

Resolution: 9

Recommendation of the Resolutions Committee: Do pass

Action Taken: Adopted as Amended

(yes = 398, no = 19, abstain = 2)

Subject: Mental Illness – Brain Disorder Education

Source: Pastors of First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota – Senior Pastor: Rev. John Christopherson, Associate Pastors: Jason Burggraff, Rev. Natanael Lizarazo, Rev. Barbara Wangness

WHEREAS, the challenges of mental health illnesses affect many members in our congregations and present religious leaders with unique pastoral care issues to both the patient and their families, for which leaders are often poorly prepared to handle and often unaware of faith-related mental health resources available to them through organizations such as: NAMI Faith.Net, Mental Health Ministries, and Pathways to Promise; and

WHEREAS, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the largest national provider of educational resources regarding brain disorders and their faith-related organization, NAMI Faith.Net, reports that serious mental illnesses such as disorders, borderline personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder affect one in every four people annually (in the USA); and

WHEREAS, serious mental illnesses including addictions to alcohol, drugs, gambling and other related disorders, as defined by the DSM IV Manual, are more common than cancer, diabetes and heart disease, and are the number one reason for hospital admissions nationwide; and

WHEREAS, serious mental illnesses have been scientifically proven to be highly treatable illnesses of the brain; and

WHEREAS, scientific research is producing tremendous breakthroughs in the understanding of mental illness, resulting in more effective treatments that allow people to reclaim full and productive lives; and

WHEREAS, misunderstandings exist about many mental illnesses and our social culture often wrongly imposes stigma on them; and

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, at its 1989 Church-wide Assembly, passed a resolution that, “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall, through its synods, congregations, and pastors, serve as an agent of education, acceptance, support, understanding, and healing for those with mental illnesses, and those affected by the mental illness of others.” (Section 19 – Mental Illness); therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the South Dakota Synod encourage its religious leaders, both laity and ordained, to become educated about mental illness through educational resources offered by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), in order to connect members of their congregations

facing these issues with a NAMI affiliate organization near them (ie: Aberdeen, Brookings, Huron, Northern Hills, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Watertown, Yankton); and be it further

RESOLVED, that pastors of the South Dakota Synod be encouraged to learn about Mental Health Ministries and faith resources available to assist them in providing quality pastoral care to individuals challenged with mental health issues (ie: www.nami.org/namifaithnet/ www.mentalhealthministries.net and www.pathways2promise.org)

FOOTNOTES: NAMI provides educational and support systems to both clients and families of clients; it does not provide mental health counseling.

Submitted by the pastors of First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls – Senior Pastor: Rev. John Christopherson, Associate Pastors: Rev. Jason Burggraff, Rev. Natanael Lizarazo, Rev. Barbara Wangsness