

– SPM EDUCATIONAL EVENT –

MENTAL HEALTH: WE ALL NEED IT



PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

“MENTAL HEALTH: WHAT IS IT?”

Megan Miessler, DCE, LCSW

Mental health is a big concept that most people find intimidating in today’s world. We hear about it in the news and from parents and family members. We see the signs of deteriorating mental health even in ourselves. Our heavenly Father cares deeply for our health and spiritual well-being. He calls us to be on guard, to protect ourselves and to take care of ourselves, especially as we give care to others.

In this session, we’ll work to identify mental-health issues that plague those to whom we minister as well as understand the mental-health risks that develop in our own lives. We will discuss ways to attend to mental-health needs in others and in ourselves as we work to be present and effective in ministry.

“SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND MENTAL HEALTH”

Rev. Dr. Gary Zieroth

The Bible says that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (*Ps. 139:14*) and created in the very image of God (*Gen. 1:26*). We are a unity of physical, spiritual, mental and relational facets, with each aspect affecting and being affected by all the others. How have these aspects of our personal being been affected by the fall into sin? The church has always emphasized the spiritual effects of sin while minimizing or disregarding the mental and physical effects. How does our identity in Christ inform us in the area of mental illness? How does our understanding of demons and demonic forces shape our understanding of mental illness today, and is there a connection? This seminar will help us examine the biblical response of how Christians can further understand the connection between spiritual warfare and mental health. Biblical examples will be used in light of modern-day diagnoses.

“WELL-BEING AMONG LCMS MINISTERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Ryan Curnutt

In 2017, LCMS Research Services surveyed nearly 1,000 church workers and spouses regarding their well-being. This survey provided baseline measures for worker wellness as well as insight into the obstacles that keep workers from seeking the help they need. The research from that survey was then expanded upon by a series of focus groups with over 300 church workers and spouses. Those focus groups explored possible avenues for providing care to church workers and spouses.

In this session, Curnutt will present an overview of the results of the survey and focus groups. This review will focus on applying the data to help the Synod form better strategies in the care of workers and spouses. Not only will you come out of this session with a clearer sense of what workers need, but the research helps us all recognize our own needs and roadblocks to well-being.

BIBLE STUDY: “PRESENCE: GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE”

Rev. Derek Wolter

BIOGRAPHIES

MEGAN MIESSLER

Megan Miessler is a licensed clinical social worker and a trained director of Christian education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. She currently serves as executive director of Lutheran Counseling Services in Orlando. Miessler has experience working in private and public school settings as a school social worker and began the School Counseling Ministry at Lutheran Counseling Services. She has also assisted organizations, schools and congregations in responding to crises, tragedies and other disasters in North Dakota, Virginia, Louisiana and Florida. She specializes in counseling children, couples and families. Miessler has a passion for working with church workers and their families. She is trained in offering care to the caregiver and teaching healthy self-care to those facing burnout. Miessler has been married for over 14 years to her husband, Matthew. They are blessed with three beautiful children, who bring joy and activity to their lives.

REV. DEREK M. WOLTER

The Rev. Derek M. Wolter graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1989. His ministry has been varied, with calls as a parish pastor, missionary to Russia, Air Force chaplain with two deployments, and now health-care chaplain. He currently serves as director of Spiritual Care at the Lutheran Home and Harwood Place in Wauwatosa, Wis. In addition, Lt. Col. Wolter serves as unit chaplain for the 115th Fighter Wing in Madison, Wis. He has one son and lives in Wauwatosa. Wolter's credentials include BBCI Board Certification with the Association of Professional Chaplains, and he is VA board certified.

REV. DR. GARY W. ZIEROTH

The Rev. Dr. Gary W. Zieroth is associate professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. Some of the courses he teaches are in the area of pastoral counseling. He also serves as dean of students and director of Vicarage and Internship. For 26 years prior to joining the seminary faculty, he served as a pastor to four different congregations in Canada and the United States. He has also served as the interim director for the Synod's PALS (Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support) program. This program helps new seminary graduates and their wives transition into their first three years of ministry. He has done numerous seminars on parenting, marriage and men's ministry. This year, he celebrates his 35th wedding anniversary with his wife, JoAnn. They have four adult children and one grandchild.

RYAN CURNUTT

Ryan Curnutt has worked for LCMS Research Services for over a decade. As the Synod's senior research analyst, he monitors trends from existing data on LCMS congregations, conducts original research for the Synod, and closely follows the latest denominational research taking place across the country. Most recently, he worked with the LCMS Office of National Mission to study church worker well-being through a major survey and a series of focus groups.

Curnutt lives in the St. Louis area with his wife and daughters. When he is not running surveys or crunching numbers, he enjoys time with his family, playing guitar and Kansas basketball. beautiful children, who bring joy and activity to their lives.

