

Advocacy

- ◆ Pray that the hearts of those who do not support mental illness programs will be softened.
- ◆ Support funding for research into severe mental illness.
- ◆ Work for parity in health insurance for physical and mental illnesses.
- ◆ Contact the governor and your state representatives to let them know you care about services for persons who are mentally ill.
- ◆ Join an advocacy group to better support the needs of mentally ill persons even if you don't have an ill family member. Be alert to pending legislation regarding the disabled and mentally ill.
- ◆ Be a *stigma buster*. Object in writing and by telephone when media and gatherings stigmatize mental illness.

Resources

American Association of Pastoral Counselors
(703) 385-6967
www.aapc.org

National Institute of Mental Health
(800) 421-4211
www.nimh.nih.gov

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
(800) 950-NAMI
www.nami.org

Pathways to Promise
www.pathways2promise.org

Pacific Media Ministry
(Catalogue of videos)
www.MentalHealthMinistries.net
(619) 686-2739

Rev. 9/8/04

Congregational Resources
www.congregationalresources.org/mentalhealth.asp

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
www.DBSAAlliance.org

Holston Conference Outreach/Advocacy Ministry Team
<http://holstonconference.com/oa/>

National Mental Health Association (NMHA)
2001 N. Beauregard Street, 12th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22311
Phone 703/684-7722 Fax 703/684-5968

Mental Health Information Center
800/969-NMHA
TTY Line 800/433-5959

Oassis (Organization for Attempters and Survivors of Suicide)
www.Oassis.org

"Preaching Mental Illness"
Rev. Jackson Day and Rev. Rose Ann Briotte
in Christian Social Action Sept.-Oct. 2001 GBCS;
<http://holstonconference.com/oa/>

Books by Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder
In the Shadow of God's Wings: Grace in the Midst of Depression (\$10)
In the Shadow of God's Wings: Group Study Guide (\$7)
The Upper Room - (800) 972-0433

In taking us on her personal journey into depression, Rev. Gregg-Schroeder, Coordinator of Mental Health Ministries for the California- Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, encourages a new understanding of the spiritual gifts that can come from depression. An excellent Group Study Guide is written to accompany her book and provides small-group leaders with the material needed to facilitate a four-session study.

For further information, contact Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder, Coordinator of Mental Health Ministries at sgschroed@cox.net.

Creating Caring Congregations



**Paint A
Different
Picture Of
Mental
Illness.**

An Ecumenical Ministry

The paintbrush emblem is the symbol of Pathways to Promise, an ecumenical, inter-faith resource center for faith communities who feel called to respond to the needs of persons with mental illness in their communities.
www.pathways2promise.org

How to Become a Caring Community

MISSION ¹

Caring Communities are churches of all faiths which covenant to enable an understanding of mental illness and to foster ministry to and with persons with mental illness and their families

Process

Caring Communities are churches (1) which have undertaken an *education* program within the congregation on the topic of mental illness, (2) whose Church Councils have voted to approve a *covenant statement* for the church to be identified as a Caring Community which welcomes persons with mental illness and their families, and (3) which participate in ongoing *welcome*, *support*, and *advocacy* in their church and in the community.

Education

- ◆ Pray for knowledge and insight about mental illness and those who suffer from a mental illness.
- ◆ Find out what your denomination is doing in the area of mental health and what resources they can offer for your study groups (contact Pathways to Promise).
- ◆ Over 25 denominations and ecumenical groups have taken special positions related to mental health and mental illness. Ask your pastor to include mental illness in sermons and worship liturgy where appropriate.
- ◆ Tie to Mental Health Month in May and to Mental Illness Awareness Week in October
- ◆ Educate yourself on what severe mental illness is - and ISN'T.
- ◆ Educate about community resources.
- ◆ Visit an existing treatment facility - hospital, halfway house, and a group home.
- ◆ Show videos on mental illness.

- ◆ Schedule special events with speakers.
- ◆ Hear from consumers.
- ◆ Ask for a speaker from the speaker's bureau of mental illness organizations to talk with your church and community organizations.
- ◆ Form one or more special classes to study serious mental illness and ways congregations can be supportive.
- ◆ Sponsor education programs through organizations such as National Alliance for the Mentally Ill's "Family to Family" group.
- ◆ Educate and train the faith community about the mental illness community and their accompanying problems to promote the building of relationships between the two communities. This process will encompass the use of training workshops and the sharing of life stories by the mental illness community.

Covenant

- ◆ Gain support for a mental illness ministry from the clergy and the church's governing body.
- ◆ Pray that the covenant will be a three-way covenant between the congregation, those with mental illness, and God.
- ◆ Ask your governing body what your church is doing to make all persons with disabilities, including persons with mental illness, feel welcome and a part of congregational life.
- ◆ Request that your church vote to self-identify the congregation as a Caring Community for persons with mental health issues and needs.
- ◆ Establish a task force of the governing body for the purpose of training and educating the faith community about mental illness and the development of a mental illness ministry.
- ◆ Request Church Council or other appropriate committee or board to adopt a statement endorsing a program of education regarding serious mental illness and welcoming persons with serious mental illness and their families in the life of the congregation.

Welcome

- ◆ Show video "Creating Caring Communities," a project of Mental Health Ministries, as a model for how churches can begin to address the stigma and shame associated with mental illness.²
- ◆ Pray that all persons in your congregation will be genuinely welcoming.
- ◆ Provide training for ushers and greeters to include specific means of being welcoming and supportive.
- ◆ Where appropriate, plan worship services to be reminders of the welcome.
- ◆ Post specific words of welcome where visible from outside the church building.
- ◆ Seek specific newspaper publicity regarding your church's welcome and steps it has taken to be welcoming.

Support

- ◆ Do more than be friendly. *Be a friend* to those who have no friends, for severe mental illness tends to isolate people. Include them in your outings, invite them to a ballgame, or out to eat after church, or accompany them to church activities.
- ◆ Volunteer your help in programs serving persons who have a mental illness.
- ◆ Pray for persons who are mentally ill, for those who work to help them-both their families and professionals-and for a better understanding in your church of the concerns of people with mental illness.
- ◆ Offer help to a family that is living with mental illness. Provide emotional support, understanding, perhaps sitting when needed.
- ◆ Invite support groups such as local NMHA chapters, NAMI, or chapters of National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association to meet in church.

¹ This brochure compiled by Rev. Rose Ann Briotte, Psychiatric Chaplain, M.A.R.; M.Div.; M.S.S.W. Lakeshore Mental Health Institute, Knoxville, TN 37919, 2002

² Contact Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder for information on how to obtain the video at sgschroed@cox.net.