2023–2025 MISSION GRANT NO. 7

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING AND OUTREACH

LCMS LIFE MINISTRY | $96,500

Upheld by God's Hand — Mental Health Outreach

Care for mental illness was a concern prior to the pandemic, but now it has become critical. LCMS church workers have expressed concern about the rise of anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders. Our teachers, youth leaders, pastors, and other church workers are continually requesting resources and training to be equipped for outreach and Christian care.

Millions of people in the United States and around the world are suffering with mental illnesses and disorders. There is a tremendous need and opportunity for Lutheran outreach to both the people struggling with mental issues and their family, so that they may receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastors, church workers, and lay leaders are challenged in dealing with these problems because they do not have enough training to provide effective and appropriate care.

Public health researchers have conducted studies that indicate people with mental illnesses or disorders are more likely to approach a pastor or professional church worker than a medical doctor or counselor. A mental illness or mental disorder has a downward spiral effect in families that may include behavioral malfunctions, addictions, marital problems leading to divorce, loss of job, incarceration, and suicide. It is estimated that 90 percent of people committing suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention). Training and outreach for mental illnesses and disorders are effective in combatting stigma, allowing more people to get the help that they need.

The LCMS Task Force for Mental Illness, Health, and Wellness collaborating with expert LCMS contributors will develop the materials, resources, and training programs. LCMS Life Ministry will coordinate the production of materials and rollout of the training for church workers.

You whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:9–10).