



## A CALL FOR PRAYER



*A Nouwen Network* invites you to join with us in calling for ***A National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness Recovery and Understanding*** to be established in Australia. We are calling for this day to be held on the Sunday of, or immediately following 10<sup>th</sup> October - the date on which World Mental Health Day is celebrated annually.

### **A Brief Background History**

***World Mental Health Day*** was proclaimed in **1992**. The World Mental Health Day was started by the World Federation for Mental Health. The World Health Organization (WHO), which is a facet of the United Nations, is a co-sponsor. **World Mental Health Day is held annually on October 10** to raise public awareness about mental health issues worldwide. This event promotes open discussions on illnesses, as well as investments in prevention and treatment service.

### **In Australia:**

***Mental Health Awareness Week*** became established Australia wide in **1985**. It is an annual, national event that aims to improve community awareness and knowledge about mental health illness and reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems. ***Mental Health Awareness Week* is held every year to coincide with World Mental Health Day - 10<sup>th</sup> October.**

### **In America:**

***Mental Illness Awareness Week*** (MIAW) (also known as *Mental Health Awareness Week*) was established in **1990** by the U.S. Congress in recognition of efforts by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to educate and increase awareness about mental illness. **It takes place every year during the first full week of October.**

***The National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness Recovery and Understanding*** was initiated by Angela Vickers and Gunnar Christiansen of NAMI as part of Mental Illness Awareness Week in America. Since it began in 2004, it has had widespread support by individual congregations and National Faith Community Mental Illness Networks.

**From the Statement of Purpose for America's National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness Recovery and Understanding**

- ◆ *...knowing that the millions of Americans who have a mental illness are in need of love, prayers, and actions, all people of faith are asked to be "seed planters." Individuals and committees within congregations as well as mental illness networks representing many congregations are asked to spread the word to faith leaders and members so that they may recognize and prepare for this day in the way that works best for their faith community. Individual prayers, notices in faith bulletins, inclusion in Mental Illness Awareness Week schedules, media articles, radio programming about mental health and recovery, web page notices with links to mental health information, inclusion in community calendars are examples of what will make this day a success.*
- ◆ *The prayers and actions of both faith communities and secular organizations are needed to restore mental wellness in America. We all need each other. A single branch is broken easily, but many branches bound together have great strength.*
- ◆ *Prayer works. Through prayer, we will all benefit regardless of whether or not we have a mental illness and we will remind our nation that we serve a God who is available and loving.*
- ◆ *Replacing misinformation, blame, fear, and prejudice with truth and love will open doors to recovery and understanding.*
- ◆ *We have an ally and we could not have a better one. With God's help, what initially might seem impossible is possible.*
- ◆ *Prayer is the first step.*



**In the United Kingdom:**

An annual ***Mental Health Awareness Week*** has been held in May since 2000. Many churches participate in special worship and community events on or near the date of ***World Mental Health Day***. Worship Resources have been prepared and made available to encourage wide church participation.

## In Brisbane, Australia:

**2010** A *Nouwen Network* (a cross-denominational outreach) invites faith communities to actively participate in ***Mental Health Awareness Week***.

The network encourages faith communities to do this by: being involved in local community Mental Health Events; hosting workshops on Mental Health Topics; displaying Mental Health Leaflets and Posters in church foyers and halls, and regularly offering communal prayers for those affected by Mental Health issues. Since 2010 the numbers of individuals and congregations engaged in such activities has grown considerably.



**2013** A *Nouwen Network* continues to proclaim that '***Any day is a good day to show support***' for those whose lives are affected by mental health issues. We also believe that there is a great need for ***A National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness Recovery and Understanding*** to be held annually here in Australia. We encourage you to join with us annually in praying for mental health issues on the Sunday of, or immediately following ***World Mental Health Day 10<sup>th</sup> October***.

We do not suggest that there is just one way in which this day should be celebrated. Participate in whatever manner best suits your own faith community. You can download helpful Worship Resources to use for the Day of Prayer on the Home page of the Mental Health Ministries website.

### Websites for More Resources

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| FaithNET NAMI            | <a href="http://www.nami.org/namifathnet/">www.nami.org/namifathnet/</a>                     |
| Mental Health Ministries | <a href="http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/">http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/</a>  |
| Pathways to Promise      | <a href="http://www.pathways2promise.org">www.pathways2promise.org</a>                       |
| A Nouwen Network         | <a href="http://www.nouwennetwork1234.wordpress.com">www.nouwennetwork1234.wordpress.com</a> |
| Diocese of Lincoln       | <a href="http://www.lincoln.anglican.org">http://www.lincoln.anglican.org</a>                |

Please join with us in calling upon church leaders throughout Australia to formally establish ***A National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Awareness Recovery and Understanding*** on the Sunday of, or immediately following World Mental Health Day - 10<sup>th</sup> October.

***A Nouwen Network***. Email: [nouwen-network@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nouwen-network@optusnet.com.au)  
Website: *Out of the Depths* [www.nouwennetwork1234.wordpress.com](http://www.nouwennetwork1234.wordpress.com)

God, we come before You remembering all those whose lives have been touched by mental illnesses. We give thanks for the people who have given of their time and talents to help those who are dealing with mental illnesses - in their own lives, or in the lives of their families and friends. We give thanks for the improvement in medication and treatment programs that have enabled persons with mental illnesses to live productive lives. We pray that our society would do everything possible to make early diagnosis and treatment a standard procedure. We pray that stigma be removed, so that both those who are unwell, and their families, get the appropriate help as soon as symptoms appear. Guide each one of us, and help us, as we endeavor to bring help and hope to all whose lives have been touched by mental health issues. Amen

### **Read in unison**

The faith community says to those people who suffer from the symptoms of mental illness, and to their family members:

We will walk with you. And God walks with you. You will not go through this alone.

### **Pray in unison**

O Lord, you have searched us and known us  
You know when we sit down and when we rise up,  
and know our innermost thoughts.  
You search out our paths and know all our ways.  
Before we speak, you know our words.  
When we were knit together in our mother's womb  
You knew us as woman, as child, as man.  
Wherever we go, Your hand will lead us.  
So guide us along the pathways to hope,  
that night becomes bright as day.  
So lead us on our walk together,  
that darkness is lifted from our hearts.  
So encourage us that our sisters and brothers  
Who have mental illness shall know that  
they never walk alone.

Amen.

