

Sherry Davis Molock, PhD, MDiv

Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychology

George Washington University

Co-Pastor

Beloved Community Church, UCC

 @RevDrSherry

Exploring Community Solutions

Why include faith communities in mental health care?

- Mental health issues affect people across faith traditions
- Faith leaders and faith communities are often “first responders” on the front-line
- Faith communities care for whole person and families
- We interact with people in diverse settings
- Congregations include people from diverse workplaces, including mental health professionals
- Mental health crises are also crises of faith

Barriers to seeking care in faith communities

3

- Beliefs that suicide violates faith community cultural/ gender role norms
- Mental illness is a sin, moral failing
 - Suicide reflects lack of faith or weak faith
 - Suicide is a “white thing”
- Stigma associated with mental illness

Barriers to seeking care in faith communities

- Distrust of mental health professionals
 - Will try to take away or ridicule faith beliefs
 - Aren't trained to deal with faith beliefs in therapy
- Clergy know little about suicide lethality/risks
- Clergy less likely to make mental health referrals
- Ministries focus on “other-world” theology less likely to make referrals



Good News! Changes in Understanding Mental Illness



- Less religious stigma associated with suicide:
 - Actions judged on basis of competency - being of “sound mind”
- Mental illnesses seen like other diseases - not a reason for shame, guilt, or a sign of God’s disapproval
- The silence is being broken and clergy see their role as partners with other mental health professionals

Protective Factors Faith Communities Can Provide:

- Cultivating Wholeness:
 - Connection and Community: “Mattering”
- Education
- Narratives of Hope
- Worship Experiences
- Advocacy

Community

- Foster a sense of connection and “mattering”
- Create sense of community inside and outside the faith location



Educational Opportunities:

What Does the Bible Say About
Suicide & Mental Illness?

National Black Church Conference
June 18, 2015
Sherry Davis Molock, Ph.D., M.Div.
George Washington University



Bible Study:
Singing in a Strange Land:
Combatting Depression & Suicide

THURSDAY'S "THURST" FOR TRUTH
BELOVED COMMUNITY CHURCH BIBLE STUDY

Narratives of Hope

- Faith traditions are built on stories of people overcoming adversity and finding meaning in life's hardships



Stories from history



Stories from the community

Worship as Pastoral Care

- Sermons, workshops & educational lessons on suicide prevention
- Sermons cover mental health challenges
- Telling our stories –
 - For example: focus in July on Minority Mental Health Month
- Each week church member “tells his/her story” re their own struggle with mental illness and/or family members
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Bipolar disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD
- Suicide

Worship as Pastoral Care

- Information on Suicide Prevention on community tables, church website, Facebook page, Instagram
- List resources in weekly bulletin
- List resources on announcements in slides
- Treat prevention as social justice issue
- Send out invites for churches in area to participate in National Faith, Hope, Life weekend

Advocacy:

Helps change policy. Helps change the person.



Anti-Bullying Covenant
Developed by the Board of the United Church of Santa Fe
November 14, 2010

We, the youth of United Church of Santa Fe, are against bullying of any kind (cyber, physical, verbal, emotional, or any other type) that results in the humiliation or dehumanization of another person or group. We affirm that all persons are created and loved by God and deserve fair and equal treatment. We covenant with one another to do our best to honor this statement.

Therefore, we will treat all people with love regardless of sexual orientation, race, class, gender, citizenship status, physical ability, age, or family background. Furthermore, we encourage other youth and adults and other faith communities to join us in this covenant.

El Bolletier
Jessi Bray-Morris
Julian Cullin
Dylan Chandler
Delaney Crovelli
Charlie Fox
Rudby Fox
Hadden Gerberding
Nicky Hughes
Jose Latoro-Strauss

Natalie Mayhew
Catherine McDonald
Ben Michael-Fallon
John Michael-Fallon
Julia Michael-Fallon
Ben Miller
Sean Noonan
Allie Norris
Olivia M. Ortega
Elena E. Ortega-Saunders

Evangelina L. Ortega-Saunders
Cezario I. Ortega-Saunders
Aly Raboff
Sarah Raboff
Jordan Readybough
Jolo Surr
Mackinn Starr
Abel Yore

Adult Signers

Gail Anderson Lyrene Andrews Ray Andrus Annika Adeleise Blankenship James B. Boller JoAnn Boller Sarah Boller Bette Smith Melissa E. Bracke John Brent Melissa E. Bracke Edith Brown Margaret Burk Laurie Calkins Caroline Barrows Cot. Amelia Carson Bill Carson Lorena Carson Mary Lisa Carson John Cavanaugh Cyril Christie Bede Chival Susan Chivers Deborah Clark Sharon Clark Beth Clayton Betsy Coffin Robyn Corvelli-Hart Karen Davis Kim Davis Michael Davis Bonnie Gill	Sharon Elmer Jerry Elliott Kathleen Fallon Dawn Field Dorey Field Gillian Field Kathy Flynn Karen Forrester Sara Gerberding Robert Glick Andrea Hamilton Marian Hamilton Stephen Hamilton Laurie Hays Jacqueline Hearn Tom Hirschfeld Steve Hirschfeld Kate Hirschfeld Famela E. Homer Patricia S. Hogle Sibbi Hornsby Bonnie Hughes Hank Hughes Sharon Ireland Ray Bradburn II Johnman Robert Johnson Jean Kandruck Neil Kandruck Howe Kopp Linda Kopp	Phyllis Kruger Jack Laiti David L. Plante Erin Lane Dr. Jennifer Manske Cynthia Mark Alison Marquis Karen Maxwell Michael Maxwell Sherry Maxwell Janet McAllister Debra McAllister Karin McAllister Ben James L. Moberg Robert Moberg Walter A. Moberg Kim Moberg Dawn Murray Candy Norris Cynthia Olson Lorena C. Ortega Sheryl Partridge Meghan Perkins Kathy Pitzer Margaret Popa Janet Puchner Fred Quinn Margie Quinn Candace Raboff Patricia Reavitt	Gerrie Ramsey Nick Ramsey Dr. Larry Reammonen Nicola Reammonen Marina Reddy Hilbert Coyce Reese Fred Rhee Marge Rhee Bill Ritter Pat Ritter Janet Robinson Mary Beth Sarr Lori L. Sanderson Vicki L. Sanderson Lawrence Sosa Kathleen Smith Rev. Joan Anne Stroup Kim Struss Hazel Struss Jesse Turner Lana L. VanDer Natalie Wells John H. White Dorey White Kathy White Ann Whitcraft Babe Whitcraft Nancy Wittner Alma Weller Steve Yore
---	---	---	--

Organizations
Chad Rensch • Hemlock Jewish Community
United Church of Santa Fe • Love God, Love Neighbor, Love Creation

For more information contact Rev. Brandon Johnson or Rev. Talitha Arnold
THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE
1804 ARROYO CAMINO (AT ST. MICHAEL'S DRIVE, NEAR THE HOSPITAL) 985-4201
www.UChofSantaFe.org



Take Home Message: Faith Communities Are an Untapped Resource!

- It takes a village: caring for persons with mental illness and for their families and loved ones takes partnerships
- Family communities and faith leaders are an important part of the village and offers many inherent protective factors
- Faith communities and faith leaders need training, resources but also acknowledgment of the unique gifts they offer in helping people become whole

Resources

- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Faith Communities Task Force: theactionalliance.org/task-force/faith-communities
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: afsp.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: sprc.org
- CDC Suicide Resources: cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/resources.html