

Forming & Facilitating a Mental Health Book Discussion Group

Reading Across Our Congregations

Faith Connections on Mental Illness will be offering its annual conference on April 10, 2015 at St. Thomas More. The guest speaker will be Amy Simpson, author of Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission. In Troubled Minds, Amy, whose family knows the trauma and bewilderment of mental illness, reminds us that people with mental illness are our neighbors and members of our faith communities. Amy shows us the path to loving them well and becoming a congregation that loves God and loves those whose minds are troubled.

Faith Connections is proposing “Reading Across Our Congregations” using Troubled Minds as our common book. Reading “together” will better prepare us to receive the benefits from next year’s conference. In addition, reading together *within* a congregation is a way to open up this topic in a non-threatening and inclusive way.

The following are suggestions to help get your congregation started.

1. Determine best time/day for meetings along with the number of meetings you anticipate to cover your topic.
2. Advertise through your church bulletins, newsletters, etc.
3. Read the assigned pages before the meeting.
4. Select at least one open-ended question from the assigned material to pose to the group for discussion. OR
5. Ask participants to prepare an open-ended question for discussion related to the reading. Or you may prefer to have a group leader.
6. In the course of discussion, some personal stories may be shared. Establish guidelines of confidentiality. Another suggested guideline: Be open to and respectful of others ideas.
7. You may wish to serve light refreshments/drinks for your first gathering. Group can determine if they would like to continue the practice.
8. Send out reminders – at least one or two – before the meetings.
9. If you are unable to attend, please let the coordinator know. (Coordinator give contact information to participants.)
10. Have nametags for all.
11. It’s helpful to have in your group a professional mental health provider as well as a clergy member.
12. You may wish to begin and end with a spiritual reading/prayer.
13. You may wish to purchase in bulk the selected reading or have each person obtain their own copy.

Faith Connections on Mental Illness would like to offer support as you begin this endeavor. Please visit our web site and use the contact tab to get in touch with us. <http://www.faithconnectionsonmentalillness.org/>

Faith Connections on Mental Illness is an inter-faith coalition whose mission is to work with all faith communities to welcome, include, support, educate, and advocate for individuals and families who are living with mental illness.

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