



CITY OF  
*Sumter*  
SOUTH CAROLINA

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Dear Pastor:

May is National Mental Health Month and May 18-20 is the Weekend of Faith for Mental Health. I ask you to join thousands of other congregations across the country to raise awareness about the important topic of mental health, with special attention to addiction. Our nation is in the midst of an epidemic: drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death for people under 50. Addiction is common, and can go hand-in-hand with mental illness. People often turn to substances to treat emotional pain. Sumter shares such problems with every community in our nation.

One in five Americans experience a mental health issue every year. Mental health and addiction know no boundaries—gender, race, religion, or social status. Breaking down barriers to treatment, decreasing stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction, and supporting our brothers and sisters is vitally important. I believe the faith community is an important partner in this battle.

Why is it important that your congregation participate in this weekend? Our fellow citizens who suffer with depression, addiction and other results of mental illness certainly fall among those whom Christ called "the least of these". Shame about mental illness and addiction prevents conversations with pastors and other members of faith families. Ironically, people close themselves off from the love, compassion and strength that only Christ and His church can provide. I know you agree that our churches need to open our hearts and congregations to those who otherwise may struggle alone and without the help they need—medical and spiritual.

What I am asking you to do is this: On Sunday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, will you include a moment in your services to talk about how those with mental health and addiction issues need the help of men and women of faith? This can be a part of your sermon or a "minute for mission" or any way you deem best to include it. I have enclosed speaking point outlines which have been prepared by some local pastors and which may be of help. I have also enclosed a brochure prepared by the Santee-Wateree Community Mental Health Center and the Sumter Police Department which includes information about resources available for those who are seeking help.

If you will participate in the Weekend of Faith for Mental Health, will you please let me know by calling (803) 436-2578, or by emailing me at [jmcelveen@sumtersc.gov](mailto:jmcelveen@sumtersc.gov). I believe this is a problem that calls for people of faith to bring their best gifts of love and grace. I hope I can count on you and your congregation. Please participate on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,



Joseph T. McElveen, Jr.  
Mayor

## Sumter Mental Health Weekend of Faith - May 18-20, 2018

### Mission Minute Points

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

– Psalm 34:20

- **This is the Mental Health Weekend of Faith**
- **Some Facts:**
  - **One in five American adults experience a mental health issue.**
  - **One in 10 young people experience a period of major depression.**
  - **One in 25 Americans live with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression.**
- **Our Lord cares for each person, each family who struggles with mental illness.**
- **There are treatment opportunities available in our community. See resource guide provided.**
- **Let our church commit to be a safe place where we can share our struggles and encourage one another.**
- **Prayer: Father, we claim your promises, that you will be close to the broken hearted, that you are at work to bring healing to agitated souls, that you are putting before each of us a path of health and healing. Help us see your path and always follow you. May our church be a safe place for people to find your plan, your power, and your path. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

**Sumter Mental Health Weekend of Faith  
May 18-20, 2018**

**Sermon Outline Resource: Title: God, Broken Hearts, and Mental Illness**

Introduction: Someone you know has a burden, a hidden weight on their soul

- Maybe depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, an addiction, obsessive-compulsive thoughts.
- In our community, especially among those who serve in combat and are first responders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

We call this Mental Illness

- Mental Illness is a condition or disorder that affect your mood, thinking, and behavior.
- Strangely, people who are physically ill will go to the Doctor for treatment, but mentally ill people often feel like they should not seek treatment.
- There is a stigma attached to Mental Illness.
  - People believe they should be strong enough to get deal with mental illness on their own.
  - Especially true for people of faith: "I should be able to pray this away." "I should have enough faith that this is not an issue".

Mental Illness impacts more people than you think.

- One in five Americans – men, women, and children – will experience some form of mental illness each year.
- Almost half of those experiencing mental illness will not seek treatment.  
Is this something we can ignore? Is this something we can hope will take care of itself? Or is this something that contributes to crime, homelessness, and substance abuse?

Look at Psalm 34:17-20.

Background:

- Written by David when he pretended to be insane.
- Saul, the King, was threatening his life.
- David when over to the enemy, pretending to switch sides. The King of Gath, Abimelech, was suspicious of him.
- David pretended to be crazy. He pounded his head on posts and foamed at the mouth.
- David was not crazy, but his life, his soul was divided. He was pretending to be someone he wasn't.
  - This is the experience for mental ill people.
  - They often pretend to be put together, while inside, they feel like they are falling apart.
  - They live a divided life.
  - Example: The soldier returning home from deployment in a combat zone. Is he a warrior? Or a tender loving father? It is hard for the human soul to shift quickly.

David spells out in this Psalm the pain of a divided life and his hope in God.

**<sup>17</sup>The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles.**

- Who are the righteous? Those who do right and those who want to do right, make the right choices.
  - The frustrating thing about mental illness is people often want to be well, but they feel unable to make the right choices.

- They do not want to be anxious or depressed. They want to stop their addiction. But a stronger power is at work in their lives.
- What is the right thing to do when you feel powerless? Cry out to God. Pray your feelings. Do not hide what you feel from God.
- This is Good News: God wants to hear your troubles. He wants to listen. God is never bored with you.
- God will deliver you. Deliver means to make a way out.
  - This may not be immediate.
  - God will give you opportunities to get better.
  - No matter what mental illness people struggle with, God is at work in their lives.

**<sup>18</sup>The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

- God is close to the broken-hearted.
  - When people grieve, despair, or are depressed, God is near.
  - Why does God make this promise?
    - Because people who suffer from mental illness often feel they have done something wrong.
    - Because mental illness can numb our hearts so we do not feel God's presence.
    - Just because we do not feel God's presence does not mean God is missing.
- God saves those crushed in spirit.
  - God saves – He takes action. God is at work.
  - Who is crushed in spirit?
    - Mental illness robs people of hope.
    - Mental illness isolates people. They feel alone.
  - God's promise: Have hope because you are not alone. I am near and I am taking action for you.

**<sup>19</sup>The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;**

- We are not promised a trouble-free life. Odds are you will struggle with a mental illness sometime in your life.
- Troubles are agitations. Troubles are soul-disruptions.
- God delivers people in trouble.
  - When trouble enters your life, God wants to help you move beyond it.
  - It is not God's will for you to be stuck in mental illness.

**<sup>20</sup>he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.**

- A strange verse. People with mental illness often feel like something inside is broken.
- Does this verse mean that if you feel broken, God is not protecting you?
- No. Broken bones is a metaphor for torture. Mental illness can feel like a torture.
- God is promising the pain does not have to win.
- The word "protect" means to watch over, to guard.
- This verse means God wants your whole self to be whole, to be healed.
- Whatever is happening in the moment, God is watching, guarding you, and seeking to put you together.

How does God put broken people back together?

- First, he gives us love and grace through his son Jesus. Jesus' death on the cross forgives our sins, even the sins that result from our mental illness.
  - Jesus' resurrection means the power of mental illness is broken. It will not ultimately win.
- So, pray your pain to God. Do not try to make your prayers pretty.
  - The Bible is filled with prayers like this Psalm where people pour out their heart to God in raw, unedited emotion.
  - When is the last time you were honest with God about your mental health? When was the last time you talked to him about your mental health?
- Talk to someone. Do not carry your broken heartedness alone.
  - Talk to a trusted friend who will listen.
  - Talk to your pastor.
  - Talk to a counselor.
  - Use the Community Health Resources we have in the Sumter Community.
- Accept help.
  - God may choose to heal a person through a support group, like Alcoholics Anonymous or Celebrate Recovery.
  - God may use medicine to help stabilize your body's chemistry.

God will lead you to a path where you can get healthier. Use whatever resource God makes available to you.

What should the Body of Christ, the Church do?

- Hold high the value of mental health.
- Be a safe place for people to confess their brokenness, struggles, and mental illnesses.
- Reject simple answers.
- Direct people to resources where they can get the skilled help they need.
- Support and encourage people in their journey to bring their divided lives back together.

Imagine what would happen in our community if Sumter was a safe place for people to get mentally healthy.

- Crime would go down.
- School performance would go up.
- Families would have a better chance of staying together.
- People would make wiser decisions.
- Workplace productivity would rise.

Here is good news: Our God wants all of us to have our brokenness healed. He is at work right now for all who struggle. He brings the hope of Jesus to all.

**Prayer: Father, we claim your promises, that you will be close to the broken hearted, that you are at work to bring healing to agitated souls, that you are putting before each of us a path of health and healing. Help us see your path and always follow you. May our church be a safe place for people to find your plan, your power, and your path. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**