

## *A Study for Healing and Mental Health: The Sanctuary Course*



Our focus in Lent is going to be on healing and recovery. The past year has been not only challenging but actually harmful to our health. Our Lenten devotional, included in the Ash Wednesday/Lenten packages, will focus on many areas of health where we may need healing and recovery: physical, obviously needed in light of the epidemic; communal, so important after a year of physical isolation and political division; intellectual health and environmental health, both of which have been challenged in recent years because of changes to industry and community. One area that has received relatively little attention is the impact of COVID-19 on mental health. Isolation, social anxiety, fear about mortality, burden on caregivers, stress on breadwinners, all of these have been made worse by COVID-19.

For several years, I have felt God calling me to the area of mental health—not as a change in profession—rather a recognition of the importance of mental health as a dimension of ministry. This is a concern close to my heart, having recently lost a nephew to mental illness, and having struggled with the stresses and disappointments of life myself. Looking toward to the season of Lent with a focus on healing and restoration, I felt the Spirit pulling me toward studying and addressing issues of mental health again. I was delighted to find a small group study, The Sanctuary Course. This eight-part course is designed to raise awareness and start conversations regarding mental health. This course is for...

- People with questions about mental health
- Mental health professionals with a wealth of knowledge to share
- Leaders who want to engage their community in mental health conversations
- People supporting loved ones with mental health problems
- People living with mental health problems

This course will give us a base of shared knowledge and the opportunity to discover a common language for talking about mental health. The course includes topics such as: mental health and mental illness, stigma, the recovery journey, companionship, self-care, and the role of community. Each theme is covered from a psychological, social, and theological angle, and each session includes a short video that tells the story of a person of faith with mental health challenges.

The course will include 8 weekly Zoom meetings on Monday evenings taking us into the Easter season, course materials, short films each week as part of the meetings, followed by discussion when our questions, our experiences, and our knowledge are invaluable. Everyone has something meaningful to contribute to the conversation because mental health affects us all. When the course is completed, we will be better able to support each other and to include healing and recovery of mental health into our ministry to the community.

The meetings will be by Zoom at 6:30 pm on the following dates: February 22, March 1, March 8, March 15, March 22, March 29, skip Easter Monday, April 12, and April 19 for the final meeting.

In addition to the 8 sessions, we will offer an optional session relating specifically to COVID-19 and its impact on mental health. This bonus session will be offered both before and after the other sessions, on February 15 and April 26.

To be part of this study and conversation, simply sign up on [www.bookapew.com/app/az/sumc](http://www.bookapew.com/app/az/sumc) or contact Pastor Ann [pastorann@scottsdaleumc.org](mailto:pastorann@scottsdaleumc.org) and she will send you the Zoom link and the materials. There is no cost for the course or the materials.