mental illness they often feel lost and abandoned by family, friends, and church. Parents need to realize that young people make mistakes, because they are young and sometimes because their judgment is impaired by a mental illness. Most, like the prodigal son come home. If they don’t seem to be headed in this direction, parents need to know the signs and not be afraid to intervene. Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. The church can play a vital role in educating the congregation so that the church can be a safe and supportive community for the youth and the families struggling with these issues.

“Mental Illness and Older Adults” (Length: 2:32 minutes)

1 Samuel 16: 14-23

The young David is introduced to the troubled King Saul who is tormented by “an evil spirit from the Lord.” David provides soothing music for the troubled king. But, more importantly, he is caring and compassionate even in the face of Saul’s terrible rages. Too often we try to explain behaviors we do not understand by labeling as an “evil spirit” or as a punishment from God. Medical science has taught us much about illnesses of the brain. Modern researchers have theorized that Saul suffered from a mental illness. As people of faith, we are called to share God’s love and compassion with those who are hurting. We can and should be instruments of healing and comfort to those we know are suffering from a mental illness through no fault of their own just as David was an instrument of healing and comfort to Saul.

“Where is God in the Darkness” (Length: 2:55 minutes)

Psalms 88 If you have never experienced the devastation of a serious mental illness, Psalm 88 is one place to begin. This Psalmist describes feelings of sadness, isolation, anger, abandonment, mistrust, spiritual emptiness and hopelessness. But sometimes it is precisely with our wounds and in our brokenness that we are most open to God. When we let go of our need to control and are truly open to God’s transforming grace, we find that the darkness becomes a time not of doing and knowing, but of being and unknowing. It is here that we discover the source of mystery that holds us and surrounds us even when we are not aware of that Divine presence.

“Overcoming Stigma: Finding Hope” (Length: 2:56 minutes)

Micah 6: 8 (8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

The major reason many persons do not get the treatment they need for a mental illness is the stigma that surrounds these illnesses of the brain. Most fear comes from our lack of understanding of these illnesses. Faith leaders and congregations can and should learn ways to be supportive and helpful to persons struggling with mental illness. The words of Micah remind us that the Lord requires us “to act justly

and to love mercy.” This may require us to advocate for social issues affecting the mentally ill. By offering loving mercy and including those struggling with mental illness in our prayers and in the life of our congregations, we will give hope to those who often feel hopeless.

“Creating Caring Congregations” (Length: 2:42 minutes)

Luke 8: 26-29 (Proper 7, Year C)

The story of the man called Legion, though it appears three times in the Gospels, only appears once in the preaching lectionary. This text from Luke reveals that people with mental illness in biblical times were often banished from their communities because of the community’s fear of behaviors they did not understand. In Luke’s version of this story, Jesus intentionally sought out this man just as the church must do today. Because of Jesus’ love and compassion, this man was healed. The church today is called to embrace those who struggle with a mental illness and be instruments of healing and wholeness. Even though this man wanted to follow Jesus, he was sent back to the full membership of his own community. And so it was that a person with a mental illness became the first evangelist to the Gentiles.

Give ME YOUR HAND

Responsive Reading

When all seems dark and the darkness is harsh, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When I cannot see light even in the brightest day, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When you are tired and every breath is heavy, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

*When my words do not grasp the depth
of yearning in my soul, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.*

When your feelings are overwhelming or dulled, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

When I am confused and don't know what to do, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

So that we may be together, GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

Please feel free to add your own desire to which we can all respond: GIVE ME YOUR HAND

© Rabbi Eric Weiss, based on text from Talmud Bavli, Berachot 5b – and inspired by sermon by Rabbi Susan Lippe, Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills, titled “A Jewish Response to Mental Illness” delivered June 21, 2002 / 11 Tammuz 5762

Reflection:

God speaks within every moment
And creates the world with every breath.

God speaks from the center of the universe,
In the silence beyond all thought.

Mightier than the crash of the a thunderstorm,
Mightier than the roar of the sea,

Is God's voice silently speaking
In the depths of the listening heart.

(Psalm 93; as translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Sample petitions to be included in the Prayers of the Faithful or as a Litany:

For persons with a mental illness, and their families that they may find effective treatment for their disease and understanding and acceptance in society, we pray to the Lord.

For our elected officials to come to an understanding of the need for increased funding for mental health care, we pray to the Lord.

For people who live on the streets without homes or hope, we pray to the Lord.

For families who strive to understand and help their loved ones with mental illness, we pray to the Lord.

For people with mental illness who are confined in jails and prisons, we pray to the Lord.

That the darkness of stigma, labels, exclusion and marginalization might be dispelled by the light of greater understanding, acceptance and respect for the dignity of every person, we pray to the Lord.

In thanksgiving for the compassion and dedication of mental health professionals and those who provide care, and for new discoveries in brain research, we pray to the Lord.

For each of us to reach out with support as we form a caring community, we pray to the Lord.

APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE WHEN DISCUSSING MENTAL ILLNESS

The words we use matter, especially when speaking about people who are often stigmatized by society through inappropriate or thoughtless use of language. For people with mental illness, the stigma surrounding the illness, rooted in misconceptions and erroneous beliefs, is compounded by the language and descriptions we use.

The dignity of the individual is paramount in our belief that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Our language should reflect that belief. What is the right language to use when talking about mental illness? We need to use “people first language,” that is, we refer to people as the persons they are - not the disease they have. So we say “a person who has a mental illness” or “a man or woman with a mental illness.” We avoid referring to people using terms like “the mentally ill” or “the depressed.” There are also differences in the degree and severity of mental illnesses. So we use the terms “serious mental illness”, or “prolonged mental illness” or “major mental illness” to describe the more severe disorders.

As people of compassion and justice we should never use stigmatizing language that refers to people as “crazy”, “psycho”, “lunatic”, “mental” or other demeaning terms. We should use appropriate language to describe diseases of the brain careful not to use generalizations or misuse terms, e.g., schizophrenia is an illness that has symptoms of delusions and hearing voices. It is not having a split personality.

Careful use of language is more than being “politically correct” it is a way of communicating that people with mental illness, as Pope John Paul II said, “have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such.”

Taken From: “Mental Illness And Faith Community Outreach – Communities of Compassion and Justice” by Deacon Tom and Rita Lambert – www.miministry.org

The following is a spiritual exercise for persons with a mental illness to be said EACH DAY.

From a workshop on spirituality by Rita Sebastian Lambert

EACH DAY

- I will recall that I am a child of God. I am one who is created out of Love. I am chosen, good, holy and have purpose...a task to perform here on Earth before I return to the Father. I deserve to be treated as a person who has value and dignity.
- I will embrace my illness or my family members illness as a friend this day looking for what it is teaching me about the mystery of God and Life.
- I will not allow the stigma of mental illness to defeat me this day. I will choose to have power over stigma by detaching myself from the stigma.
- I will talk to someone today who will encourage me to see my goodness and holiness as a child of God. Maybe we will share a prayer together for one another.
- I will look for humor and reasons to laugh and be happy. Quiet joy will be my goal.
- I will read a passage from Scripture or something from a book of devotion, inspiration or spiritual reading that will encourage me to trust and hope in the power and love of God.
- I will seek twenty minutes of solitude, silence, prayer this day. If my mind won't quiet down, if my thoughts keep racing, I will offer that as my prayer to God. If necessary and helpful, I will listen to soothing instrumental music or inspirational/religious music to quiet me and remind me that God is present.
- I will walk outdoors marveling at a sunrise, a sunset, the song of a bird, the soothing colors of nature...the serenity of green grass, a blue sky, the softness of the pastel colored blossoms of Springtime and the peaceful waters of a river, lake or stream that ripple and flow. I will remind myself that everything in nature is a reflection of the Creator and pleases the Creator just as it is and so do I just as I am.
- I will delight in the knowledge that we are each created different because it is in our differences we make a more powerful and beautiful whole. We each reflect a different aspect of the mystery of Life and God. Individually and together we are a Masterpiece!
- In God is my hope and my joy. I will give honor, glory and praise to God knowing and trusting what God has in store for me. We do not seek or like suffering but our suffering can make us strong in many ways and more compassionate and loving to others...our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Knowing for sure that although I long for God, God's longing for me is even greater. I will rest in that knowledge this day.