

Local Churches Need to Address Suicide and Mental Health

- God can use the Church to provide assistance in healing for those that struggle with mental health and suicidal thoughts

Doctrinally Sound Christian Pastor Commits Suicide

- Does this headline confuse you? Is it inconsistent with what you have been taught in the Bible?
- Aren't pastors supposed to be able to identify the signs of despair and hopelessness?
- Aren't pastors supposed to safely guide people they suspect of self-harm or having suicidal thoughts?
- Aren't pastors supposed to help people who have experienced tremendous trauma?
- Aren't pastors supposed to help others deal with brokenness in the soul?
- Resources for suicide awareness:
 - <https://faithandleadership.com/pastors-are-uniquely-positioned-help-people-contemplating-suicide>
 - <https://www.keyministry.org/church4everychild/2019/9/16/a-psychiatrists-thoughts-on-pastors-and-suicide>
 - "Lots of pastors have no idea where to go for help if they find themselves struggling with suicidal thoughts."
 - <https://wellcommunity.org/four-ways-churches-can-help-prevent-suicide/>
 - "The truth is that devoted Christians are not immune to mental health challenges, and no measure of faith can provide a guaranteed shield against depression."
 - "Mental illness is more likely to be seen as shameful when it's not discussed openly, and this shame often prevents those dealing with mental health challenges from sharing their struggles."

How Local Churches Can Address Suicide and Mental Health

- Remove the stigma and shame: Jesus came to heal the broken
 - "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." (Lk 4:18-19)
- Remind Christians to be honest with God because He cares for each of us individually and uniquely
 - "casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]." (1Pet 5:7 AMP)
- Promote health for (and not ignore) the whole person: spirit, soul, and body
 - "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Thes 5:23)
- Encourage Christians to reach out for support
 - "But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1Cor 12:24-26)
 - "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up." (Ecc 4:9-10)

Practical Guidelines for Pastors Regarding Mental Illness Awareness

- Learn the basic signs of mental illnesses and other facts about mental health to encourage those in need to seek help.
- Remind others that people can and do recover from mental health challenges and that help is available and effective.
- Develop relationships with local mental health service providers and other family and youth organizations to help to direct individuals and families in need to available services and support in the community.
- Share the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in your community newsletter or other publications. Call or text 988 or chat the Lifeline.
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/how-to-talk/community-and-faith-leaders>

Promote Acceptance of Those with Mental Health Issues

- The voices of leaders and members of faith-based and other community organizations can greatly influence attitudes about mental health conditions and those who experience them.
- Talk about your own mental health openly.
- Be an example of taking good care of your mental health by making mental wellness a priority in your personal life.
- Be inclusive. Mental health affects all of us.

- Foster opportunities to build connections with individuals and families dealing with mental health challenges through trust and acceptance.
- Foster safe and supportive environments for people to openly talk about mental health, stress, trauma, and related issues.
- Encourage and express empathy in your family, congregation, and community. Convey a message of nonviolence, acceptance, and compassion.
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/how-to-talk/community-and-faith-leaders>

Challenges for Pastors in Helping Those with Chronic Illness

- Work with the pre-existing medical team as a faith resource
- Help people build a support team, if one doesn't exist
- How to help people address chronic pain
- How to help people address mental health strategies, especially depression
- How to help people address insomnia
- How to help people address trauma
- How to help people address suicidal thoughts
- How to help people address guilt, regret, unforgiveness, remorse, and bitterness
- One ministry that addresses this issue
 - <https://brokenandmended.org/>

Suicide Mental Health.pdf