

## RESOLUTION 5

### MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND ADVOCACY

**Resolved**, That the 166<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of California calls upon all congregations to become more supportive and safe places where those living with mental health diagnoses and their families can come for acceptance, information and the unconditional love of God;

**Resolved**, That the Discipleship Ministries Working Group will partner with the Diocesan Task Force on Mental Illness/Mental Health to help equip congregations and leaders with the tools, referral resources and support they need to become agents of reconciliation for those living with mental health diagnoses; and

**Resolved**, That Diocesan staff and congregational leaders will partner together to communicate with local, state, and federal policy makers and service providers to eliminate dangerous stigmas pertaining to brain disorders, and advocate for urgent reforms and funding for mental health care.

**Explanation:** All Episcopalians are called by our baptismal covenant to “support the dignity of all human beings” and by the Gospel to love all of our neighbors. Congregations and faith leaders often find themselves in positions of serving those living with mental illness and their families, both in and outside the church.

Since the 1980’s, the growing majority of adults living with mental health diagnoses, having little or no access to quality care, find themselves living on the streets or in prisons, rather than in places of healing and grace. Today, one in five Americans live with the physical, emotional and social effects of mental illness.<sup>1</sup>

Uninformed stereotypes about those living with brain disorders found in media, language and public policies promote negative attitudes about mental health consumers which discourage them from seeking help. Mental illness has been proven to be an organic condition, no more deserving of shame or blame than any other chronic physical disorder, such as diabetes or heart disease.

The two primary goals of the Diocesan Task Force on Mental Illness/Mental Health are:

- . 1) To help educate all Episcopal churches and faith leaders about mental illness by connecting them to resources – both in and outside the faith community -- for information and support, by encouraging culturally inclusive, interfaith and ecumenical partnerships, and by facilitating welcoming conversations in congregations;
- . 2) To advocate for discussion and action with legislators, media and community leaders to break stigmas around mental illness and implement/fund urgent mental health care reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> From the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) website, “Mental Health by the Numbers”, <http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers>

This resolution is designed to promote these goals by better educating clergy and faith leaders about the physical, emotional and social effects of mental illness upon individuals and families, as well as creating bridges with agencies that provide information, services and support (including but not limited to information offered through continuing education for clergy and lay leaders, the Resource Center, and the Diocesan Web Site). This may include developing an educational tool for use in and by congregations. The Task Force on Mental Illness/Mental Health will request resources for this work in the 2017 Diocesan Budget.

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