

**INDIANA KENTUCKY CONFERENCE &
HEARTLAND CONFERENCE**

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH
RESOURCES
2026**



Indiana Kentucky Conference & Heartland Conference WISE Team Mental Health Month Resources 2026

May is Mental Health Awareness month. The sacred stories of four faith traditions offer us hope and encouragement for everyday life. When it comes to mental health and wellbeing, we invite you to celebrate the power of faith to positively influence the mental health of our communities. New brain science confirms what our ancestors knew: God's love has healing power. For emotional, social, and mental wellbeing, faith assures of two factors: (1) you are not alone and (2) you are loved.

As the writer of Revelations says, God is the Alpha and the Omega, God is with us in the beginning and in the end, no matter who we are or what our mental health diagnosis or where we are on life's journey. God promises to be our God and God is creating a new heaven and a new earth. God shows us all compassion and unconditional love, wiping away every tear from our eyes.

Thank you for being part of a global movement of God's healing Spirit and for sharing hope with people living with mental health issues, often invisible, yet very real and painful. Coming together to break the silence in worship services, we help end the stigma and shame of mental health challenges. Thank you for creating beloved communities where we can share honestly about our mental health and where we can share God's love with one another.

[\(Resource to Host Your Mental Health Sunday Year-round\)](#)

We invite you to include in your worship services these mental health and wellness resources curated by and written by the members of the Indiana Kentucky Conference and Heartland Conference's WISE Team.

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Witnessing the Divine Light: A Story of Being Supportive for Mental Health

Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott

Conference Minister, Indiana Kentucky Conference

The movement of ministry in the area of mental health in the United Church of Christ is vital to the thriving of our churches and those who have found belonging in our midst. In a season of greater and greater isolation, loneliness, and fear, how we understand supporting one another's mental health can be transformative.

As the Conference Minister for the Indiana Kentucky Conference, I have witnessed firsthand the power of such mental health support. On Memorial Day of 2024, I experienced the trauma of an accident that resulted in me dislocating and breaking my right ankle. It propelled me into a season of pain, both physically and emotionally. In my spirit, there was no doubt I was experiencing what has been called a "dark night of the soul." For months I was unable to walk, drive, or visit the churches in person that are under my care. I had to be assisted by my family on a daily basis to even do the very basic of tasks. I found myself experiencing depression, flaring of trauma responses, flashbacks to the accident, and a sense of loneliness that was hard to bear. And that is where my various communities of support came in and helped me make it through two surgeries, months of physical therapy, and getting back into a sustainable rhythm for my life.

As I experienced the pain and the radical physical and emotional shift in my own life, various communities stepped towards my pain with compassion and support. From those who came to mow my grass for 8 weeks while I couldn't, to the knee scooters someone donated, to hundreds of dollars contributed towards Grub Hub cards so my wife didn't have to cook just after my surgery, to those who stayed up with me into the early morning hours when I had a frightening flashback, to those who wrote me cards or emails, texted me, called me, prayed with me, and helped drive me places, all the way to my staff who surrounded me in love and care. These were small acts of love and compassion to let me know I was not alone, to let me know that because I could not heal from this experience without others, their support would be a vital part of what has made me whole again.

I could have easily turned inward and found myself isolated from the world. Others could have easily just gone about their daily lives and assumed God and my doctors would do the healing for me. But, healing is more than just physical or medical. Healing is

communal and spiritual, involving a very intentional offering of mutual support. St. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians that the different parts of the body cannot say "I have no need of you" when the other is hurting. This is one of four key witnesses as the body of Christ, that we care and support one another when the need is there. We are called to do so selflessly and with deep compassion because this is, indeed, how Jesus himself lived his life in the world. He not only saw the need of another, he was able to bear witness to the divine light that lives in every person no matter what they face and that is what makes his story and his ongoing story in us so powerful.

I consider myself so deeply blessed that I had family, friends, colleagues, and churches in my conference who understood Jesus' vision for supporting others and their mental and physical well-being. I cherish and do not take lightly the deep and abiding kindness provided to me in the wake of my injury. In all of this, I witnessed the Divine Light that bears God's love in all people. It is a light that has continued to shine in the world and I tell the story of those who cared for me every chance I can because it is what being WISE for mental health truly means. There was not a time in those months of struggle where I didn't feel welcomed, included, supported, and engaged in my mental health and that is a testimony to the power of love in the world. May it be so in our lives and in our churches.

The World Loves You Back

By: James Crews

Even if no one ever touched you
with the tenderness you needed,
believe that the world's been
holding you in its arms since
the day you were born. You are
not an accident, or afterthought.
Let rain on the roof remind you.
Let sun on the skin, and the neon-
orange of the Mexican sunflower
at which a hummingbird pauses
to drink. There are so many ways
to hold and be held, and you
could spend your whole life
tallying them up without ever
reaching the end of the list.

Sunday, May 10, 2026

“Do we have any chips?”
Rev. Dr. Monica Ouellette
Associate Conference Minister, Indiana
Kentucky Conference

My daughter has three teenage children who have a variety of mental health issues. Two years ago I asked her to share her experience. This is part of her story.

A simple five-word question strikes terror into my heart. “Do we have any chips?” My daughter loves chips. They are her very favorite thing to eat in the whole world. I think she must have some sort of salt deficiency. My answer to this question is usually no. We live off of the food we receive from our food bank pick-ups twice a month. We almost never get chips. We certainly do not get her favorite kind. Honey Barbeque in case you were wondering. There are two ways the situation can unfold after that. She can accept that we do not have any chips and continue to look for some other snack to satisfy her ever growing hunger due to her medication. Or, she can go into a tailspin and I will have to deal with the chaotic torment that she will inevitably rain down on our home for no reason other than the fact that she wants to rage. She will rage until she has physically exhausted herself. I pray that the dragon won't break any of my bones or cause internal bleeding before it falls into a fitful slumber.

I unconditionally love each child with mental illness. Actually, I love three children with an assortment of varied mental illnesses. Loving and raising these children is my sole reason for getting up out of bed in the morning. I am there for them no matter what they need. It makes no difference to me how many bruises are covering my arms and legs from hours of restraining my daughter in a desperate attempt to keep her from hurting anyone else in our home. I still sit on the couch with her every afternoon and help her with her math homework.

I am often questioned as to how I “do it.” How do you take care of these kids day after day. I have no idea. I don't have the slightest clue as to what I am doing and I fear that I never will. The rules change so fast and so often that I am constantly ten steps behind. I just do it. No one else can or will do it for me. No one else is there to drive a half hour one way to take them to trauma counseling once a week. No one else to sit in the waiting room at the doctor's office when the doctor is running forty- five minutes behind schedule just to be seen for a ten-minute medication checkin. No one else to sit at home every afternoon with the therapists and service providers who attempt to help my children get a handle on their illnesses. My front door revolves around and around while I stand still. A broken shell of a rock in the middle of the apocalypse of the day, whatever it maybe. I have committed two of my children for inpatient stays at psychiatric

facilities. One of which has now been committed four different times at three different facilities. I know that it is not a matter of if there will be more in the future. But when. Still I hope. Still I survive. What choice do I have?

My children's mental illnesses do not define them. It is not all that they are. We have good moments mixed in with the bad. I enjoy family game night, movie night, and our annual pumpkin picking day. There are moment's, however brief they may be, when all three of them get along. I can hear the choir of angels singing 'Hallelujah' clear as day in those moments.

(Celina Ouellette Dix, Lock Haven, PA)

Sunday, May 17, 2026

Dementia **Scott Griswold**

After I received my diagnosis of Alzheimer's in the Fall of 2018. It had a profound affect upon I became curious about this disease and its effects on the brain. With education, I learned that that being "developmentally-disabled does not define who I am. As a community educator with the Alzheimer's Association, I learned that important of wholeness (heart, mind, soul and body). All that I needed to do is look at the strengths and use them. And accept my weaknesses from Alzheimer's.

With an interest in connecting this to ministry, I found and read Bryan Spoon's book, "*Neuroscience and the Fruit of the Spirit, Science, Spirituality and Theology.*" Which as Paul writes in Galatians 3:22-23 "*the Holy Spirit produce this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*"

Here is what has been written about the book:

"I recommend this fascinating book to all who agree with St. Ignace - 'Our one desire and our one choice should be this: we want and we choose whatever will allow God's life to be deepened in us.' Bryan Spoon has crafted a beautiful integration of neuroscience, the study of emotions, and Christian Scripture and teaching. I will surely use these ideas not only for my own growth but also to enrich adult formation classes."
The Rev. Janice Hicks, BCC Eldercare Chaplain and coauthor of *Redeeming Dementia: Spirituality, Theology, and Science*

"Praying with the Psalms" by Eugene Peterson, is a yearly reflection through the psalms. In his reflection on Psalm 8, Peterson writes:

"In physical size human beings are miniscule; in the sidereal universe they are barely noticeable, a speck of cosmic dust. In spiritual significance they are giants; set in the purposes of God, the creator of heaven and earth, they are gloriously majestic."

For me, the psalms answer two very important questions:

1. Who is God?
2. Who are we in God's creation?

I came to understand that if we really embraced the answers to these two questions, we would be very grateful for having a God who loves and cares for a "micro-self" so deeply. For insight I went back to my daily journal entries starting July 7, 2022, as read

Bryan Spoon's book, "Neuroscience and the Fruit of the Spirit, Science, Spirituality and Theology." On the first day, I wrote:

"My belief must match my life. Example: I can believe in healthy eating, but do not eat healthy or I can believe God is love, but do not love, my life doesn't match with my belief. I have been promised the Holy Spirit; an Advocate (John 14:15-21, 23-26) that connects to my whole being (Heart, Mind, Soul and Body). It is up to me to appreciate this reality in all circumstances of life."

On July 8, 2022, I wrote:

"The human body is the most extra-ordinary, intrinsically and precious thing in the Universe. Just look at a group of people. Everyone is unique yet made in the image of God. In this we experience the "Butterfly Effect." One small act of love has a ripple effect beyond our expectations." Bryan Spoon encourages us to embrace that we are the "CEO of a galaxy of a

hundred billion stars (cells) that are complex and rare gems." Each of us are to be loved, by God, by others and by self." So that together we are building up the Kingdom of God. We are growing godly wisdom daily. This wisdom includes understanding our own "Temple" of the Spirit and the goodness that is on earth, putting the teaching of Jesus into practice (Matthew 7:24-27).

And so, then, "Who are we?" We are the ones that God has chosen to take on the same selfless love and nature as Jesus, no matter our physical condition and circumstances of life. Good mental health happens when we are vulnerable enough to give up control to let God rule our lives and stop being enslaved to our circumstances, then we too can be as happy as God and become love.

Conclusion Hopefully your goal embracing the Fruit of the Spirit will lead you in a way that will strengthen right living through Love and Love's Virtues in Galatians 5:22-23.

As I wrote on July 12, 2022:

"Let me be measured by the fruit I can produce - not my wealth or material collection, or status in life. Let me learn the lessons in each fruit and examine my life accordingly."

Invitation to Pray

Is anything too wonderful for you, O God, help us in all times all times and places, to work with courage, to be full of joyful confidence, that puts away your anxious doubt that often burdens us and blocks our witness to good mental health, your good news. May we live in hope and delight in pondering: how wonderful the fruit of your Spirit is for us. Amen

Sunday, May 24, 2026

“Let Him Go”
Rev. Ann E. H. Houlette

While I realize that it is not unusual for some to hear voices, it is for me. This Voice was clear as a bell, and it said, “Let him go.” (And this was some years before a certain Disney movie, which featured a song with a very similar title.)

My spouse and I had been terribly worried about one of our children, who suffered from severe anxiety. It had started with separation anxiety when he was in day care, and now manifested itself in stomach aches, tears, not wanting to go to school, and crippling panic attacks. Since I was the one with the more “flexible” schedule, I was the one who most often witnessed his distress.

I will admit that I wanted to hold on. When he didn’t want to go on a field trip with his summer day-care program, my own fears of “what might happen” sometimes overwhelmed me, and I let him stay home. I wanted so much to protect him, and yet I was unknowingly reinforcing his trepidations.

I’m not sure what day or what year I heard the Voice, but I know where I was. I was in bed, trying to get to sleep, when I heard it. And because of the little bit of training I had in systems theory, I immediately understood that I was part of the problem.

I would love to say that our son’s anxiety went away immediately after I heard the Voice, but that wasn’t true. What was true was that I began to get help for myself, for my own anxiety and depression. What was true was that we finally found a therapist who was able to help our son – and to provide some help to our parents, as well. And yes, some of that help involved “letting go” in ways that we had never imagined – including letting go of therapists and therapies that were not helpful as well as letting go of the public school system that was not – at that time – equipped to handle students with mental health crises.

What IS true, now, is that our son is an adult, able to manage his mental health in ways that work for him. Though he has been through much pain, struggle, and grief, including the death of his father, he is now confident, resilient, and able to shine as the truly amazing human being God created him to be. Thanks be to God!

Sunday, May 31, 2026

Mental Health Liturgy Components

Rev. Sigrid Rother

Westerville Community UCC, Westerville Ohio

CALL TO WORSHIP One: We gather in the presence of the One who abandons no one.
All: We gather as God's beloved people, leaving no one outside. All are welcome in this sacred place. One: In Christ, there is no East or West. All: We praise God who loves each of us. There is nothing we can do for God to love us less. Let us worship God. Adapted from Rev. Amy Petré Hill, Mental Health and Wellness Worship Resources

OPENING PRAYER Glorious God, thank you for the wide variety of people and expressions of faith. Thank you that we are all unique. Everyone is your beloved child, regardless of their peculiarities, worries, and feelings. Lover of diversity, God of all souls, continue to give us the grace to treasure each other with all our oddness and to use these differences as we minister to the diversity of people. We pray in the name of Our Risen Savior. Amen

Prayer for someone who has completed Suicide:

NO ONE KNEW

No one knew the torment
that you were going through;
We only kept on seeing
What we really wanted to.

We saw the outward smile,
but not your inner pain;
We never really dreamt,
That you would never smile again.
Forgive us if we failed to see,
What we could do to aid;
Or if we failed to comprehend,
How much you were afraid.

We pray your mental anguish,
Will now forever cease;
And that your deep anxieties,
Will be replaced by peace.
We know your pain invaded,
Every single thought you had;
It made you cry internally,
And deeply, deeply sad.

But we in turn remember,
The good times, not the bad;
We remember when you smiled at us,
And not when you were sad.
So when we think about your life,
We won't dwell upon its close;
We'll remember all the good times,
And forget about life's blows.
We'll remember all the happiness,
The joy and not the tears;
The assurance and the confidence,
And not irrational fears.
Our lives have all been better,
Because you have been there;
So now we leave your memory,
In God's all-loving care.

(Dick Underwood) from: <http://www.ellielomas.com/blog/5-funeral-poems-for-those-who-have-been-led-with-depression-and-other-mental-health-issues>

Additional Resources

A Grief Interrupted: An Easter Pondering, Plea, and Prayer

Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins

Conference Minister, Heartland Conference

Loving God, is it true
That grief must always win
Bearing down heavy
In weight of what was
Sucking out life's breath
At every turn of memory?

Must the upper hand always

Be given to grief's will and way
Bringing tender tears
In relentless remembrances
Sore and sweet all the same
Turning day into night
Resisting sun's reminder
Of new possibilities rising?

Today, O Love, resurrect me,
Saying no to grief's command
Surprising expected sadness
With unexpected morning light
Tearing open grief's heavy door
Announcing a going forth ahead
Revealing impossible meetings
Made possible by a motion
Only You can breathe to life.

Now, open the tomb of my heart,
Too often pre-occupied
With death's demands
Disguised as the final word
Unable to see the script
You write even with death
To bring Your good will

And Way of Love to life.

Let early bird song
Beahallelujah,
Each layer of sun
On ordinary sights
An awakening to You
Who brings this new day
As a gift of "yes"
To persistent "no's"
Commanding attention
Meant for You alone.

O Holy One who bears

Life through death
In ways improbable
ExceptforYourChrist-Love
That rises unstoppable,
Grant my grief a rest
And enliven me again
WithYourrising
New creation in Christ.

Two Poems

Stewart Jones

Medina Congregational UCC

Blessed

I've come to realize
How blessed I am

To have had the experiences I have
And be surrounded by
The people I have

Disguise

Some people
Try to disguise
Their discomfort

By joking about
An issue they don't understand
When in reality
If they would
Open their minds and hearts

They may see
The beauty in the issue
That they once didn't understand