

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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## JUSTICE ISSUE: MENTAL HEALTH

|                                                       |                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTIONARY WEEK:                   | Psalm 43                                                                                                     |
| SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/<br>BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES: | Book of Resolutions #4207: Ministries in Mental Illness                                                      |
| OBJECTIVE:                                            | Students will reflect on our call to respond to mental health concerns and support those with mental illness |
| SUPPLIES NEEDED:                                      | Scratch Paper, Mental Health Plan Worksheet (2 sided)                                                        |

## LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

### CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

**Say:** Today we will start with a breathing exercise to help us put down all of the business and distraction of our daily lives. Grounding exercises can be especially helpful when we're stressed or feeling big emotions which we'll be talking out in our time together today.

Please find a comfortable seated position with both feet on the floor. You can place your hands on your knees, or palms up in your lap, whatever feels comfortable. Close your eyes and relax your focus as we take a few slow, deep breaths, breathing in through our nose for a count of three and then out through our mouths for a count of three.

Breathe in...1, 2, 3

Breath out... 1, 2, 3

And breathe in... 1, 2, 3

Breathe out...1, 2, 3

### NOTES

\*students may also sit cross-legged on the floor for this exercise

Count slowly to allow for deep breaths

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

We're going to do two more breaths, but this time I want you to place a hand over your heart. As we breathe in and out, notice the air filling your lungs and the weight of your hand on your chest.

Breathe in...1, 2, 3

Breath out... 1, 2, 3

And breathe in... 1, 2, 3

Breathe out...1, 2, 3

Thank you. Let's open our eyes, stretch out bodies, and get into our lesson for today.

## SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

**Say:** Today's scripture is Psalm 43. This is a prayer with three that begins with complaint, moves through a petition or re-request for help from God, and ends with a statement of hope.

*(Read Psalm 43)*

**Say:** We're going to read that scripture again, but this time we're going to look at each section of the prayer by itself. I want you to notice one or two words that stand out to you and write them down on a piece of scratch paper.

In verses 1-2, David expresses his grief and anger at the wrongs that have been committed against him

*(Read Psalm 43:1-2)*

**Ask:**

- What words stood out to us?
- When have we felt like David in the first part this psalm? When have we felt sad, depressed or alone?

## NOTES

Pass out scratch paper

Remind students that they are invited to share only if they are comfortable.

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

**Say:** In verses 3-4, David prays to God as his source of strength and guide in darkness.

*(Read Psalm 43:3-4)*

**Ask:**

- What words stood out to us
- Who are the friends, family, or community members you can reach out to when you face feelings of sadness, depression, or loneliness?

**Say:** In the final verse, David acknowledges his negative feelings but also connects with his source of hope.

- What words stood out to us?
- What thoughts, activities, or images bring you hope when you are feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions?

**Say:** Each and every one of us experiences feelings of sadness, loneliness or hopelessness. For some these feelings might be temporary and situational like the grief we feel after a breakup, while others might experience these feelings on a more consistent or chronic basis.

While we all can practice taking care of ourselves and work to build coping skills, it is vital that we also reach out for help and support when we need it.

## GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

**Say:** According to the United Methodist Book of Resolutions, all aspects of health were of equal concern to Jesus. The healing that Jesus offered was the restoration of well-being and renewed connection with God and community.

The church is called to also embrace a wholistic view of healing that includes our mental and emotional health, embracing the role of healing professionals as well as addressing the social and environmental conditions that affect our mental health.

## NOTES

You may choose to allow students to use their phones to look up emergency numbers for local resources.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

So, in that spirit, we are going to spend some time creating our own Mental Health Plans that will help us respond to our own needs and a Community Health Plan to help us think about what we can do to support others in our community.

*(Allow 5 minutes for students to independently begin My Mental Health Plan.)*

*(Divide students into pairs or small groups and invite them to share their individualized plans with one another.)*

*(Allow 10 minutes for students to work together to begin My Community Health Plan)*

### CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

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**Say:** We'll close with a quick check in with our bodies and a prayer.

Let's start by closing your eyes and taking a deep breath. Notice your feet on the ground. Wiggle your toes and relax your legs.

Now notice your stomach. Is it full? Are you hungry?

Notice your lungs. Feel the air flowing in and out.

Now notice your arms. Wiggle your fingers and relax your muscles.

Notice your neck and shoulders. If they are tight loosen them. Roll your head or look side to side.

Take one more breath in thinking about all of the light and love the world has to offer.

Now breath out and send all the light and love inside of you out into the world.

**Prayer:**

Gracious and loving God,

We come before you today with open hearts and minds.

You are the healer of all wounds. Both the ones we show and the ones we keep hidden.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

You know our sorrows, our joys, and our pain.

Today we lift up all of those who are struggling with difficult emotions and thoughts, especially those facing the challenge of chronic mental illness.

Help us to be a community that reflects your compassion.

Teach us to listen with patience and act with kindness.

Break down the walls of stigma and silence and help us build a place where honesty and vulnerability are welcomed with grace.

In the name of your son who knows our pain and carries us home.

Amen.

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

## LESSON HANDOUT

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### My Mental Health Plan

I know I'm triggered, upset or overwhelmed when I notice:

*What does it feel like in my body?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When I'm overwhelmed, I can distract myself with:

*What gets me out of my head and in touch with my body?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Some safe people I can reach out to are:

*Who do I turn to for help?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things that help me when I feel this way are:

*What coping skills or strategies can I use?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ways to keep myself and my space safe and healthy:

*What can I change about my environment or context?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Other Resources I can use to take care of myself are:

*What health resources or community supports can I utilize?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST CONT'D

## LESSON HANDOUT

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### Community Mental Health Plan

What can we do to educate ourselves or share information with others in our community about mental health challenges?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can our community promote available resources?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can we create space to listen to the concerns or struggles of others?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How can our community promote self-care and encourage health habits?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How should I respond if I am worried about the mental health of someone in our community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.