

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING AND OUTREACH

LCMS LIFE MINISTRY | \$96,500

Upheld by God's Hand — Mental Health Outreach

Prayer: Heavenly Father, place Your healing hand on the lives of people with mental illness. Show them the steps to take to be strong in body, mind, and spirit. Give them a humble heart to accept and obey Your plan. Help them to trust You even if Your way is not what they would choose. Thank You for Your love that never lets them go. Help their families find comfort and support knowing that God loves them and will protect them.

Guide the work of the LCMS Task Force for Mental Illness, Health, and Wellness and the expert LCMS contributors as they develop the materials for training church workers and lay leaders for mental health outreach and spiritual care.

All: Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" LSB 770 (all verses)

Reader 1: Ephesians 4:29: *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

Leader: In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul advises his friends to "build each other up." This passage reminds us as Christians, we are instructed to choose our words carefully in order to offer wholesome, honest encouragement. How can we build others up? By celebrating their victories and accomplishments. Look for the good in others and be a powerful force of encouragement in the world. While we cannot ignore sin, our first goal is to relieve the suffering of sin with the Gospel.

Reader 2: Hebrews 3:13: *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Leader: As we rejoice in this day that the Lord has given us, we remember that an important part of today's celebration is the time we spend celebrating others. Each day provides countless opportunities to encourage others and to praise God for their good works done through faith. When we do, we not only spread seeds of joy and happiness, but we also share God's love and honor Him for the faith He creates and strengthens.

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).

Reader 1: Psalm 46:1: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

Leader: Millions of people in the United States and around the world are suffering with mental illnesses and disorders. There is tremendous need and opportunity for Lutheran outreach to people struggling with mental illness and their family members, so they may receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We care for human life by sharing Christ's love and mercy, caring for people in body and soul by sponsoring human care efforts in local communities through districts and partner church bodies. We educate by providing resources and events for people of all ages. More than all of this, we proclaim God's promise to literally be our strength when our strength seems used up and empty. It is then that God promises to come forward and even carry us onward.

Reader 2: Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

Leader: Church workers and lay leaders must be prepared for the variety of mental health and illness issues that congregational members and those outside the church may bring to them. Training in mental illness, health, and wellness is needed, along with techniques to provide Christ-centered care, compassion, and ministerial support to those in need. While it is God who does the work, we seek to learn to speak the words that people will hear. God will move through these words and heal according to His will.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Son. His love is boundless, infinite, and eternal. Today let me pause and reflect upon Christ's love for me and let me share that love with all who cross my path. As an expression of my love for Him, let me share Christ's saving message with a world that desperately needs His grace.

All: Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

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).

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