

Christianity

Prayers Concerning Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

Common Prayer for Those Affected by Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

God, (in the same way that we pray for those beset by physical illness,) we ask you to comfort and heal those among us and those whom we love who experience various mental health challenges, whether they be depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dementia, or others. Lord, we know that at times their suffering is great and their isolation can seem unbearable. May they experience the love and support from their family (or community) here at (Name of Faith Community) that is the hallmark of your Kingdom as we reach out to them in love. Also, we ask you to show your hand in helping them experience the effective treatment they need from doctors and caregivers.

There are others among us who carry the weight of an addiction. Some involve alcohol or prescription drugs, some are other addictions. You know them all, Lord. We rejoice that some persons are in recovery, and we ask for your continued grace and mercy for their journey. For those who are still in the ugly (or powerful) grip of their illness, we pray that your good news would, as the prophet Isaiah affirmed and Jesus proclaimed, “bind up the broken hearted and proclaim freedom to the captives.”

And Lord, we pray for those who care for and love our brothers and sisters who daily face the many challenges of living with mental illness and substance abuse, in any of the many ways those conditions manifest themselves. Their work can be exhausting. Rise up in us a caring community to help them in their times of need. Amen.

Dr. David Litts, Your Life Matters!

[Note: The following litanies and prayers are from the UCC Mental Health Ministries, used with permission.]

Opening Prayer for Mental Health Sunday

God of love, today as we celebrate Mental Health Sunday, stir in us deep compassion for people living with brain disorders and their families. Raise our awareness of how we can create a supportive and safe spiritual community for people who feel isolated, shunned and ashamed. Inspire us to reach out in love as a sign of your radical hospitality and grace. Encourage us to receive the gifts that are given by all, including those who are living with mental health challenges. Amen.

By the Rev. Sarah Lund

Prayer of Invocation

God of the empty tomb and the Emmaus road, awaken us and open our lives to your presence. We long to step fully into new life and to recognize you in all whom we meet. As we come into your presence, remove from us all that separates us from our neighbors. Show us how to be your people, a people of

radical hospitality, a people welcoming all human differences knowing that in you we are all made perfect. We come before you ready to leave behind darkness and emptiness, willing to have our eyes opened to seeing you in the faces around us. Meet us here as we worship you that we may experience the transforming power of Easter. Amen.

By the Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe

Pastoral Prayer I

God of love, we celebrate that today you are still speaking a word of acceptance, wholeness, and inclusion of all your differently-abled people.

We give thanks for this church and the ways we seek to live out Jesus' commandment to love You, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. On this Mental Health Sunday we pray for people who live with untreated mental illness and who are unable to find help and cannot afford medical care. We pray for an end to the stigma of mental illness.

We pray for families torn apart by mental health diseases, and for families that hold-on-to one another during difficult times of illness.

We pray for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

We pray for mental health caregivers, for scientific researchers, and for professionals who seek to bring compassion, treatment and healing to those who suffer from brain diseases.

We pray for children, teens, and young adults learning how to live with newly diagnosed brain diseases.

We pray for people burdened by labels and stereotypes.

We pray for people who are victims of bullying and discrimination because of their disability. Help our society to be more compassionate of differently-abled people.

We give thanks for the many gifts that people with mental health disease bring into the world and celebrate the creative genius of artists, scientists, authors, scholars, business leaders, actors, musicians, inventors, and presidents who live with mental illness. Still speaking God, as the mysteries of the human brain unfold, we remain in awe of the intricate ways in which we are created in your image.

May we be reflections of your love in this world. Amen.

By the Rev. Sarah Lund

Pastoral Prayer II

Creator God, Each day, we live on the threshold of above and below, of inside and out. We live in spaces in between knowing and never knowing. Between believing and questioning. Between clarity and ambiguity. These spaces create confusion in us. Back and forth we meander along a winding road that begins to feel like a labyrinth with no center. No exit. No way out. Too often we live in stuck places like these. Gently and then violently we rock back and forth back and forth craving something that feels certain.

It feels as if there is no space for us to rest except within the vast universe of your love. In you – the feeling that no one accompanies us into the darkness diminishes. Instead, complete darkness is replaced when the tiniest ray of hope - Hope - found in a speck of light feebly shines through reminding us that you when we fall to the ground You will sit with us there. And when we finally feel able to stand up You will steady us then slowly, you will walk with us. In all times, you will be with us. For this, God of bright, shining light we are grateful.

Thank you for the questions the ambiguity and for the disbelief. Through them we travel closer to you. Thank you for clarity for knowing and for answers when they come. Through them we are assured of your presence. And now, may you bless all of those who suffer today in mind, body and spirit, Indeed, may you bless us all with your healing ministry of love. Amen.

By Rev. Lorraine E. Leist

Pastoral Prayer III

O God, who is beyond names, and yet who Jesus called Abba, who is the mystery of life itself, which still is at the center of all that is and comes close to us, we seek to be present to your presence. Though we have fallen short of the ways we are to be living in your realm, your way which is here and is yet to come fully, we bring all that we have done, and that which we have not done, seeking your mercy. Out of the many of our own vulnerabilities, we offer You our prayer for hope and compassion for those who are living with a mental illness. We place before you the illnesses of major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar and anxiety disorders, eating and post-traumatic stress disorders, and alcoholism and drug addiction. You know us through and through and will never forsake anyone. Be with those who live with these conditions and their loved ones, so we all know that You are our sustainer and our guide. Yet in these life disruptions, You come in surprising ways to lead people through the church, organizations, medicines and treatment centers to help us discover the ways to live, to discover the core of who we are as Your beloved children. Be the light in our dark times; be the love in the places of our isolation; be the truth when our fears bring falsehood; and be the grace that overcomes our shame. You are the God who came in Jesus to show us who you are. May we find our true selves in You as we receive all the gifts which You have given us. We thank You. Embolden us to speak and live with honesty and courage, embracing our vulnerabilities and find Your grace which is sufficient for our every need. Through the living Spirit of Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.

By the Rev. Alan Johnson

Litany of Naming

Leader: On this Mental Health Sunday, we join in this Litany of Naming.

People: As a congregation we are glad to lift up our voices and our spirits to break the silence that often happens when we are confronted with mental illness.

Leader: As a faith community, we name the gifts and the often unnamed experiences which come to those who live with a mental illness such as major depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, and eating disorder. We name:

People: The Hope which upholds our spirit through honest sharing;

Leader: The Pain when people turn away because of fear;

People: The Courage to speak in a safe place the way that Jesus spoke truth with love;

Leader: The Strength from being with others who listen compassionately;

Leader: The Isolation that comes when no one knows what to say;

People: The Realization that mental illnesses and brain disorders can be managed;

Leader: The Exhaustion that comes with living with a mental illness as well as for those who are caregivers;

People: The Welcome of mental health as part of our church's ministry and outreach;

Leader: The Wisdom that comes when we become educated about mental health;

Leader: The Spirituality that comes when we walk alongside those who show both resilience and vulnerability in their lives affected by mental illness;

All: We receive these gifts that we have named, those which are welcomed and those that are challenges. We come before you, our God, knowing we are not alone and that You will show us a way to be and live. In the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

By the Rev. Alan Johnson

Prayers of the People for Mental Health

Let us pray to the Father of Mercies: Father, we pray for the unity and mission of the holy Church of God; that it may welcome and serve those who live with a mental illness. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Guide us, the citizens and leaders of this land, this state and this city ... that we may unite to provide for and protect the poor, the homeless and those who suffer in mind, body and spirit. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Forgive us when we knowingly or unknowingly ridicule, look in disgust, neglect or discriminate against those who are mentally ill. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Comfort and relieve those who are troubled in mind and spirit. Bring them hope, peace and the consolation of a loving community. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Grant patience and courage to the families and friends of those who are ill. Increase their perseverance as they face challenges to recovery for their loved one. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Protect and defend those living with mental illness from exploitation, addictions and abuse. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Walk with the homeless and missing persons, those who are destitute and have no one to care. Forgive us for our indifference. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We commend to your mercy and defense all who are contemplating suicide today, right now. Bring someone or something to intervene. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the families who have lost a loved one to mental illness, bring them comfort in trusting that your grace accepts their ill loved one, despite the final desperate act that brought them into your loving arms. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Empower us to speak up for those who do not have a voice; save us from making peace with the injustices in the social systems that have failed them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Guide those who do research for the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses; uphold them with your compassion and diligence. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are in recovery and for treatments that enable them to return to full and rewarding lives, we give you thanks. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, Giver of life and health, we trust that in your time and way, you will dispel all darkness with your light, all confusion with your order, all fear with your peace. Through Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Adapted from and patterned after Prayers of the People from the Book of Common Prayer.)