

A Better Way
— P.A.U.S.E. —



National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.



National Mental Health Month Toolkit

May 2026

“Stigma Grows in Silence. Healing Begins in Community.”

NBCUSA H.O.P.E. Ministry
Health Outreach and Prevention Education
In Partnership with the
National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

A comprehensive faith-rooted resource
for congregations, pastors, health ministries, community leaders

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NBCUSA H.O.P.E. National Mental Health Month Toolkit 2026

Disclaimer & Use Statement

The **NBCUSA H.O.P.E. National Mental Health Month Toolkit** is provided as a faith-rooted educational resource to support churches, families, and communities in promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and encouraging compassionate care. The information contained herein reflects reputable national guidance and faith-based perspectives. Please review the following disclosures to ensure proper use.

General Information

This toolkit is intended for **educational and ministry purposes only**. It offers general guidance and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical, mental health, or legal advice. Individuals should consult qualified professionals for recommendations specific to their personal needs or circumstances.

Mental Health & Medical Information

Content related to mental health and wellness is informed by reputable sources such as the **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**, **Mental Health America (MHA)**, **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**, and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**. This information is **not** a replacement for diagnosis, treatment, or individualized care. Members should contact licensed mental health professionals with questions about symptoms, medications, or treatment options.

Crisis & Emergency Guidance

Recommendations related to crisis response follow national safety guidelines. Local conditions and emergency protocols may differ. Always follow the guidance of **local authorities**, including emergency responders and mental health professionals. In emergencies, contact the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**, **Crisis Text Line (Text HOME to 741741)**, or **911** for immediate assistance.

Faith-Based Context

This toolkit integrates spiritual encouragement alongside public health guidance. Faith-rooted content is intended to support emotional and community well-being and is not a replacement for professional services where needed. Scripture references and prayers are included to promote hope, compassion, and resilience.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Information about **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training is provided for educational purposes. MHFA equips individuals to recognize signs of mental health challenges and connect people to appropriate care. It does **not** certify participants to diagnose or treat mental illness. Churches hosting MHFA training should partner with certified instructors and follow official program guidelines from [mentalhealthfirstaid.org](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org).

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AI Tools

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Faith Reflection

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3 (NKJV)

This toolkit is offered in the spirit of healing, hope, and wholeness. May it empower every congregation to speak openly about mental health, extend compassion to those in need, and embody Christ’s love through care and community.



Section 1: Welcome Letter

Dear Pastors, Health Ministry Leaders, and Beloved Community,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we enter the month of May 2026 — designated as **National Mental Health Awareness Month** — the NBCUSA H.O.P.E. (Health Outreach and Prevention Education) Ministry is honored to place this comprehensive toolkit into your hands. This resource has been prayerfully developed to equip your congregation, your health ministry, and your community with the knowledge, language, and spiritual grounding needed to address one of the most pressing health concerns of our time: **mental health and emotional wellness**.

This year, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has chosen a theme that resonates deeply with who we are as a faith community: **“Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community.”** These words speak directly to the power and purpose of the Black church. For generations, our sanctuaries have been the first place our people turn in times of trouble, grief, confusion, and despair. The church has always been a place of healing — and mental health is, without question, a ministry priority.

We know that in too many of our congregations, mental health remains a topic whispered about rather than spoken about openly. Depression is sometimes dismissed as a lack of faith. Anxiety is brushed aside with a well-meaning “just pray about it.” Suicide is shrouded in shame. But Scripture reminds us: *“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:17-18). God does not shame us for our struggles — and neither should His church.

This toolkit mirrors the format of the **NBCUSA H.O.P.E. Lupus Awareness Month Toolkit**, providing your ministry with sermon starters, responsive readings, litanies, crisis resources, community event planning guides, social media content, bulletin inserts, prayer points, and much more. It is designed to be a comprehensive, ready-to-use resource that empowers your church to observe Mental Health Month with intention, compassion, and cultural relevance.

We encourage you to use this toolkit in its entirety or to select the sections most meaningful to your congregation. Share it with your pastors, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, deacons, and community outreach coordinators. Let it spark conversations that have been long overdue. Let it open doors to healing that have been closed by stigma.

Together, let us break the silence. Together, let us build communities of healing.

In H.O.P.E. and Healing,

The NBCUSA H.O.P.E. Ministry Team

Health Outreach and Prevention Education

National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Dr. Boise Kimber, President

www.hopenbc.com

“

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3 (NKJV)



Section 2:

About National Mental Health Month

A History of Awareness and Advocacy

National Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed every May since **1949**, when it was established by **Mental Health America** (formerly the National Association for Mental Health). For over 75 years, this annual observance has served as a rallying point for education, advocacy, and the reduction of stigma surrounding mental illness.

What began as a small effort to raise public awareness has grown into a nationwide movement involving government agencies, healthcare organizations, faith communities, schools, employers, and millions of individuals committed to changing the conversation about mental health.

2026 Themes

This year, two major themes guide our observance:

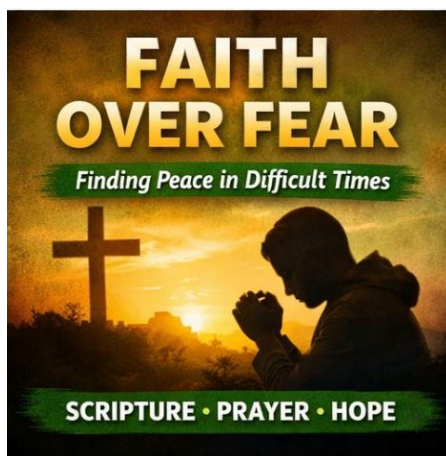
- **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) 2026 Theme:** *“Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community.”* — This theme invites everyone to speak up against mental health stigma, share their lived experiences, and build strong community connections that create spaces where people are supported, understood, and can find healing.
- **Mental Health America 2026 Theme:** *“More Good Days, Together”* — Reflecting the understanding that everyone — not just those with a diagnosed condition — manages their mental health every day, and that together we can connect people to the right support at the right time.



Why This Matters for Faith Communities

The church occupies a unique and trusted position in the mental health landscape — particularly within African American communities. Research consistently shows that Black Americans are more likely to turn to clergy and faith leaders for support during emotional distress than to mental health professionals. This makes pastors and church health leaders **first responders** in the mental health space, whether they recognize it or not.

By intentionally observing Mental Health Month, your congregation sends a powerful message: *It is safe to talk about mental health here. You will not be judged. You will be loved. You will be helped.*



★ Did You Know?

- **1 in 5** U.S. adults — more than 59 million people — live with a mental health condition in any given year.
- **1 in 2** people will develop a mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- Only **about half** of adults with mental illness receive treatment — meaning tens of millions go without care.
- Black/African American adults are **36% less likely** than U.S. adults overall to have received mental health treatment in the past year.
- The average delay between the onset of mental health symptoms and treatment is **11 years**.

“

The church must not only be a place where people come to hear the Word — it must be a place where people come to be made whole.

”



Section 3: Understanding Mental Health — Facts & Figures

The State of Mental Health in America

Mental health is an essential part of overall health. It includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being — affecting how we think, feel, act, handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health conditions are medical conditions, not moral failings, not spiritual weakness, and not something a person can simply “snap out of.”

Key Statistics

Finding	Source
1 in 5 U.S. adults (approximately 59 million people) live with a mental health condition.	SAMHSA, 2024 NSDUH
1 in 2 people will develop a mental health disorder at some point during their lifetime.	World Health Organization
29% (1 in 3) U.S. high school students report their mental health was not good most of the time or always.	CDC Mental Health Data Channel
48 million Americans live with a substance use disorder.	SAMHSA, 2023
Approximately 1.5 million people attempt suicide each year in the United States.	American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Black/African American adults are 36% less likely to receive mental health treatment than U.S. adults overall.	HHS Office of Minority Health, 2024
Among adults who report fair or poor mental health, only 39% of Black adults received mental health services, compared to 50% of White adults.	KFF Survey, 2023

Barriers Facing Black Americans




Black Americans face a unique set of barriers to mental health care, including:

- **Stigma:** Cultural norms that frame mental illness as personal weakness or spiritual failure
- **Cultural mistrust:** Historical and ongoing experiences of racism in healthcare systems
- **Provider shortages:** A severe lack of Black and culturally competent mental health providers
- **Cost and access:** Higher rates of uninsurance and underinsurance
- **Misdiagnosis:** Research shows Black patients are more likely to be misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed
- **Lack of information:** Limited awareness of available resources and treatment options

Common Mental Health Conditions — In Plain Language

Condition	What It Is
Depression	More than feeling sad. Depression is a persistent condition that affects how you feel, think, and handle daily activities. It can include lasting sadness, loss of interest in things you once enjoyed, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating. It is not a character flaw or a lack of faith.
Anxiety Disorders	Everyone feels worried sometimes, but anxiety disorders involve intense, excessive, and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. This can include panic attacks, social anxiety, and generalized anxiety that interferes with daily life.
PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)	Develops after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event. PTSD is common among veterans, survivors of violence, and those who have experienced community trauma.
Bipolar Disorder	Involves unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out daily tasks. People may experience episodes of extreme highs (mania) and extreme lows (depression).
Substance Use Disorders	A medical condition in which the use of alcohol, drugs, or other substances leads to health problems, disability, and difficulty meeting responsibilities. It is not a moral failing — it is a treatable brain disorder that often co-occurs with other mental health conditions.

MENTAL HEALTH & THE BLACK COMMUNITY
KEY FACTS & DISPARITIES

-  **20%** More Likely to Experience Serious Mental Health Issues
-  **60%** Less Likely to Receive Treatment
-  High Rates of Trauma & Community Violence
-  Suicide Rates Increased Among Black Youth

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE
Let's Talk. Let's Listen. Let's Support.



SHARE **CONNECT** **HEAL**

TRAUMA-INFORMED MINISTRY
Compassion, Understanding, Healing.



SAFETY **TRUST** **EMPATHY** **SUPPORT**

MENTAL WELLNESS & SELF-CARE WORKSHOP



Rest. Reflect. Renew.

Myths vs. Facts

✗ MYTH	✓ FACT
“Mental illness is a sign of weak faith. If you just prayed harder, you’d be fine.”	Mental health conditions are medical conditions with biological, psychological, and social components. Prayer is powerful, but it works alongside — not instead of — professional treatment. Even the most faithful believers can experience mental illness.
“People with mental illness are dangerous and violent.”	The vast majority of people with mental health conditions are not violent. In fact, they are far more likely to be <i>victims</i> of violence than perpetrators. Only 3-5% of violent acts are committed by people with serious mental illness.
“Children don’t experience mental health problems.”	Half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14, and 75% by age 24. Children can and do experience depression, anxiety, ADHD, and other conditions that benefit from early intervention.
“Therapy is only for ‘crazy’ people.”	Therapy is a tool for wellness, growth, and healing — just like going to the doctor for a physical ailment. People seek therapy for grief, relationship challenges, stress management, trauma recovery, and everyday mental health maintenance.
“You can’t recover from mental illness.”	Recovery is absolutely possible. With appropriate treatment — which may include therapy, medication, support groups, and lifestyle changes — people with mental health conditions live full, productive, and meaningful lives.
“Talking about suicide plants the idea in someone’s head.”	Research consistently shows that asking someone about suicide does <i>not</i> increase their risk. In fact, open, compassionate conversations about suicide can reduce distress and connect people to help.

“Mental health is not a destination, but a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.” — Noam Shpancer, PhD



Section 4: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training

What Is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an evidence-based, early-intervention training program developed by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. Just as CPR training helps people assist someone having a heart attack, MHFA teaches people how to recognize the signs of mental health and substance use challenges and provide initial support until appropriate professional help is available — or until the crisis resolves.

MHFA does not teach people to diagnose or provide therapy. Instead, it equips everyday people — including pastors, deacons, church nurses, Sunday School teachers, and community volunteers — with the knowledge and confidence to **notice, respond, and connect** someone to care.

★ MHFA by the Numbers

- **4+ million people** trained in the United States
- Courses available in **12,000+ U.S. cities**
- Backed by **91 peer-reviewed studies** demonstrating effectiveness
- Recognized by SAMHSA as an evidence-based program

The ALGEE Action Plan

At the heart of MHFA is the **ALGEE Action Plan** — a five-step framework that anyone can learn and use to help someone in need. The steps can be applied in any order in non-crisis situations:

	Action	Description
A	Assess for risk of suicide or harm	Find a suitable time and place to start a conversation. Assess whether the person may be at risk for self-harm or harm to others. If so, take immediate action (call 988 or 911).
L	Listen nonjudgmentally	Let the person share without interrupting. Practice empathy and acceptance. Use phrases like “I noticed that...” or “I’m here for you.” Do not rush to fix or advise.
G	Give reassurance and information	After listening, provide hope and useful information. Reassure the person that mental health conditions are treatable and that help is available. Avoid minimizing their experience.
E	Encourage appropriate professional help	The earlier someone gets help, the better the outcome. Offer to help the person learn about options: therapists, counselors, primary care physicians, community mental health centers, or faith-based counselors.
E	Encourage self-help and other support strategies	Help the person identify their support network — family, friends, church community. Encourage healthy coping strategies: exercise, prayer, meditation, journaling, and connection with support groups.

Types of Training Available

- **Adult MHFA** (8 hours): Teaches adults how to recognize and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in other adults.
- **Youth MHFA** (8 hours): Designed for adults who regularly interact with young people ages 12–18, including parents, teachers, coaches, youth pastors, and mentors.
- **Blended format**: Combines self-paced online coursework with a live instructor-led session.
- **In-person courses**: Full-day training available in communities nationwide.

How Your Church Can Host MHFA Training

1. **Contact NBCUSA H.O.P.E. A Better Way** at info@hopenbc.com to discuss a virtual or in-person mental health first aid training class.
2. **Designate a church coordinator** to manage registration, space, and communication.
3. **Recruit 15–30 participants** from your congregation: pastors, deacons, nurses, ushers, youth leaders, Sunday School teachers.
4. **Secure a training space**: Your fellowship hall, classroom, or community room is ideal.
5. **Promote the training** through bulletins, announcements, and social media.
6. **Consider funding options**: Some community health organizations and grants cover MHFA training costs.

★ Take Action: Become a Mental Health First Aider

Your church can be a place where no one falls through the cracks. Mental Health First Aid training equips your leaders with the tools to recognize warning signs, respond with compassion, and connect people to professional help.

Contact: Contact NBCUSA H.O.P.E. A Better Way at info@hopenbc.com

Cost: Many courses are offered at no cost or reduced cost through community partnerships.



Section 5: Crisis Response Guidance

Pastors and ministry leaders are often the first people someone turns to in a crisis. This section provides practical guidance for responding to mental health emergencies with confidence, compassion, and safety.

National Crisis Resources

Resource	Contact	Details
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or Text 988	Available 24/7/365. Free, confidential. Connects to trained crisis counselors. Chat available at 988lifeline.org.
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741	Free, 24/7 crisis support via text message. Trained crisis counselors.
SAMHSA National Helpline	1-800-662-4357	Free, confidential, 24/7/365. Treatment referrals and information in English and Spanish.
Emergency Services	Call 911	For immediate danger to life — when someone is actively attempting self-harm, harming others, or in medical distress.

When to Call 911 vs. 988

Call 911 When...	Call/Text 988 When...
Someone is actively attempting suicide or self-harm	Someone is expressing thoughts of suicide but is not in immediate danger
Someone is threatening to harm others	Someone is in emotional distress and needs to talk
Someone is unconscious, has taken an overdose, or is in medical distress	Someone is experiencing a mental health crisis but is safe
There is an immediate threat to physical safety	You need guidance on how to help someone who is struggling

How to Stay with Someone in Crisis

1. **Stay calm.** Your composure helps the person feel safer.
2. **Listen without judgment.** Do not argue, debate, or try to talk them out of their feelings.
3. **Ask directly:** “Are you thinking about suicide?” — Research shows this does not plant the idea.
4. **Remove access to means** if safely possible (medications, weapons, sharp objects).
5. **Do not leave the person alone.** Stay with them until professional help arrives.
6. **Call for help:** 988, Crisis Text Line, or 911 as appropriate.
7. **Follow up.** Check in on the person in the days following the crisis.

Creating a Church Crisis Response Team

Every congregation should have a small, trained team prepared to respond to mental health emergencies:

- **Identify 3–5 team members:** Include a pastor, a nurse or health professional (if available), a deacon, and a trained lay leader.
- **Complete MHFA Training** (see Section 4) as a team.
- **Develop a simple protocol:** Who to contact, how to secure the space, how to communicate with emergency services.
- **Maintain a resource binder** with local crisis numbers, therapist referrals, and hospital information.
- **Practice confidentiality:** The person in crisis deserves privacy and dignity.
- **Debrief after every incident:** Support the responders, too — secondary trauma is real.

Safe Messaging: How to Talk About Suicide

✗ Avoid	✓ Instead
“Committed suicide” (implies crime or sin)	“Died by suicide” or “lost their life to suicide”
Sharing specific methods or details	Focus on warning signs, how to help, and available resources
Sensationalizing or romanticizing suicide	Frame as a public health issue; emphasize hope and recovery
Blaming the person or their family	Express compassion; acknowledge the complexity of mental health
Suggesting suicide is a solution to problems	Emphasize that help is available and recovery is possible

De-Escalation Basics for Ministry Settings

- **Use a calm, steady voice.** Speak slowly and clearly.
- **Give the person space.** Do not crowd or touch without permission.
- **Validate their feelings:** “I can see you’re hurting. I’m here for you.”
- **Avoid power struggles.** This is not the time for theological debate.
- **Offer choices** when possible: “Would you like to sit here or step outside for some air?”
- **Set gentle boundaries** if behavior becomes unsafe for others.
- **Know your limits.** You are not a therapist — your role is to provide initial support and connect to professional help.

⚠ CRISIS QUICK REFERENCE CARD ⚠

Cut along the border. Keep in your Bible, bulletin board, or wallet.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Call or Text 988

Crisis Text Line:

Text HOME to 741741

SAMHSA National Helpline:

1-800-662-4357

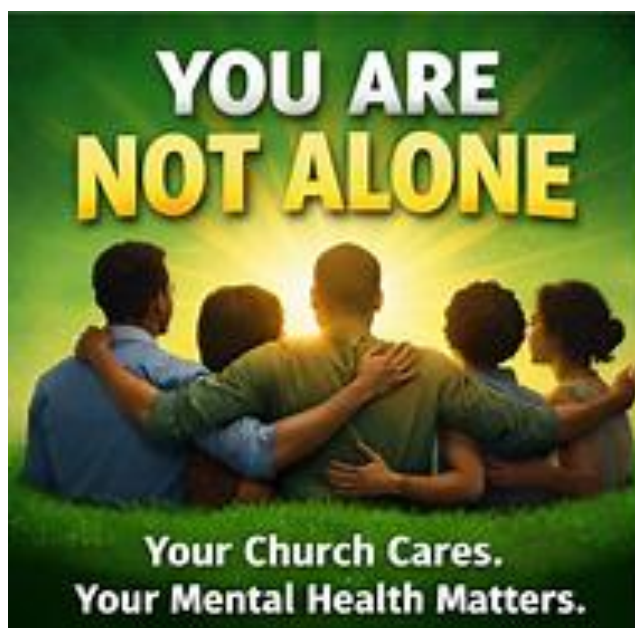
Emergency Services:

Call 911

National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-7233

You are not alone. Help is available 24/7.



Section 6: Youth Mental Health

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
— Proverbs 22:6 (KJV)

The Youth Mental Health Crisis

Our young people are hurting. Across the nation, children, adolescents, and young adults are experiencing a mental health crisis of unprecedented proportions. The church has a sacred responsibility to recognize the signs, create safe spaces, and wrap our young people in love and support.

Key Statistics

- **40%** of high school students report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness — a figure that has increased dramatically over the past decade.
- **29% (1 in 3)** U.S. high school students report their mental health was not good most of the time or always during the past 30 days.
- Nearly **1 in 5 adolescents** (ages 12–17) experienced a major depressive episode in the past year.
- **10%** of high school students attempted suicide in the past year.
- The suicide rate among youth ages 10–19 increased **85.3%** between 2007 and 2017.
- Black youth are experiencing the fastest-growing suicide rates of any racial or ethnic group.

Warning Signs in Children and Teens

Parents, guardians, youth pastors, and teachers should watch for these changes:

Category	Warning Signs
Emotional	Persistent sadness, excessive worry or fear, sudden mood swings, feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, excessive guilt
Behavioral	Withdrawal from friends, family, or activities; declining grades; loss of interest in hobbies; acting out; aggression; risky behavior; substance use
Physical	Changes in appetite or weight, sleep disturbances (sleeping too much or too little), frequent headaches or stomachaches, low energy
Social	Isolation, difficulty maintaining friendships, avoidance of social situations, conflict with peers or authority figures
Crisis Indicators	Talking or writing about death or suicide, giving away possessions, self-harm (cutting, burning), sudden calmness after a period of depression

The Digital Dimension

Today's young people live in a digital world that presents both opportunities and serious risks to mental health:

- **Social media** can fuel comparison, inadequacy, and body image issues. The curated, “highlight reel” nature of platforms can make young people feel their real lives don't measure up.
- **Cyberbullying** follows young people home from school and into their bedrooms, creating inescapable harassment.
- **Digital isolation:** Paradoxically, constant online connection can increase feelings of loneliness and disconnection from real-world relationships.
- **Sleep disruption:** Screen time before bed and late-night phone use significantly impact sleep quality, which directly affects mental health.

Special Considerations

- **LGBTQ+ youth** face elevated risk for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation due to stigma, discrimination, and rejection. The church must determine how to minister with compassion to all young people in their care.
- **Rural youth** often have less access to mental health providers, longer wait times, and fewer community resources.
- **Youth in foster care** and those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are at significantly higher risk.

The Role of the Church

- **Create youth-friendly programming** that normalizes mental health conversations
- **Train youth leaders** in Youth Mental Health First Aid
- **Identify safe adult mentors** — young people need trusted adults they can turn to
- **Establish a youth mental health ministry** within your church
- **Partner with school counselors** and community organizations
- **Invite youth mental health professionals** to speak at youth events

Conversation Starters for Youth

For younger children (ages 6–11):

- “How are you feeling today? Can you show me with your face?”
- “Who do you talk to when something makes you sad or scared?”
- “What makes you feel safe and happy?”

For teens (ages 12–17):

- “I've noticed you seem a little different lately. How are things really going?”
- “It's okay to not be okay. Is there anything you want to talk about?”
- “Have you ever felt so overwhelmed that you didn't know what to do? I want you to know I'm here for you.”
- “What's one thing that's been stressing you out? What's one thing that brings you peace?”

For young adults (ages 18–25):

- “How are you taking care of yourself — really?”
- “What does your support system look like? Who do you lean on?”
- “Have you considered talking to a counselor? There's no shame in getting help.”



Section 7: Sermon Starters

The following three sermon outlines are designed for use during Mental Health Month. Each may be adapted to your congregation's context, worship style, and tradition. These are starting points — prayerfully make them your own.

Sermon 1: “Breaking the Silence: Faith and Mental Health”

Scripture: Psalm 34:17-18 (NKJV) — *“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”*

Theme: Destigmatizing mental health in the faith community

Main Points

I. The Silence Is Killing Us

- In too many of our churches, mental health is the “unspoken struggle” — people suffer in silence because they fear judgment.
- Illustration: Consider the person sitting in the pew next to you. Statistically, 1 in 5 adults is living with a mental health condition. They may smile on Sunday morning and cry every night.
- The culture of silence around mental health does not protect our people — it isolates them. Stigma grows in silence.

II. God Is Not Ashamed of Our Struggles

- David — the man after God's own heart — cried out in anguish, experienced deep depression, and poured out his pain in the Psalms. God did not rebuke him. God heard him.
- Elijah, after his greatest victory on Mount Carmel, fled in fear and prayed to die (1 Kings 19:4). God did not lecture him — He fed him, let him rest, and spoke to him gently.
- If the heroes of faith experienced emotional and mental distress, we must stop treating mental illness as a failure of faith.

III. The Church Must Be a Place of Healing

- Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Abundant life includes emotional and mental wellness.
- Practical steps: Train leaders in Mental Health First Aid. Create support groups. Partner with mental health professionals. Preach about mental health — not just once a year, but regularly.
- Let this church be a place where people can say “I'm not okay” and know they will be met with love, not judgment.

Closing Invitation: If you are struggling today — with depression, anxiety, grief, addiction, or any burden that feels too heavy — know that God is near to you. This altar is a safe place. Come as you are.

Suggested Hymns/Songs: “It Is Well with My Soul” • “His Eye Is on the Sparrow” • “I Need Thee Every Hour”

Prayer: Lord, give us the courage to break the silence. Remove the shame and stigma that keep Your people bound. Make this church a sanctuary of healing — where broken hearts are mended, weary minds find rest, and every soul knows they are loved. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think mental health is so difficult to discuss in church settings?
2. How can we create a culture where people feel safe being vulnerable about their struggles?
3. What biblical figures experienced emotional or mental distress? What can we learn from their stories?

Sermon 2: “Healing Begins in Community”

Scripture: Galatians 6:2 (NKJV) — “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”

Theme: The church as a healing community (aligned with NAMI 2026 theme)

Main Points

I. We Were Never Meant to Carry It Alone

- God created us for community — from the Garden of Eden (“It is not good for man to be alone”) to the early church (Acts 2:42-47), we are designed to do life together.
- Mental illness thrives in isolation. When we withdraw, the darkness gets louder. When we connect, light breaks through.
- Illustration: A single coal removed from the fire quickly dies out. But coals together keep burning. We need each other’s warmth.

II. Bearing Burdens Is Not Optional — It’s the Law of Christ

- Paul does not say “bear one another’s burdens if it’s convenient” or “if you understand what they’re going through.” This is a command.
- Bearing burdens means showing up — even when you don’t have the right words. It means checking on the member who stopped coming. It means sitting with someone in their pain without trying to fix it.
- Sometimes the most powerful ministry is simply being present.

III. Building a Community of Healing

- A healing community is one where vulnerability is honored, not exploited.
- A healing community makes mental health resources as accessible as the food pantry.
- A healing community trains its leaders not just in theology but in recognizing the signs of mental distress.
- Practical application: What would it look like if every church had a mental health ministry? A support group? A list of local therapists who share our values?

Closing Application: This week, reach out to one person you haven’t heard from in a while. Send a text. Make a call. Stop by. You never know — your reaching out may be the lifeline someone has been praying for.

Suggested Hymns/Songs: “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” • “We’re Blessed” • “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to be burden-bearers. Open our eyes to the pain in our midst. Give us the compassion to reach out and the humility to receive help when we need it. Build us into a community where healing is not just preached — it is practiced. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does “bearing one another’s burdens” look like in practical, everyday terms?
2. How can our church become a more intentional community of healing?
3. Is there someone in your life right now who might be carrying a burden alone? What can you do this week?

Sermon 3: “You Are Not Alone: God’s Presence in the Valley”

Scripture: Psalm 23:4 (NKJV) — “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*”

Theme: God’s companionship in depression, anxiety, and grief

Main Points

I. The Valley Is Real — And It’s Not a Sign of Faithlessness

- David does not say “if I walk through the valley” — he says “though I walk.” The valley is not hypothetical. It is a guarantee of life.
- Depression is a valley. Anxiety is a valley. Grief is a valley. Addiction is a valley. Being in the valley does not mean God has abandoned you.
- Illustration: Even Jesus experienced deep anguish in Gethsemane — “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Matthew 26:38). If the Son of God can grieve, so can we.

II. “You Are With Me” — The Promise of Presence

- Notice the shift in the Psalm: David moves from talking *about* God (“He leads me”) to talking *to* God (“You are with me”). It is in the valley that the relationship becomes personal.
- God does not always remove us from the valley — but He always walks through it with us.
- For those living with chronic mental health conditions: God’s presence is not contingent on your healing. He is with you in the treatment, in the therapy, in the medication, in the hard days, and in the better ones.

III. Through — Not Stuck

- The Psalm says “through the valley” — not “stuck in the valley.” The valley is a passage, not a permanent address.
- But “through” does not mean alone. Getting through may require a therapist, a support group, medication, a pastor, a friend who checks in. God often delivers us *through* other people.
- Hope-centered truth: No matter how dark the valley feels today, it is not the end of your story. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

Closing: If you are in the valley today, hear this: You are not alone. God is with you. This church is with you. Help is available. Healing is possible. And the valley is not your final destination.

Suggested Hymns/Songs: “Amazing Grace” • “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” • “I Won’t Complain”

Prayer: God of the valley, we thank You that even in our darkest moments, You are near. Comfort those who are walking through depression, anxiety, grief, and despair. Remind them that they are not alone and that they are deeply loved. Lead them through the valley and into the light of Your hope. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. What “valley” have you walked through — or are you walking through now? What helped you most?
2. How does it change your understanding of mental health to know that biblical heroes like David and Elijah experienced emotional distress?
3. What does it mean to you that God is “with you” in the valley — even when healing doesn’t come immediately?



Section 8: Responsive Readings

The following responsive readings are designed for congregational worship during Mental Health Month. They may be printed in the bulletin or displayed on screen. The **LEADER** reads the first line, and the **CONGREGATION** responds.

Reading 1: “A Litany of Hope for the Weary Soul”

LEADER: When the weight of the world presses down upon us, and our minds find no rest —

CONGREGATION: **We trust in You, O God, for You are our refuge and strength.**

LEADER: When anxiety steals our peace and worry clouds our thoughts —

CONGREGATION: **We cast our cares upon You, for You care for us.**

LEADER: When depression wraps us in darkness, and joy feels out of reach —

CONGREGATION: **We hold fast to the promise that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.**

LEADER: When grief overwhelms us and loss leaves us broken —

CONGREGATION: **We remember that the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

LEADER: When stigma silences our pain and shame keeps us from seeking help —

CONGREGATION: **We declare that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

LEADER: When we feel alone in our struggle, invisible in our suffering —

CONGREGATION: **We are reminded that God sees us, knows us, and calls us by name.**

LEADER: Let us go forth as a community of compassion, bearing one another’s burdens —

CONGREGATION: **For this is the law of Christ, and this is the ministry of His church. Amen.**

Reading 2: “We Are Not Alone”

LEADER: In this sanctuary, we gather as one body — imperfect, hurting, and hopeful.

CONGREGATION: **We are not alone. We belong to God and to one another.**

LEADER: To those who carry burdens no one can see — the silent battles of the mind and heart —

CONGREGATION: **We see you. We stand with you. You are not alone.**

LEADER: To those who have been told to “just pray harder” when they needed help and healing —

CONGREGATION: **We honor your courage. Seeking help is an act of faith, not a failure of faith.**

LEADER: To those who care for loved ones living with mental illness — the weary caregivers, the anxious parents, the devoted friends —

CONGREGATION: **We lift you up. You are seen, and your labor of love is sacred.**

LEADER: To those who have lost someone to suicide — the families carrying grief and unanswered questions —

CONGREGATION: **We mourn with you. Your loved one is held in the arms of God.**

LEADER: To every person in this room and beyond — struggling or strong, grieving or grateful —

CONGREGATION: **We declare together: Stigma grows in silence, but healing begins right here, in this community. We are not alone. Amen.**

Reading 3: “Renewing Our Minds”

Based on Romans 12:2 — “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

LEADER: The world tells us to hide our struggles, to mask our pain, to perform wellness we do not feel.

CONGREGATION: **But God calls us to truth, to honesty, and to transformation.**

LEADER: The world says mental illness is shameful, that the strong never break.

CONGREGATION: **But God says His strength is made perfect in our weakness.**

LEADER: We bring before God our anxious thoughts, our troubled minds, our weary spirits.

CONGREGATION: **We surrender them to the One who promises to renew our minds and restore our souls.**

LEADER: We reject the lies of stigma that say we are broken beyond repair.

CONGREGATION: **We embrace the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, even in our struggles.**

LEADER: Today, we choose transformation over silence, community over isolation, hope over despair.

CONGREGATION: **We are being renewed. We are being made whole. Thanks be to God. Amen.**



Section 9: Litanies

These litanies are designed for use in worship services, prayer meetings, or special Mental Health Month observances. The congregational refrain is printed in **bold**.

Litany 1: “A Litany for Mental Health and Wholeness”

LEADER: Almighty God, Creator of mind, body, and spirit — we come before You acknowledging that mental health is a gift from You, and mental illness is not a curse.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for those living with depression — for whom each morning is a mountain to climb and each night is a valley to endure.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for those bound by anxiety — whose hearts race, whose minds spin, and whose peace has been stolen by fear.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for those struggling with addiction — trapped in cycles they did not choose and desperately seeking freedom.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for those who have attempted suicide — that they may find reasons to live, people who care, and professional help that brings hope.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for families navigating the complexities of a loved one’s mental illness — for patience, understanding, and strength they cannot summon alone.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

LEADER: We pray for pastors and church leaders — that we may have wisdom to know when to pray, when to listen, and when to refer to professional help.

CONGREGATION: **Lord, hear our prayer for wholeness and healing.**

ALL: **We commit ourselves to being a church of compassion, understanding, and action. May healing begin in this community. Amen.**

Litany 2: “A Litany of Lament and Hope”

LEADER: O God, we come to You with heavy hearts. We lament the suffering of those who struggle in the shadows of mental illness.

CONGREGATION: **Out of the depths we cry to You, O Lord.**

LEADER: We lament the lives lost to suicide — precious souls who saw no other way, families left with grief and unanswered questions.

CONGREGATION: **Out of the depths we cry to You, O Lord.**

LEADER: We lament the silence of the church — the times we turned away, the times we offered platitudes instead of presence, the times we confused faith with denial.

CONGREGATION: **Out of the depths we cry to You, O Lord.**

LEADER: We lament the barriers that keep our people from care — the stigma, the cost, the distrust, the shortage of providers who look like us and understand our experience.

CONGREGATION: **Out of the depths we cry to You, O Lord.**

LEADER: And yet — even in our lament — we turn toward hope. For You are the God who makes a way where there seems to be no way.

CONGREGATION: **We choose hope. We choose healing. We choose community.**

LEADER: You promise that those who sow in tears will reap in joy. You promise to be near the brokenhearted. You promise that nothing — not death, not life, not anxiety, not depression — can separate us from Your love.

CONGREGATION: **We choose hope. We choose healing. We choose community.**

ALL: **We will break the silence. We will bear one another’s burdens. We will build a church where healing begins. In Jesus’ name, Amen.**



Section 10: Scripture References for Mental Health

The following 20 Scripture passages are organized by theme and offered as resources for sermons, Bible studies, counseling sessions, bulletin inserts, and personal devotion. All passages are from the King James Version (KJV) or New King James Version (NKJV).

Comfort in Suffering

Reference	Text (NKJV)	Reflection
Psalm 34:17-18	<i>“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”</i>	God does not turn away from our pain. He draws near to the brokenhearted — including those broken by mental illness.
Psalm 147:3	<i>“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”</i>	God is a healer of hearts and minds. His healing may come through prayer, through community, through professional care, or through time.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4	<i>“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble.”</i>	Our own suffering, when met with God’s comfort, equips us to comfort others. This is the foundation of peer support ministry.
Isaiah 41:10	<i>“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”</i>	For those overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty, God’s promise of presence and strength is an anchor.
Psalm 42:11	<i>“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.”</i>	The Psalmist models honest self-reflection — acknowledging inner turmoil while choosing to anchor in hope.

Overcoming Anxiety and Fear

Reference	Text (NKJV)	Reflection
Philippians 4:6-7	<i>“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds.”</i>	This verse is an invitation to bring our worries to God — not a condemnation for feeling anxious. God’s peace guards us.
1 Peter 5:7	<i>“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”</i>	A simple, powerful reminder: God cares. We are not burdening Him with our struggles — He invites us to lay them down.
2 Timothy 1:7	<i>“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”</i>	A “sound mind” is God’s desire for us. Pursuing mental health through all available means is pursuing God’s will.
Psalms 56:3	<i>“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”</i>	Trust does not eliminate fear — it accompanies it. Faith and anxiety can coexist while we lean into God’s faithfulness.
Joshua 1:9	<i>“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”</i>	Courage is not the absence of fear — it is moving forward with God despite it.

Hope and Renewal

Reference	Text (NKJV)	Reflection
Romans 12:2	<i>“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”</i>	God is in the business of renewing minds. Transformation is possible — and it is a process, not a one-time event.
Jeremiah 29:11	<i>“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”</i>	Even in the darkest season, God’s plans for us are rooted in hope. The valley is not the destination.
Lamentations 3:22-23	<i>“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”</i>	For those who feel consumed by mental illness — God’s mercy is renewed each morning. Every day is a new beginning.
Psalms 30:5	<i>“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”</i>	The night of suffering is real, but it is not eternal. Morning — and joy — will come.
Isaiah 40:31	<i>“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”</i>	Waiting on the Lord includes engaging in the process of healing — therapy, rest, community, and faith.

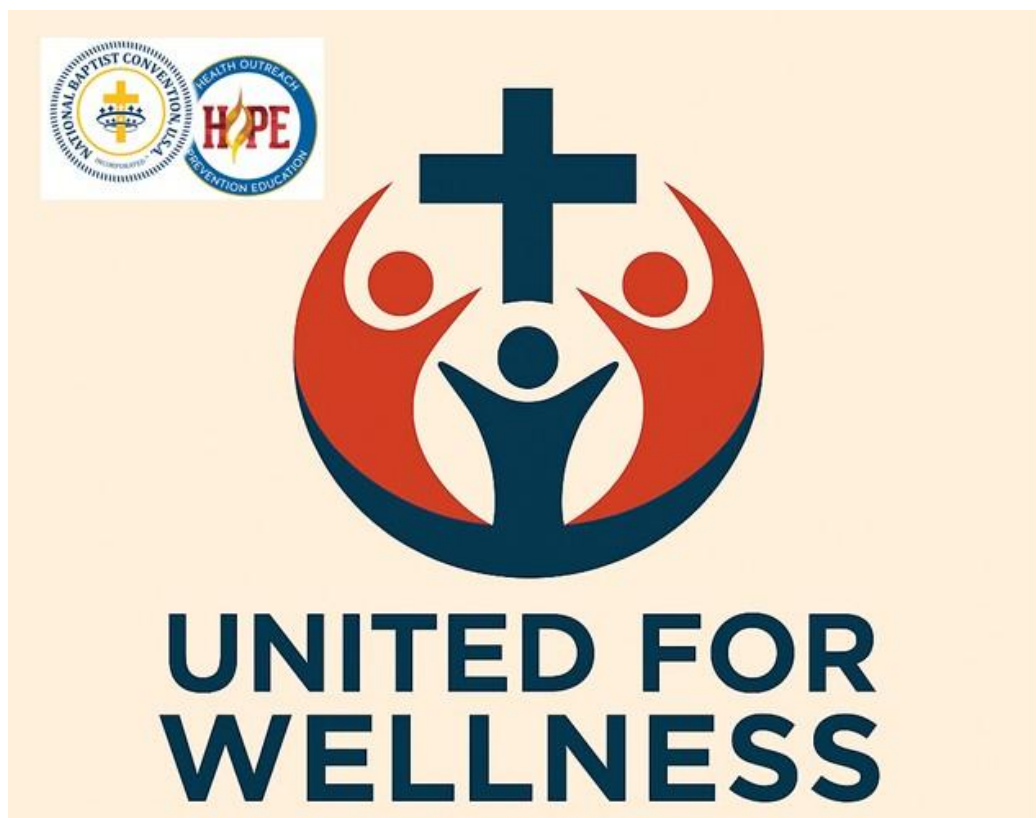
Community and Bearing Burdens

Reference	Text (NKJV)	Reflection
Galatians 6:2	<i>“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”</i>	Burden-bearing is not a suggestion — it is the law of Christ. Mental health ministry is kingdom work.
James 5:16	<i>“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”</i>	Healing comes through honest confession and mutual prayer. The church must be a safe space for vulnerability.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10	<i>“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.”</i>	We need each other. Community is a protective factor against mental illness and a pathway to recovery.
Romans 12:15	<i>“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”</i>	Empathy is ministry. Sitting with someone in their grief — without trying to fix it — is a powerful act of love.
Acts 2:42, 44-45	<i>“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... All who believed were together, and had all things in common.”</i>	The early church modeled radical community — sharing everything, including their struggles. This is the blueprint for a mentally healthy church.



Section 11: United for Wellness Pillars & Mental Health

The NBCUSA **United for Wellness** initiative champions a holistic approach to health that recognizes the interconnection of mind, body, spirit, and community. Mental health is not a separate category — it is woven into every pillar of wellness.



Physical Wellness & Mental Health

The connection between physical and mental health is profound and bidirectional:

- **Exercise and mood:** Regular physical activity releases endorphins and serotonin — natural mood regulators. Studies show that just 30 minutes of moderate exercise three times per week can be as effective as medication for mild to moderate depression.
- **Nutrition and the brain:** The gut-brain connection is one of the most exciting areas of mental health research. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins supports brain health and emotional regulation. Conversely, diets high in processed foods and sugar are linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety.
- **Sleep:** Poor sleep is both a symptom of and a risk factor for mental health conditions. Promoting healthy sleep habits is a mental health intervention.
- **Chronic disease:** People living with chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease) are 2-3 times more likely to experience depression.

Spiritual Wellness & Mental Health

- **Prayer and meditation:** Research shows that regular prayer and meditation can reduce stress hormones, lower blood pressure, and increase feelings of peace and well-being.
- **Meaning and purpose:** Faith provides a framework of meaning that is deeply protective against despair. Knowing that one's life has purpose — even in suffering — is a powerful buffer against hopelessness.
- **Faith practices as coping:** Scripture reading, worship, singing, and fellowship are evidence-supported coping strategies that complement professional treatment.
- **Important note:** Spiritual practices support mental health, but they do not replace professional treatment when needed. Faith and therapy work together.

Emotional Wellness & Mental Health

- **Emotional intelligence:** The ability to recognize, understand, and manage our emotions — and respond empathetically to others — is foundational to mental health.
- **Healthy relationships:** Strong, supportive relationships are one of the most significant protective factors against mental illness.
- **Processing grief:** The Black community carries layers of grief — personal, communal, ancestral, and ongoing. Churches must create space for grief that is processed, not just endured.
- **Setting boundaries:** Emotional wellness includes the ability to say no, to rest, and to prioritize self-care without guilt.

Community Wellness & Mental Health

- **Social connection:** Loneliness and social isolation are as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The church is inherently a community — and community is medicine.
- **The church as a wellness hub:** Your congregation can serve as a central point for health screenings, support groups, wellness classes, and mental health education.
- **Addressing social determinants:** Poverty, racism, housing instability, and food insecurity all impact mental health. Community wellness means addressing root causes, not just symptoms.

Preventive Health & Mental Health

- **Screening:** Just as we screen for blood pressure and diabetes, we should normalize mental health screenings. Free tools are available at screening.mhanational.org.
- **Early intervention:** The earlier mental health conditions are identified and treated, the better the outcomes. Don't wait for a crisis.
- **Reducing barriers:** Churches can help by providing information about free and low-cost mental health resources, connecting members with community health centers, and hosting mental health education events.

♥ The ABCS Connection

The H.O.P.E. Ministry's ABCS challenge — Aspirin therapy, Blood pressure management, Cholesterol management, and Smoking cessation — is directly connected to mental health. Research shows that cardiovascular health and mental health are deeply intertwined: depression increases the risk of heart disease, and heart disease increases the risk of depression. By addressing the ABCS, we are also supporting mental wellness.



Section 12: H.O.P.E. Church & Community Garden Connection

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” — Genesis 2:8 (KJV)

From the very beginning, God placed humanity in a garden. There is something deeply restorative about putting our hands in the soil, nurturing living things, and witnessing the miracle of growth. The **H.O.P.E. Church & Community Garden Project** is more than a food initiative — it is a mental health ministry rooted in creation itself.



Horticultural Therapy: The Evidence

Horticultural therapy — the use of gardening and plant-based activities in therapeutic settings — is a well-established, evidence-based practice for improving mental health:

- Research shows that gardening reduces cortisol (the stress hormone) more effectively than many other leisure activities.
- Studies demonstrate significant reductions in depression, anxiety, and stress among participants in gardening programs.
- The physical activity involved in gardening releases endorphins and provides gentle, accessible exercise.
- Horticultural therapy has been shown to improve self-esteem, social functioning, and overall quality of life.

Gardening as Mindfulness Practice

Gardening naturally promotes **mindfulness** — the practice of being fully present in the moment. When we garden, we engage all five senses: the feel of the soil, the scent of herbs, the sound of birdsong, the sight of green growth, the taste of a freshly picked tomato. This sensory engagement pulls us out of anxious thoughts about the future and ruminating thoughts about the past, grounding us in the present moment.

Community Gardens as Connection Spaces

Social isolation is one of the greatest risk factors for mental illness — and community gardens are a natural antidote:

- Gardens bring people together across generations, creating intergenerational connection.
- Working side by side creates opportunities for conversation and companionship that might not happen in a church pew.
- For those who struggle with traditional social settings, the garden offers a low-pressure, purpose-driven way to connect with others.
- Community gardens have been shown to increase neighborhood social cohesion and reduce feelings of loneliness.

Farm-to-Table Nutrition & Brain Health

What we eat directly affects how we feel. Church gardens that produce fresh, nutritious food are literally growing mental health:

- **Leafy greens** (collards, kale, spinach) are rich in folate, which supports serotonin production.
- **Berries** are packed with antioxidants that protect brain cells from stress-related damage.
- **Herbs** like lavender, chamomile, and basil have calming properties.
- **Fresh vegetables** provide the vitamins and minerals essential for neurotransmitter function.

Starting or Expanding a Garden with a Mental Health Focus

1. **Designate a “Peace Garden” section** — a quiet area with a bench for meditation and reflection.
2. **Plant a “Healing Herbs” bed** — lavender, chamomile, mint, lemon balm — and teach their calming properties.
3. **Host “Garden and Talk” sessions** — informal support groups that meet while gardening.
4. **Create a youth garden crew** — giving young people purpose, responsibility, and outdoor time.
5. **Partner with local therapists** to offer garden-based counseling sessions.

Suggested Garden Activities for Mental Health Month

- **Therapeutic Planting Day:** Invite the congregation to plant seeds as a symbolic act — “planting seeds of hope.” Pair with a brief devotional on growth and patience.
- **Garden Meditation Walk:** Create a guided walk through the garden with Scripture readings at stations. Focus on themes of rest, renewal, and creation.
- **Harvest and Share:** Distribute fresh produce to members experiencing hardship — nourishing the body nourishes the mind.
- **“Grow Your Joy” Workshop:** Teach members to start small herb gardens at home as a daily mindfulness practice.



Section 13: Social Media Content

Use the following ready-to-post content throughout May. Customize with your church's name and local details. All content is designed for sharing on Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter).

Hashtags to Use

#MentalHealthMonth #MHAM2026 #StigmaGrowsInSilence #HealingBeginsInCommunity
#NBCUSAHOPE #UnitedForWellness #FaithAndMentalHealth #YouMatter #988Lifeline
#BreakTheSilence #MentalHealthIsMinistry

Weekly Themes for May 2026

Week	Theme	Focus
Week 1 (May 1–9)	Awareness	Facts, statistics, and education breaking down stigma
Week 2 (May 10–16)	Self-Care	Personal wellness, rest, spiritual practices, boundaries
Week 3 (May 17–23)	Reaching Out	Checking on others, crisis resources, community connection
Week 4 (May 24–31)	Community Action	Building mentally healthy churches, long-term commitment

10 Sample Social Media Posts

#	Platform	Caption
1	Facebook	May is Mental Health Awareness Month! This year's theme reminds us: "Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community." Our church is committed to being a place where mental health is discussed openly, compassionately, and without shame. You matter. You are not alone. 💚 #MHAM2026 #StigmaGrowsInSilence #HealingBeginsInCommunity
2	Instagram	1 in 5 adults lives with a mental health condition. That means people in our pews, our choirs, our Sunday Schools, and our pulpits may be struggling — and they deserve love, not judgment. Let's break the silence. 💚 #MentalHealthMonth #FaithAndMentalHealth #NBCUSAHOPE
3	X/Twitter	Mental health IS ministry. If you're struggling, please know: you are seen, you are valued, and help is available. Call or text 988 anytime. 💚 #MHAM2026 #988Lifeline #YouMatter
4	Facebook	Self-care is not selfish — it's stewardship. You can't pour from an empty cup. This week, we encourage our pastors, caregivers, and ministry leaders to REST. Take a walk. Take a nap. Take a break. God rested, and so should you. 💚 🌿 #SelfCare #UnitedForWellness #MentalHealthIsMinistry
5	Instagram	Seeking help is not a failure of faith — it's an act of faith. Therapy, counseling, medication, and support groups are tools God uses to bring healing. Don't let stigma keep you from the help you deserve. 💚 #BreakTheSilence #FaithAndMentalHealth #MHAM2026
6	X/Twitter	Check on your strong friend. Check on your pastor. Check on the person who "always seems fine." A text, a call, a visit could change everything. 💚 #HealingBeginsInCommunity #MentalHealthMonth

#	Platform	Caption
7	Facebook	“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2. This Mental Health Month, let’s commit to being a church that doesn’t just preach about community — but practices it. Who can you reach out to today? 🤝 📞 #NBCUSAHOPE #MentalHealthIsMinistry
8	Instagram	If you or someone you know is in crisis, help is available 24/7: 📞 Call or text 988 🗨️ Text HOME to 741741 📄 SAMHSA: 1-800-662-4357. You are not alone. 🤝 #988Lifeline #CrisisHelp #MHAM2026
9	X/Twitter	Did you know? Black Americans are 36% less likely to receive mental health treatment than the overall population. Let’s change this — starting in our churches. 🤝 #MentalHealthMonth #HealthEquity #NBCUSAHOPE
10	Facebook	Mental Health Month may end on May 31st, but our commitment to mental wellness is year-round. We are building a church where healing is possible, help is accessible, and hope is always alive. Join us. 🤝 📞 #UnitedForWellness #HealingBeginsInCommunity #NBCUSAHOPE

Tips for Responsible Mental Health Posting

- **Always include a crisis resource** when posting about suicide or self-harm (988, Crisis Text Line).
- **Use person-first language:** “people living with mental illness,” not “the mentally ill.”
- **Avoid graphic descriptions** of suicide methods or self-harm.
- **Center hope:** Every post about struggle should also communicate that help is available and recovery is possible.
- **Respect privacy:** Never share someone’s mental health story without explicit permission.
- **Engage with comments:** If someone reaches out in the comments, respond with compassion and direct them to resources.

Content Calendar Template — May 2026

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Sunday
Week 1	Launch post — introduce the month and theme	Share a mental health fact or statistic	Post a Scripture graphic (e.g., Psalm 34:18)	Recap Sunday sermon on mental health
Week 2	Self-care tip for church leaders	Share a “Myth vs. Fact” graphic	Encourage followers to check on someone	Share worship highlights and responsive reading
Week 3	Post crisis resources (988, Crisis Text Line)	Share youth mental health information	Highlight MHFA training opportunity	Community event promotion
Week 4	Share a personal testimony (with permission)	Promote local mental health resources	Year-round commitment post	Closing reflection and gratitude



Section 14: Bulletin Inserts

The following four bulletin inserts are designed for use on each Sunday in May. Print and include in your worship bulletin or display on screen.

♥ WEEK 1: “Mental Health Is Ministry”

“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” — Psalm 34:18 (NKJV)

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, and our church is joining congregations across the country in raising awareness about mental health and emotional wellness. Did you know that **1 in 5 adults** lives with a mental health condition? That means people in our pews — people we love — may be struggling in silence.

This month’s theme reminds us: *“Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community.”* Mental health care is not a sign of weak faith — it is wise stewardship of the mind God gave us. Let us commit to being a church where people can be honest about their struggles and find love, not judgment.

If you or someone you know needs help: Call or text **988** (24/7 crisis support).

♥ WEEK 2: “Caring for the Caregiver”

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:28 (NKJV)

Pastors, deacons, church mothers, Sunday School teachers, ushers — you carry the burdens of your congregation every day. But who carries yours? Burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma are real risks for those who serve others.

This week, we honor our caregivers with a simple message: **self-care is not selfish — it is stewardship.** God rested on the seventh day, and He invites you to do the same. Take a walk. Turn off your phone. Talk to a counselor. Ask for help. You cannot pour from an empty cup.

If you are a caregiver experiencing burnout or emotional exhaustion, please reach out to a trusted colleague or mental health professional. Your well-being matters to this church and to God.

This week’s challenge: Do one thing for YOUR mental health today.

♥ WEEK 3: “Know the Signs, Save a Life”

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2 (NKJV)

Would you know if someone in your life was in mental health crisis? Warning signs may include: withdrawal from activities and relationships, changes in sleep or appetite, increased substance use, giving away possessions, talking about feeling hopeless or being a burden, or expressing thoughts of suicide.

What to do: Ask directly — “Are you thinking about suicide?” (Asking does NOT plant the idea.) Listen without judgment. Stay with the person. Help them connect to professional support.

Crisis Resources: 📞 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) | 💬 Text HOME to 741741 | SAMHSA: 1-800-662-4357

This week’s challenge: Check on someone you haven’t heard from in a while.

♥ WEEK 4: “Building a Mentally Healthy Church”

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.” — *Hebrews 10:24 (NKJV)*

Mental Health Month may end on May 31st, but our commitment to mental wellness is year-round. A mentally healthy church is one that: normalizes conversations about mental health from the pulpit; trains leaders in Mental Health First Aid; maintains a list of local mental health resources and providers; offers support groups for grief, addiction, and caregiver burnout; and creates safe spaces where people can be honest about their struggles.

We invite you to join us in building this vision. Speak to your health ministry leader about how you can get involved in our mental health ministry efforts.

This week’s challenge: Commit to one action that supports mental health in your church or community — and carry it beyond May.



Section 15: Discussion & Small Group Guides

Guide 1: “Faith Over Fear: A 4-Week Mental Health Bible Study”

This study is designed for adult Sunday School classes, midweek Bible studies, or small groups. Each session is approximately 45-60 minutes.

Week 1: Understanding Mental Health Through a Faith Lens

Scripture: Psalm 42:11 — *“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.”*

Opening Prayer: Lord, as we begin this study, give us open hearts and open minds. Remove any stigma or judgment from this space. Help us to see mental health through Your eyes — with compassion, truth, and love. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

6. The Psalmist is honest about feeling “cast down.” Why is honesty about our mental state important in our faith journey?
7. What messages have you heard — in church or culture — about mental health that were helpful? What messages were harmful?
8. How do you define mental health? How does your definition compare to the medical definition?
9. Do you think it is possible to have strong faith and still struggle with depression, anxiety, or other mental health conditions? Why or why not?
10. What would a church that takes mental health seriously look like?

Closing Prayer: God, help us to be people who tell the truth about our struggles and trust You in the midst of them. Amen.

Take-Home Challenge: This week, have one honest conversation about mental health with someone you trust.

Week 2: The Stigma of Silence

Scripture: James 5:16 — *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”*

Opening Prayer: Father, give us courage to break the silence. Help us create a community where confession is met with compassion and vulnerability is honored. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

11. James connects confession and prayer to healing. How might breaking our silence about mental health struggles lead to healing?
12. What are the sources of stigma around mental health in the Black community? In the church specifically?
13. Have you ever felt you couldn’t be honest about a struggle because of how others might react? What happened?
14. How can we make our church a safer place for people to share their mental health stories?
15. “Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community.” What does this mean to you personally?

Closing Prayer: Lord, forgive us for the times we have let stigma silence the suffering. Give us the courage to speak and the compassion to listen. Amen.

Take-Home Challenge: Identify one stigma or myth about mental health that you’ve believed. Research the truth and share it with someone this week.

Week 3: Being a Burden-Bearer

Scripture: Galatians 6:2 — *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Opening Prayer: God, teach us to be burden-bearers. Open our eyes to the pain around us and give us the strength and wisdom to respond with love. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

16. What does it practically look like to “bear one another’s burdens” when it comes to mental health?
17. How can we support someone with a mental health condition without trying to be their therapist?
18. What is the difference between helping someone and enabling them? Where are the boundaries?
19. Read the ALGEE Action Plan (Section 4). How could these steps be useful in your daily life?
20. Is there someone in your life right now who might be carrying a burden alone? What can you do?

Closing Prayer: Lord, show us who needs us this week. Give us the courage to reach out and the humility to ask for help when we need it. Amen.

Take-Home Challenge: Reach out to one person who has been on your heart. A text, a call, a visit — be a burden-bearer this week.

Week 4: Building a Church of Healing

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47 — *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... praising God and having favor with all the people.”*

Opening Prayer: Lord, as we close this study, ignite in us a vision for what our church can become — a place where healing is not just preached but practiced. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

21. What elements of the early church in Acts 2 are most relevant to building a mentally healthy church today?
22. What mental health resources or ministries does our church currently offer? What gaps exist?
23. How can we move from being a church that responds to mental health crises to one that prevents them?
24. What role can you personally play in our church’s mental health ministry?
25. What is one commitment you will make, going forward, to support mental health in your church and community?

Closing Prayer: God of healing, we commit ourselves to being a church where no one suffers alone, where help is accessible, and where Your love is tangible. Build us into the community You envision. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Take-Home Challenge: Write down one concrete action you will take in the next 30 days to support mental health in your church. Share it with someone for accountability.

Guide 2: “Table Talk — Mental Health Conversations for Families”

This guide is designed for family or intergenerational small groups. Each session is 30-40 minutes and includes activities suitable for all ages.

Session 1: “Feelings Are Not Wrong”

Key Idea: God gave us all of our emotions — including sadness, fear, and anger. Having big feelings is not a sin; it’s part of being human.

Discussion Prompts:

- For kids: “Name as many feelings as you can! Which ones do you feel the most?”
- For teens: “Is there a difference between feeling sad and having depression? What do you think?”
- For adults: “Growing up, were you allowed to express difficult emotions? How does that affect you today?”

Family Activity: Create a “Feelings Wheel” together — a colorful chart of emotions. Put it on the refrigerator and use it during the week to check in with each other.

Session 2: “It’s Okay to Ask for Help”

Key Idea: Asking for help is brave, not weak. God designed us to need each other.

Discussion Prompts:

- For kids: “Who are the grown-ups in your life you can talk to when you’re sad or scared?”
- For teens: “What makes it hard to ask for help? What would make it easier?”
- For adults: “Have you ever struggled to ask for help? What happened?”

Family Activity: Create a “Circle of Trust” — each family member writes or draws 3-5 people they can turn to when they need help.

Session 3: “Being a Good Friend to Someone Who Is Hurting”

Key Idea: We can help others by listening, being present, and showing kindness.

Discussion Prompts:

- For kids: “If your friend seemed really sad at school, what could you do?”
- For teens: “What would you do if a friend told you they were thinking about hurting themselves?”
- For adults: “How can we model healthy support for our children?”

Family Activity: Role-play scenarios: practice what to say (and what not to say) when someone is hurting.

Session 4: “Our Family’s Wellness Plan”

Key Idea: Mental health is something we take care of every day — not just in a crisis.

Discussion Prompts:

- For everyone: “What are three things that make you feel calm and happy?”
- For teens: “How does your phone/social media use affect your mood? What boundaries might help?”
- For adults: “How can our family prioritize mental health together?”

Family Activity: Create a “Family Wellness Plan” — a poster with each person’s self-care strategies, family activities, and a commitment to check in with each other regularly.



Section 16: Prayer Points for Mental Health

Thirty daily prayer points for the month of May — one for each day. Use these in personal devotion, family prayer, prayer meetings, or church-wide prayer initiatives.

Week 1: Prayers for Awareness and Understanding (Days 1–7)

Day 1 (May 1): *Psalm 139:23* — Lord, search our hearts. Open our eyes to the reality of mental health struggles in our families, our churches, and our communities. Help us see what we have ignored.

Day 2 (May 2): *Proverbs 4:7* — Father, give us wisdom and understanding about mental health. Remove the myths and misinformation that fuel stigma. Help us learn the truth.

Day 3 (May 3): *John 8:32* — God of truth, let the truth about mental illness set us free from shame and silence. Help us speak openly and listen compassionately.

Day 4 (May 4): *Psalm 19:14* — Lord, let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable. Guide our conversations about mental health with grace and accuracy.

Day 5 (May 5): *James 1:5* — God, give our pastors and church leaders wisdom to address mental health in their congregations with boldness and sensitivity.

Day 6 (May 6): *Hosea 4:6* — Father, we reject ignorance. Equip our churches with knowledge about mental health so that our people are not destroyed for lack of understanding.

Day 7 (May 7): *Romans 12:2* — Lord, renew our minds and transform our thinking about mental health. Replace judgment with compassion, fear with knowledge, and silence with speech.

Week 2: Prayers for Those Living with Mental Illness (Days 8–14)

Day 8 (May 8): *Psalm 34:18* — Lord, draw near to every person living with depression today. Remind them that You see them, You hear them, and You are close to their broken hearts.

Day 9 (May 9): *Philippians 4:7* — Father, we pray for those living with anxiety. Guard their hearts and minds with Your peace that surpasses understanding.

Day 10 (May 10): *Psalm 107:14* — God, bring out of darkness and the shadow of death those who are trapped in addiction. Break the chains that bind them and lead them to freedom.

Day 11 (May 11): *Isaiah 61:3* — Lord, give beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness to every person battling despair today.

Day 12 (May 12): *Psalm 23:4* — Father, walk through the valley with those living with PTSD, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Be their comfort and their courage.

Day 13 (May 13): *Jeremiah 29:11* — God, remind those who feel hopeless that You have plans for their future — plans of peace and hope, not harm. They are not forgotten.

Day 14 (May 14): *Psalm 40:1-2* — Lord, we pray for those who have been waiting — waiting for healing, waiting for breakthrough, waiting for the darkness to lift. Hear their cry and set their feet upon a rock.

Week 3: Prayers for Caregivers, Families, and Providers (Days 15–21)

Day 15 (May 15): *Matthew 11:28* — Lord, give rest to the weary caregivers — the mothers, fathers, spouses, and children who carry the weight of a loved one’s mental illness every day.

Day 16 (May 16): *Isaiah 40:31* — Father, renew the strength of our pastors. Many carry the burdens of their entire congregation. Protect them from burnout and compassion fatigue.

Day 17 (May 17): *Colossians 3:12* — God, clothe our therapists, counselors, social workers, and psychiatrists with compassion, kindness, and patience. Strengthen them in their sacred work.

Day 18 (May 18): *3 John 1:2* — Lord, we pray for the families navigating mental illness — for unity, understanding, and endurance. Protect their relationships and give them wisdom.

Day 19 (May 19): *Psalm 91:1* — Father, be a shelter for the crisis counselors and first responders who answer calls at 988 and on crisis lines. Cover them with Your protection.

Day 20 (May 20): *1 Thessalonians 5:11* — God, multiply the mental health providers in underserved communities — especially Black and culturally competent therapists. Close the gap in care.

Day 21 (May 21): *Galatians 6:9* — Lord, encourage those who are growing weary in caregiving. Remind them that they will reap a harvest if they do not give up. Sustain them.

Week 4: Prayers for Healing, Hope, and Community Action (Days 22–30)

Day 22 (May 22): *Jeremiah 30:17* — Lord, restore health to Your people and heal their wounds. We claim healing — spiritual, emotional, mental — for every person struggling today.

Day 23 (May 23): *Psalm 30:5* — Father, for those in the night season of their mental health journey, we declare that joy comes in the morning. Sustain them through the darkness.

Day 24 (May 24): *Ezekiel 37:5-6* — God, breathe life into dry bones. Revive the spirits of those who feel dead inside — those who go through the motions but have lost their joy and purpose.

Day 25 (May 25): *Psalm 46:1* — Lord, be a very present help in trouble for every person contemplating suicide today. Intervene. Send help. Surround them with people who care.

Day 26 (May 26): *Acts 2:42* — Father, build our churches into communities of healing — where fellowship, prayer, and mutual support are not just ideals but daily realities.

Day 27 (May 27): *Isaiah 58:12* — God, make us repairers of the breach. Let our churches repair the broken systems, the broken trust, and the broken hearts in our communities.

Day 28 (May 28): *Micah 6:8* — Lord, help us do justice — by advocating for mental health equity, fighting for access to care, and standing with those who have been marginalized.

Day 29 (May 29): *Philippians 1:6* — Father, we trust that You who began a good work in each of us will carry it to completion. Mental health recovery is a journey, and You are faithful.

Day 30 (May 30): *Revelation 21:4* — Lord, we look forward to the day when You will wipe away every tear, when there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Until that day, give us the strength to be Your hands and feet. Amen.



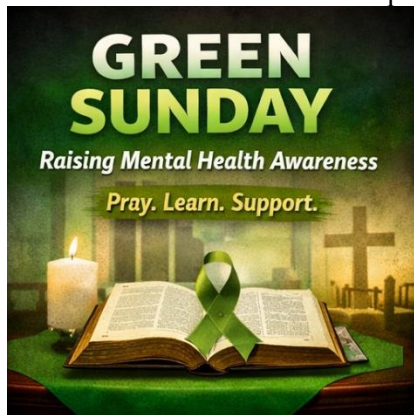
Section 17: Community Event Planning Guide

This section provides step-by-step guidance for planning and hosting Mental Health Month events in your church and community.

Event Ideas

1. Mental Health Sunday Worship Service

Dedicate one Sunday (or every Sunday) in May to mental health. Use the sermon starters, responsive readings, and litanies from this toolkit. Invite a mental health professional to share a brief testimony or educational moment. Include a special offering for a local mental health organization.



2. Community Mental Health Fair

Host a free, open-to-the-public event featuring:

- Resource tables from local mental health agencies, counseling centers, and support groups
- Free mental health screenings (partner with local providers)
- Blood pressure and wellness checks (connect to ABCS challenge)
- Information about 988, SAMHSA, and local crisis resources
- Food, music, and fellowship to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere
- Children's activities with a wellness focus

3. MHFA Training Event

Host a Mental Health First Aid certification course (see Section 4). Invite members from multiple churches. Provide lunch and childcare to maximize participation.

4. Youth Mental Health Awareness Night

An evening event for teens and young adults featuring:

- An age-appropriate speaker on mental health
- Small group discussions using prompts from Section 6
- Creative expression activities (journaling, art, music)
- Distribution of youth-friendly crisis resource cards
- Pizza and fellowship

5. “Walk for Wellness” Community Walk

Organize a community walk to raise awareness about mental health. Choose a scenic route in your neighborhood. Provide green ribbons or T-shirts. Walk together as a visible statement: mental health matters here.

6. Mental Health Movie Night

Screen a film that addresses mental health themes, followed by a facilitated discussion. Suggested titles:

- *Inside Out* (family-friendly; emotional awareness)
- *A Beautiful Mind* (schizophrenia; resilience)
- *The Soloist* (mental illness; friendship and advocacy)
- *Reign Over Me* (PTSD; grief; community support)
-

7. Panel Discussion with Mental Health Professionals

Invite 3-4 local mental health professionals (therapist, psychiatrist, school counselor, pastoral counselor) for a panel discussion. Allow congregants to submit anonymous questions. Focus on destigmatization, available resources, and the intersection of faith and mental health.

8-Week Planning Countdown

Weeks Out	Action Items
8 Weeks	Select events. Form planning committee. Set dates and times. Identify budget needs.
7 Weeks	Secure venue (fellowship hall, sanctuary, community center). Begin contacting speakers, panelists, and vendors.
6 Weeks	Confirm speakers and partners. Order materials (ribbons, flyers, T-shirts). Begin social media promotion.
5 Weeks	Recruit and assign volunteers. Plan food and refreshments. Set up registration (if needed).
4 Weeks	Distribute flyers in the community. Announce in church bulletins. Send email and social media invitations.
3 Weeks	Confirm all logistics: AV equipment, tables, chairs, signage, childcare. Prepare printed materials.
2 Weeks	Final promotion push. Confirm volunteer schedules. Prepare resource packets and handouts.
1 Week	Final walkthrough. Confirm all speakers and vendors. Prepare evaluation forms. Pray over the events.

Budget Template

Item	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost	Notes
Venue (if off-site)	\$0 – \$500		Church facilities: no cost
Speaker/Panelist honoraria	\$0 – \$500		Many volunteer; budget for honoraria
Food and refreshments	\$100 – \$500		Potluck option reduces cost
Printed materials (flyers, handouts)	\$50 – \$200		Use toolkit materials to reduce design cost
Green ribbons / T-shirts	\$50 – \$300		For Walk for Wellness or general distribution
MHFA Training course fee	\$0 – \$2,000		Many offered free through grants
AV / Technology	\$0 – \$100		Use existing church equipment
Childcare	\$0 – \$200		Volunteer childcare reduces cost
Total Estimated Range	\$200 – \$4,300		

Volunteer Roles Checklist

Role	Responsibilities	Assigned To
Event Coordinator	Oversees all planning and logistics	
Communications Lead	Manages flyers, social media, announcements	
Registration/Greeter	Welcomes attendees, manages sign-in	
Food Coordinator	Plans and manages refreshments	
AV/Tech Support	Manages sound, projector, livestream	
Resource Table Manager	Sets up and staffs resource/information tables	
Childcare Coordinator	Organizes safe childcare during events	
Prayer Team Leader	Available for prayer support during events	
Follow-Up Coordinator	Sends thank-you notes, collects evaluations	

Promotion Strategies

- **Church bulletin** announcements for 4 weeks leading up to events
- **Social media** posts (use content from Section 13)
- **Flyers** posted in the church, community centers, libraries, barbershops, and beauty salons
- **Pastoral announcements** during worship services
- **Email blasts** to the church directory
- **Partner church invitations** — invite neighboring congregations to participate
- **Local media** — submit event announcements to community newspapers and radio stations



Section 18: Resources & References

National Organizations

Organization	Website	Focus
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)	nami.org	Education, advocacy, support groups, crisis resources
SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)	samhsa.gov	Federal agency; treatment locator, helpline, grants
Mental Health America (MHA)	mhanational.org	Screening tools, state-level data, advocacy
CDC Mental Health	cdc.gov/mentalhealth	Data, statistics, public health resources
National Council for Mental Wellbeing	thenationalcouncil.org	MHFA training, organizational resources
NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health)	nimh.nih.gov	Research, statistics, educational materials
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	afsp.org	Suicide prevention, research, advocacy

Crisis Lines

Resource	Contact
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or Text 988 (24/7)
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741 (24/7)
SAMHSA National Helpline	1-800-662-4357 (24/7)
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-7233 (24/7)
Veterans Crisis Line	Dial 988, then press 1
Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ Youth)	1-866-488-7386 (24/7)

MHFA Training

Mental Health First Aid: mentalhealthfirstaid.org — Find a course, become a certified Mental Health First Aider, or learn how to bring training to your church.

Faith-Based Mental Health Organizations

- NBCUSA H.O.P.E. Health Ministry: A Better Way – Offers programming and nationally accredited mental health first aid training
- **The Balm In Gilead, Inc.** — Works with faith communities to address health disparities, including mental health. balmingilead.org
- **Saddleback Church Mental Health Ministry** — Resources for churches starting mental health ministries.
- **The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation** — Founded by Taraji P. Henson; provides mental health resources for the Black community. borislhensonfoundation.org
- **Therapy for Black Girls** — Directory of Black female therapists. therapyforblackgirls.com
- **Black Men Heal** — Provides free mental health services to Black men. blackmenheal.org

Recommended Books on Faith and Mental Health

Title & Author	Description
<i>Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission</i> by Amy Simpson	A compassionate guide for churches seeking to understand and support people with mental illness.
<i>Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness</i> by Matthew S. Stanford	Bridges clinical psychology and Christian theology, exploring how faith communities can respond to mental illness.
<i>The Unapologetic Guide to Black Mental Health</i> by Rheedra Walker, PhD	Addresses the cultural, systemic, and personal barriers to mental health in the Black community, with practical strategies.
<i>Healing for Damaged Emotions</i> by David A. Seamands	A classic work on emotional healing from a pastoral perspective — addressing shame, guilt, and inner wounds.
<i>I Told the Storm</i> by Bishop T.D. Jakes	Encouragement for those facing overwhelming circumstances, rooted in faith and spiritual resilience.
<i>Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness</i> by Kathryn Greene-McCreight	Written by a theologian living with bipolar disorder — an honest, faith-rooted exploration of mental illness.

Websites and Apps for Mental Health Support

- [screening.mhanational.org](https://www.screening.mhanational.org) — Free, confidential mental health screenings
- [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) — Online chat option for crisis support
- [findtreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov) — SAMHSA’s treatment locator
- [psychologytoday.com/us/therapists](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists) — Find a therapist by location, specialty, and insurance
- **Calm / Headspace / Insight Timer** — Guided meditation and mindfulness apps

Local Resource Template

Fill in the information below with providers and resources specific to your community:

Resource Type	Name / Organization	Phone / Website
Local Community Mental Health Center		
Local NAMI Affiliate		
Therapist / Counselor (accepting referrals)		
Psychiatrist		
Pastoral Counselor		
Substance Abuse Treatment		
Support Group (grief, addiction, etc.)		
Hospital Emergency / Psychiatric Services		
Youth Mental Health Services		
Free / Sliding Scale Counseling		

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Section 19: Acknowledgments & Closing

Acknowledgments

This toolkit was developed by the NBCUSA H.O.P.E. (Health Outreach and Prevention Education) Ministry in partnership with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

We gratefully acknowledge the visionary leadership of **President Dr. Boise Kimber**, whose bold commitment to making the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. the **healthiest major denomination in America** has inspired and empowered health ministries across the country. Under his leadership, the H.O.P.E. Ministry continues to expand its reach, addressing the critical health issues — including mental health — that impact our congregations and communities.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to:

- The H.O.P.E. Ministry Dr. Michael O. Minor, National Director, national leadership team, and regional coordinators
- The pastors, health ministry leaders, and volunteers who will put this toolkit into action in their congregations
- Our partnering organizations — NAMI, Mental Health America, SAMHSA, and the National Council for Mental Wellbeing — for their tireless work in mental health education and advocacy
- The mental health professionals, therapists, counselors, and social workers who serve our communities with compassion and excellence
- The individuals and families living with mental illness who courageously share their stories, break the silence, and light the path for others

A Closing Prayer for Mental Health Ministry

Almighty God, Healer of every wound and Comforter of every heart — We thank You for the gift of this month and this toolkit. We pray that the words on these pages will become action in our churches, compassion in our communities, and healing in our homes.

Bless the pastors who will preach these sermons with boldness and tenderness. Bless the leaders who will facilitate these discussions with wisdom and grace. Bless the volunteers who will organize these events with energy and purpose.

Most of all, Lord, bless the people who will be touched by this ministry — the mother who has been suffering in silence, the teenager who feels alone, the deacon who smiles on Sunday but weeps in private, the caregiver who is running on empty. Let them know that they are seen, they are loved, and they are not alone.

We commit ourselves to being a church that does not look away from mental illness but looks directly at it — with the eyes of Christ, with the hands of compassion, and with the heart of a healer.

May stigma die in the light of our honesty. May healing bloom in the soil of our community. And may Your church be the sanctuary — in every sense of the word — that Your people need.

In the name of Jesus, who heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds, we pray.

Amen.

Beyond May: A Year-Round Commitment

Mental Health Month is a catalyst — not a conclusion. We encourage every church to carry this work beyond May:

- **Establish a permanent mental health ministry** within your church structure
- **Include mental health check-ins** in pastoral care and visitation programs
- **Train new groups** in Mental Health First Aid each year
- **Maintain a current resource list** of local mental health providers
- **Preach about mental health regularly** — not just in May
- **Host quarterly mental health events** or support groups
- **Advocate for mental health equity** in your city, state, and denomination

“Stigma grows in silence. Healing begins in community.”

— NAMI Mental Health Awareness Month 2026

Contact the H.O.P.E. Ministry

NBCUSA H.O.P.E. Ministry *Health Outreach and Prevention Education* Website: hopenbc.com Phone: (866) 800-4432 **H.O.P.E. — Health Outreach and Prevention Education** *“Building the healthiest major denomination in America.”*



“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3

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A Better Way



National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH TOOLKIT

— ❁ May 2026 ❁ —

'Stigma Grows in Silence. Healing Begins in Community.'



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