
Prayer Resources for the Opioid Crisis

Office of Worship
Diocese of Erie
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Pastoral Resources

- Ritual Prayer of the Sick
- Order for the Blessing of a Person
- Suffering from Addiction or from Substance Abuse from the Book of Blessings
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- A Healing Service
- Responding to the Impact of Opioid Addiction and Substance Abuse
- Intercessions, Prayers, Scripture, Music

Ritual Prayer for the Sick

from Pastoral Care of the Sick

The following prayers "Visits to the Sick" from Pastoral Care of the Sick may be appropriate and helpful for those suffering from addiction. This rite may be celebrated with one person, or with a community.

SONG

SIGN OF THE CROSS

INTRO: Addiction is an illness that affects brain chemistry and requires both a medical and a spiritual response.

We pray today for those burdened with addiction.

We pray that God may strengthen their weakness and restore them to life.

READING Matt 11:25-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew:

At that time Jesus answered,
"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
for although you have hidden these things
from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to the childlike.
Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.
All things have been handed over to me by my Father.
No one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

The Gospel of the Lord.

RESPONSE

A brief period of silence may be observed after the reading of the word of God. An appropriate psalm or one of the following psalms may be used.

A

(Psalm 102)

R. O Lord, hear my prayer and let my cry come to you.

O Lord, hear my prayer,
and let my cry come to you.
Hide not your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
in the day when I call, answer me speedily. **R.**

He has broken down my strength;
he has cut short my days.
I say: O my God,
Take me not hence in the midst of my days;
through all generations your years endure. **R.**

Let this be written for the generation to come,
and let his future creatures praise the Lord:
“The Lord looked down from his holy height,
from heaven he beheld the earth,
to hear the groaning of the prisoners,
to release those doomed to die.” **R.**

B

(Psalm 27)

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid? **R.**

One thing I ask of the Lord;
this I seek:
To dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
That I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord
and contemplate his temple. **R.**

For he will hide me in his abode
in the day of trouble;
He will conceal me in the shelter of his tent,
he will set me high upon a rock. **R.**

The minister may then give a brief explanation of the reading, applying it to the needs of the sick person and those who are looking after him or her.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The minister introduces the Lord's Prayer in these or similar words:

Now let us offer together the prayer our Lord Jesus Christ taught us:

Our Father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER

The minister says a concluding prayer. One of the following may be used.

A

Father,
your Son accepted our sufferings
to teach us the virtue of patience in human illness.
Hear the prayers we offer for those who suffer from addiction.
May all who suffer pain, illness, or disease
realize that they have been chosen to be saints
and know that they are joined to Christ
in his suffering for the salvation of the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen

B

All-powerful and ever-living God,
the lasting health of all who believe in you,
hear us as we ask your loving help for the sick;
restore their health,
that they may again offer joyful thanks in your Church.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

C

All-powerful and ever-living God,
we find security in your forgiveness.
Give us serenity and peace of mind;
may we rejoice in your gifts of kindness
and use them always for your glory and our good.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING

The minister may give a blessing.

All praise and glory is yours, Lord our God,
for you have called us to serve you in love.
Bless all those who struggle with addiction
so that they may bear this illness
in union with your Son's obedient suffering.
Restore them to health,
and lead them to glory.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

CLOSING

If the minister is a priest or deacon, he immediately concludes:

May the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,
come upon you and remain with you for ever.
Amen.

The priest may lay hands upon the sick person's head

A minister who is not a priest or deacon invokes God's blessing and makes the sign of the cross on himself or herself, while saying:

May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

R/. Amen

The minister may then trace the sign of the cross on the sick person's forehead.

Order for the Blessing of a Person Suffering from Addiction or from Substance Abuse from the Book of Blessings (Modified to be used with multiple people)

INTRODUCTION

- 407 Addiction to alcohol, drugs, and other controlled substances causes great disruption in the life of an individual and his or her family. This blessing is intended to strengthen the addicted person in the struggle to overcome addiction and also to assist his or her family and friends.
- 408 This blessing may also be used for individuals who, although not addicted, abuse alcohol or drugs and wish the assistance of God's blessing in their struggle.
- 409 Ministers should be aware of the spiritual needs of a person suffering from addiction or substance abuse, and to this end the pastoral guidance on the care of the sick and rites of *Pastoral Care of the Sick* will be helpful.
- 410 If the recovery process is slow or is marked by relapses, the blessing may be repeated when pastorally appropriate.
- 411 These orders may be used by a priest or a deacon, and also by a lay person, who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister.

A. ORDER OF BLESSING

Introductory Rites

- 412 *When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the minister says:*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All make the sign of the cross and reply:
Amen.

- 414 *A lay minister greets those present in the following words:*

Let us praise God our creator, who gives us courage and strength,
now and for ever.

Amen.

- 415 *In the following or similar words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing.*

God created the world and all things in it and entrusted them into our hands that we might use them for our good and for the building up of the Church and human society. Today we pray for those burdened with addiction, that God may strengthen their weakness and restore them to the freedom of God's children. We pray also for ourselves that we may encourage and support them in the days ahead.

Reading of the Word of God

416 *A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.*

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ.

But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

417 *Or:*

Isaiah 63:7-9 - He has favored us according to his mercy.

Romans 8:18-25 - I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

Matthew 15:21-25 - Woman, you have great faith.

418 *As circumstances suggest, one of the following responsorial psalms may be sung or said, or some other suitable song.*

Psalm 121

R. *Our help is from the Lord who made heaven and earth.*

I lift up my eyes toward the mountains;
whence shall help come to me?
My help is from the Lord
who made heaven and earth. **R.**

May he not suffer your foot to slip;
may he slumber not who guards you:
Indeed, he neither slumbers nor sleeps,
the guardian of Israel. **R.**

The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your shade;
he is beside you at your right hand.
The sun shall not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night. **R.**

The Lord will guard you from all evil;
he will guard your life.
The Lord will guard your coming and your going,
both now and forever. **R.**

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R. (v.5) *My soul trusts in the Lord.*

419 *As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.*

Intercessions

420 *The intercessions are then said. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed.*

The minister says:

Our God gives us life and constantly calls us to new life; let us pray to God with confidence.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

For those addicted to drugs, that God may be their strength and support, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For those bound by the chains of addiction, that we encourage and assist them in their struggle, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For those who are despondent, that they may trust in the mercy of God through whom all things are possible, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For family and friends, that with faith and patience they may show them their love, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For first responders, hospital personnel and mental health professionals who support those dealing with addiction and substance abuse, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For the Church, that we may always be attentive to those in need, we pray. **R.**

421 *After the Intercessions the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.*

Let us pray to our merciful God as Jesus taught us:

All:

Our Father...

Prayer of Blessing

422 A lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

For addiction or substance abuse

God of mercy,
we bless you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who ministered to all who came to him.
Give your strength to your servants,
bound by the chains of addiction.
Enfold them in your love
and restore them to the freedom of God's children.

Lord,
look with compassion on all those
who have lost their health and freedom.
Restore to them the assurance of your
unfailing mercy,
and strengthen them in the work of recovery.

To those who care for them,
grant patient understanding and a love
that perseveres.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

As circumstances suggest, the minister in silence may sprinkle the person with holy water.

Concluding Rite

May Almighty God bless you all,
the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit
R. Amen

424 *A lay minister concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:*

May our all-merciful God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and embrace us
in love for ever.
R. Amen

425 *It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.*

B. SHORTER RITE

426 *All make the sign of the cross as the minister says:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All reply:

Who made heaven and earth.

427 One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ.

But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

428 *Or:*

Isaiah 63:7-9 - He has favored us according to his mercy.

Matthew 15:21-25 - Woman, you have great faith.

429 *A lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.*

For addiction or substance abuse

God of mercy,
we bless you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who ministered to all who came to him.
Give your strength to *N.*, your servant,
bound by the chains of addiction.
Enfold him/her in your love
and restore him/her to the freedom of God's children.

Lord,
look with compassion on all those
who have lost their health and freedom.
Restore to them the assurance of your
unfailing mercy,
and strengthen them in the work of recovery.

To those who care for them,
grant patient understanding and a love
that perseveres.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

Anointing Outside of Mass

Situations where someone struggling with addiction may be anointed: (Fr. C. Singer)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

R/. And with your spirit.

Sprinkling

If it seems desirable, the priest may sprinkle the sick person and those present with holy water.

Like a stream in a parched land, may the grace of the Lord refresh our lives.

Instruction

The sick came to Jesus for healing. Through the apostle James, he has commanded us: "Are there any who are sick among you? Let them send for the priests of the Church, and let the priests pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord."

Let us therefore commend our sick brothers and sisters to the grace and power of Christ, that he may save them and raise them up.

Penitential Rite

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this holy anointing, let us call to mind our sins. (silence)

Lord, Jesus, you healed the sick: Lord have mercy

R/. Lord have mercy

Lord Jesus, you forgave sinners: Christ have mercy

R/. Christ have mercy

Lord Jesus, you give us yourself to heal us and bring us strength.

Lord have mercy.

R/. Lord have mercy

Reading

At that time Jesus answered,
“I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
for although you have hidden these things
from the wise and the learned
you have revealed them to the childlike.
Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.
All things have been handed over to me by my Father.
No one knows the Son except the Father,
and no one knows the Father except the Son
and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,
and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Response

(silence)
Pastoral reflection

Litany

121 *The priest may adapt or shorten the litany according to the condition of the sick person.*

My brothers and sisters, in our prayer of faith,
let us appeal to God for our brothers and sisters.

Come and strengthen them through this holy anointing: Lord have mercy.

R. Lord have mercy

Free them from all harm: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Free them from sin and all temptation: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Relieve the sufferings of all the sick who suffer from addiction:

Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Assist all those dedicated to the care of the sick: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Give life and health to our brothers and sisters

on whom we lay our hands: Lord have mercy

R. Lord have mercy

Laying on of Hands

- 122 *In silence and, if so desired, the priest may lay his hands on the head of any person suffering from addiction.*

Prayer over the Oil

- 123 *The priest says a prayer of thanksgiving over blessed oil, or he may bless the oil himself, using one of the following:*

Thanksgiving over the Blessed Oil – If the oil is already blessed, the priest says the following prayer of thanksgiving over it:

Praise to you, God, the almighty Father.
You sent your Son to live among us
and bring us salvation.

R. Blessed by God who heals us in Christ.

Praise to you, God, the only-begotten Son.
You humbled yourself to share in our humanity
and heal our infirmities.

R. Blessed by God who heals us in Christ.

Praise to you, God, the Holy Spirit, the Consoler.
Your unfailing power gives us strength
in our bodily weakness.

R. Blessed by God who heals us in Christ.

God of mercy,
ease the sufferings and comfort the weakness
of your servants
whom the Church anoints with this holy oil.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

Blessing of Oil – When the priest blesses the oil during the rite, he uses the following blessing:

Let us pray.

God of all consolation,
you chose and sent your Son to heal the world.
Graciously listen to our prayer of faith:
send the power of your Holy Spirit, the Consoler,
into this precious oil, this soothing ointment,
this rich gift, this fruit of the earth.

Bless this oil + and sanctify it for our use.

Make this oil a remedy for all who are anointed with it;
heal them in body, in soul, and in spirit,
and deliver them from every affliction.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
R/. Amen

Anointing

124 *The priest anoints the sick person with the blessed oil.
First, he anoints the forehead, saying:*

Through this holy anointing
may the Lord in his love and mercy help you
with the grace of the Holy Spirit.
R/. Amen

Then, he anoints the hands, saying:

May the Lord who frees you from sin
save you and raise you up.
R/. Amen

Prayer after Anointing

Let us pray.

Father in heaven,
through this holy anointing
grant them comfort in their suffering.
When they are afraid, give them courage,
when afflicted, give them patience,
when dejected, afford them hope,
and when alone, assure them of the support of your holy people.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen

A Healing Service

A welcoming atmosphere is created in the worship space. People should gather together in a comfortable space but not spread out too far. The pastor or a minister welcomes all and introduces the service.

Song "Healer of Our Every Ill," Marty Haugen or any other song of healing

Sign of the Cross

Greeting May the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, be with you.
R. And with your Spirit.

Presider: We gather to pray for those who struggle with the illness of addiction and all those who are affected by its consequences. In the letter of Saint James, we hear that if anyone is ill, he or she should be brought forth to be prayed over. Because addiction drives people into isolation from others, this may not be possible. Therefore, let us pray on behalf of those affected. Let us pray too for ourselves, that God may soften our hearts and open them to learn about the effects of drugs on the entire person, physically, mentally and spiritually. So, we gather to pray for all those struggling with addiction, for those who love and care for them, for all emergency responders and mental health professionals who minister to them— and for ourselves...

Opening Prayer

Presider: Let us pray:

Merciful God,
your Son showed compassion to all in need.
Open our hearts to those who suffer from addiction.
Strengthen our support for them and their loved ones.
Watch over all of us who come to you in need.
Protect those who minister to those suffering in this crisis:
first responders, hospital personnel,
and mental health professionals.
Empower us here to pray and support
those who are suffering, now and in the days ahead.

Scripture Luke 10:27-37

Reader: The man asked Jesus,
“And who is my neighbor?”
Jesus replied,
“A man fell victim to robbers
as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.
They stripped and beat him and went off
leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road,
but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.
Likewise, a Levite came to the place,
and when he saw him, he passed by
on the opposite side.

“But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him
was moved with compassion at the sight.
He approached the victim,
[tended] his wounds and
bandaged them.

Then he lifted him up on his own animal,
took him to an inn and cared for him.

“The next day he took out two silver coins
and give them to the innkeeper with the instruction,
‘Take care of him.

If you spend more than what I have given you,
I shall repay you on my way back.’

“Which of these three, in your opinion,
was a neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”

He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.”
Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Psalm Ps 130, Out of the Depths I Cry to You O Lord;
Ps 103, The Lord is Kind and Merciful; Ps 34, the Lord Hears the Cry
of the Poor, or another psalm.

Reflection

Reader: The illness of addiction is not unlike the robber in Luke’s Gospel.
Addiction steals into our lives and takes away that which is most
valuable to us and leaves us injured and alone.

[This might be a time to reflect on the challenges presented by the
opioid crisis and name some things that the assembly can do in
response. It’s a good time to remind parishioners and others that
addiction is a complex brain disease that requires our compassion and
understanding. It requires too our support of families and those who
minister to those suffering.]

Procession of Light [accompanied by sung music, Taizé, Psalmody, etc.]

Create a place of honor, perhaps with a crucifix where candles may be displayed for the evening. Set a table near the people with candles for those who wish to process. Some suggest using mini votive lights. They may be used for the service and taken home afterwards. Hoffmann's has such a votive candle.

Presider: We light candles to honor Christ's presence among us. We light them to honor and remember loved ones. So, tonight, we light candles for those who have died from overdoses, to pray for those who are struggling with the illness addiction and for families and friends who have lost loved ones or suffered along with them as they struggled. I ask that a representative of each family light a candle and bring it forward to the place of honor as a sign of our prayer and support. Likewise, I invite all of you who wish to remember an individual who has died from or is struggling with drugs, to bring a candle forward to honor them.

Instrumental and/or sung music may be used as appropriate during the procession.

Intercessions

Presider: Let us bring our concerns and needs before our Lord and pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For those bound by the chains of addiction, may they find courage and strength from God to take the next step on a journey toward healing. **R.**

For families who have been robbed of their loved one because of addiction, that they may be able to show their love and compassion with faith and patience, we pray: **R.**

For all who minister to those struggling with the impact of the illness of addiction, that they may seek strength, support, and healing in their God, we pray: **R.**

For those who have lost loved ones due to drugs, that they may know that the ties of love that bind us together on earth do not dissolve with death. **R.**

For those who have died, having lost the battle against drugs and addiction, that they may find peace, forgiveness and eternal rest. **R.**

For all of us here, that we may be attentive to those who are weighed down with the burden of addiction, and seek ways to stand by them and their families through prayer, encouragement and assistance, we pray: **R.**

Lord's Prayer

Presider: Gathering our prayers into one, we pray as our savior taught us.
"Our Father..."

Prayer of Healing

Presider: Let us pray.

O God of compassion,
your people are in pain.
Send your Holy Spirit among us
to dispel the fear that accompanies grief.
We cry out to you in our confusion;
comfort us in our affliction.
Give us courage to travel this road of grief and sadness
with our eyes fixed on the salvation
promised us through the death and resurrection
of your Son,
who is Lord forever and ever.
Amen.

Healing Prayer adapted from Prayer Service for Comfort in Time of Disaster;" *Prayer Services for Parish Life*, Jerry Galipeau, 2004, World Library Publications.

Blessing

Closing Song

Whole Community Formation Prayer Model

Responding to the Impact of Opioid Addiction and Substance Abuse

Preparation

- The church environment is welcoming with greenery and perhaps seasonal flowers.
 - Greeters are poised at all entrances, ready to offer a friendly “welcome, thank you for being here tonight.”
 - Music is playing softly in the background.
 - When people arrive, they are warmly welcomed and given a name tag to write their name on. [If you will have small group discussions, write a number on each tag to create groups of seven or eight people per group.
 - The service begins with brief words of welcome given by the pastor or another minister.
 - All stand and an opening song on the theme of mercy, forgiveness, peace, etc. is sung by all.
 - The presider then leads the assembly in the sign of the cross and a brief introduction and then concludes with an opening prayer. The program of stories, presentation and prayer follows. [This section might contain a time of sharing]
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Song: *You Are Mine*, David Haas, GIA Publications, “I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fears...” or another song.

Greeting: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Introduction:

Good afternoon/ Good evening.

Today/tonight, we hope to shine a light into the darkness surrounding opioid addiction. Much of what is happening with opioids in our communities occurs under the surface of our everyday life and is hidden from our eyes. We will attempt to understand more deeply the complex issues of what is now often described as a brain disease. We will pray for those who are afflicted with addiction, their loved ones who suffer with them, and the hospital personnel, the mental health professionals and the clergy who seek to help them.

Prayer:

Presider: Let us pray:

Merciful God,
your Son showed compassion to all in need.
Open our hearts to those who suffer from addiction.
Strengthen our support for them and their loved ones.
Watch over all of us who come to you in need.
Protect those who minister to those suffering in this crisis:
first responders, hospital personnel,
and mental health professionals.
Empower us here to pray and support
those who are suffering, now and in the days ahead.

Scripture: Luke 10:27-37, The Good Samaritan or another reading.

[The man asked Jesus]
“And who is my neighbor?”
Jesus replied,
“A man fell victim to robbers
as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.
They stripped and beat him and went off
leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road,
but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.
Likewise, a Levite came to the place,
and when he saw him, he passed by
on the opposite side.

“But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him
was moved with compassion at the sight.

He approached the victim,
[tended to] his wounds and
bandaged them.

Then he lifted him up on his own animal,
took him to an inn and cared for him.

“The next day he took out two silver coins
and give them to the innkeeper with the instruction,
‘Take care of him.

If you spend more than what I have given you,
I shall repay you on my way back.’

“Which of these three, in your opinion,
was a neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”

He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.”
Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Response: Psalm 121, “Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth” Michael Joncas, GIA Publications or another psalm.

Reflections: *Three to four story-like reflections on the impact of opioids on individuals and the community are read by ministers. Each reflection is approximately a minute to a minute-and-a-half duration.*

Select the most appropriate stories for your community. Choose the number of stories that is right for the community.
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Facilitator: To set the stage for our consideration of the opioid crisis, we present a number of stories drawn from the experiences of addicts, their families, and 1st responders. The stories are comprised of several sources. Names have been changed.

Reader One: This is an introductory story from a Cincinnati Video News Special:

It’s 7:45 on a Monday morning: The parking lot at the Northern Kentucky Medical Clinic in Covington is bustling. About 1,200 people come here every day for a dose of methadone, a drug that can stabilize brains rewired by heroin.

One man walks toward the glass doors at the clinic’s entrance with a sleeping baby on his shoulder and a girl in pajamas at his side.

Two women with little boys follow a few minutes later.

Then a man in a business suit.

And a woman in a waitress uniform.

And a young man walking his dog.

And five pregnant jail inmates in orange and white stripes shuffling single file from a van to the entrance, wrists shackled, hands resting on their bellies.

.....

Reader Two: FELICIA’S STORY

My name is Felicia. I am the mother of 3 small children. I’m 25. This is my story.

Heroin consumed my whole life. I put my baby down for a nap and left her and the other two alone while I went out to score some H. The neighbor in the next unit had seen me leave and heard my daughter crying. She called Children’s Services and the police. I didn’t mean to be gone long, but my buzz dulled my sense of time. I lost custody of my kids. I’ve had to work really hard to get them back and to keep

them. Stress and loneliness trigger my desire. I have to call my sponsor almost every day.

I know in my heart that H is no good for me or my family. Yet my brain addiction tries to convince me that a little bump won't hurt, and that I really deserve to have a little buzz. Looking at my kids sometimes helps me not to use. But, other times, their crying and the demands they put on me make me want to score some horse. I know-- I know-- heroin and dope won't help me cope.

They always say, "one day at a time." For me, it's "one minute at a time." Heroin still consumes my life. Almost every minute, I find myself thinking about heroin, getting high, staying off H, needing to get to a meeting, needing to call my sponsor... but I haven't used in 14 months and six days.

In rehab one of my counselors had a sign that said, "Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord." I'm really trying, but sometimes He is slow in bringing the help I need to be strong. Heroin is an equal opportunity destroyer. Gaudenzia got me clean. Now it is up to me to use the people and resources out there to stay that way.

I'm shooting for the stars, not shooting in my arm. I hope my kids grow up and learn a new version of "twinkle, twinkle little star." **[COULD THIS BE SUNG?]** I want them to understand it this way: "twinkle, twinkle little star - use drugs like your mama, you won't go far."

One second at a time, I choose not to use.

Response: Following a brief time of silence, a short response, such as a psalm antiphon, is sung after each reflection, for example:

"Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth." or
"The Lord hears the cry of the poor."

Reader Three: LINDA'S STORY

My name is Linda. I'm Felicia's neighbor. I'm 55.

When Felicia moved in next door, I was so happy to see her children's smiling faces and hear their laughter. I haven't seen my grandchildren in what seems like years, so this was a welcome distraction to fill the emptiness in my heart. Felicia was such a great mom...the kids were her whole world. She would often come over for coffee and of course bring her kids with her. Then we started sharing a meal together here and there. It was as if we were becoming a family.

As we grew closer, Felicia occasionally asked me to watch them when she had errands to run or got called into work. It was like I got a second chance to be a grandma!

Then, things started changing.

I hadn't talked with Felicia in a few days, so I went to her door to make sure everything was alright and to ask them over for dinner. She looked...different. I thought maybe she was under the weather and

made a mental note to make her some chicken soup. When I tried to visit the next day, she didn't come to the door. I knew they were home because I could hear one of her children crying. I went home distraught thinking perhaps I had done something to hurt her.

A few days later she came over. She was very apologetic and asked if I could keep her kids for an hour as she had to visit a friend. I was elated and, of course, said yes. She didn't come back for 4 hours. She looked horrible. She didn't even look at me...just took her children and went home.

That was the last time I talked with Felicia. When I would see her children in the yard, they didn't have that sparkle they once had. They looked sad and distant. She would leave often, and not take her kids with her. I worried for all of them.

I knew what it was when I first saw her looking 'sick', but I didn't want to admit it. I saw the same thing in my own daughter. It was drugs, most likely heroin. I didn't want my daughter mad at me, so I didn't say anything. Eventually, my son-in-law had enough and left, taking their children with him. I haven't seen or heard from any of them since.

This time, I wasn't going to be silent. One day, I saw her leave without the kids. Hours later, I could hear the children crying in the adjacent house. I called Children's Services and alerted the police. And then I cried. I felt so sad that she was probably going to lose her family. But in the end, I knew it was best for all of them that she gets help.

Response: Following a brief time of silence, a short response, such as, the psalm antiphon, is sung after each reflection, for example:

“Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth.”

Reader Four: Stephanie's Story

My name is Stephanie. I'm 45.

Let me first say that I love my daughter. Everyone did. She had a wonderful personality and a smile that would light up the room. Unfortunately, that smile faded.

As a teen-ager, we knew something was wrong. It started out as an eating disorder. I thought, "We can handle this. Lots of teen girls struggle with this. She'll be fine." We got her help, but then there were other mental health issues that weren't so 'easy.' She continued binging and purging. She had to go to a psychiatric treatment center many times. She was getting better. The smile we all loved returned – but then, it got worse than we could have ever imagined.

She started volunteering at an agency that offers help to those in need and she excelled there. Everyone counted on her to brighten their day with kind words and that infectious smile, but that smile began to fade

more and more. Because I missed the signs the first time, I was determined to find out why.

I found prescription bottles in her room. Other people's prescriptions. When I confronted her about it, it all came out. The drug experimentation, the fact that she had tried heroin, and why. All the feelings she'd tried to mask for so long. I had no idea of the struggles she was experiencing inside her head. I couldn't believe it. This vibrant girl had low self-esteem? She was bullied in school? I felt horrible that she felt she had to hide that and so sad that I didn't see it.

We got her into a rehabilitation facility. When she graduated rehab, she moved in with her grandmother. She was on the 'right path.' She went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings; she was close with her family...she even asked me to start going to church with her! Her life was becoming 'normal.' Or so we thought.

She started meeting up with her old boyfriend again. It turned out he was the addict that introduced her to heroin. She left us and went with him. I didn't know what to do. I constantly feared for her health and safety. I heard she had overdosed and had to be revived with Narcan. I kept trying to reach out to her, to show her that she was still loved, but that isn't what she wanted. She wanted an enabler, and I couldn't do that. I had to just live with the fear of getting 'that call' one day. I was powerless.

Sadly, this story does not have a happy ending. That 'call' did come and the terror of hearing those words that my child had died became a reality. I would never see her again.

At the funeral home, hundreds of people waited in line for over an hour to pay their respects. Videos played in every room, showing photos of her as a baby, a child, a teen and young adult so full of life, so full of promise. Yet, mired in a shadow of addiction, she was robbed of her life much too soon.

People have given me so much support through all this. We tried to support my daughter, but she could not overcome the demon of drugs.

.....

Response: Following a brief time of silence, a short response, such as, the psalm antiphon, is sung after each reflection, for example:

“Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth.”

.....

Presentation: A short overview of the opioid crisis is given. It emphasizes the need to understand addiction as a complex brain disease that may be triggered by environmental and biological factors.

Skip this next section and go to the **Litany** unless you have the professional support of counselors, psychologists, etc. to assist you in case anyone has a strong emotional response.

Instruction: The facilitator introduces the small group discussion sessions (five to eight people per group). Groups are determined by the number on each name tag. Each group receives a list of “conversation starter” questions. Directions are given to group session locations and the time to return. A trained facilitator sits with every group if at all possible.

Small Groups Each group processes what they have heard. A few questions are written down for the facilitator at the main session. After 30 minutes, all return to the worship space.

Starter Questions for Small Groups

Ask your counselors and psychologists for suggestions here.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Leave ample space on the page to take notes and to write down questions to be asked back in the main group.

Q. & A. The pastor and a mental health professional answer questions for about 30 minutes. Any printed resource material is made available.

Litany

The presider announces the response to the litany. If it is to be sung, a cantor sings the response first. The presider then begins the litany with the assembly singing the response.

Presider/Cantor:

We turn to our God in prayer saying/singing
“Hear us, O Lord.”

Reader: We cry out for consolation. Hear us, O Lord.

We cry out in fear. Hear us, O Lord.

We call out in grief and anxiety. Hear us, O Lord.

May God keep watch over all
who have been harmed and those
who minister to them. Hear us, O Lord.

May the Holy Spirit soothe
the suffering and comfort the afflicted. Hear us, O Lord.

May we feel Christ’s nearness this day. Hear us, O Lord.

May Christ bless the dying
and receive them into merciful arms. Hear us, O Lord.

May God strengthen our leaders
and all who hold authority to respond
to the opioid crisis. Hear us, O Lord.

May God work through our struggle
and confusion to accomplish
his purposes on earth and to unite us
in harmony and love. Hear us, O Lord.

[modified from As Morning Breaks – Alonso/Delgatto/Feduccia]

Final Blessing

Presider: God of mercy,
we bless you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who ministered to all who came to him.

Give strength to your people
who struggle with drugs and addiction.
Enfold them in your love.
Restore them to the freedom of God's children.

Give them the assurance of your
unfailing mercy.

Strengthen them in the work of recovery
and help them to resist all temptation.

To those who care for them,
grant patient understanding and a love
that perseveres.

And may the Lord bless all of us here,
in the name of the Father and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(modified from the Book of Blessings, "Blessing of a Person Suffering from Addiction...")

A closing song may be sung, if desired.

Invitation to a Light Reception

(length approx. 90 minutes.)

An Ecumenical Service

An ecumenical (interchurch) service among Christian churches may be a way to bring a focused and coordinated response to the opioid epidemic in an area. Think of an ecumenical Thanksgiving service as a model. Of course, the common theme here is prayer for and support of those suffering from addiction and substance abuse.

This service might be hosted by the Catholic church which prepares the service and invites other churches to attend and share ministry roles of leading, reading, and blessing. As such, the service would most likely come out of a Roman Catholic tradition and have a Catholic flavor.

Planning and preparing with other churches is another possibility. This would lead to a service that reflects the flavor and structure of multiple churches.

In preparing such a service, the following questions, drawn from *Liturgies of Lament* by J. Frank Henderson may be helpful.

Where will the service take place? What is central, neutral, offers enough space, etc.?
How will the service consciously foster Christian unity?
How will we make the service hospitable and welcoming for all?
Is there anything that ought to be avoided because it would offend?

The structure of the service will depend on who is involved in its planning. In the Catholic tradition, a Word service might be a typical model. Other traditions might emphasize different elements of song, preaching, praying, etc.

Common elements to keep in mind are: Scripture, Song, Silence, Sharing of ministry roles, Hospitality and a homily or reflection. Examples of how these various elements may be used in a prayer service may be found in the services contained in this package of resources.

An Interfaith Service

An interfaith service, that is, a service with Christians and non-Christians, is a bit more challenging to plan. Still, it may have a powerful impact on the community. Here, it is advisable to bring the faith leaders together and focus on what is shared in common. J. Frank Henderson offers several models for planning:

1. Each group works independently and prepares something appropriate from its tradition.
2. Faith leaders agree on a common plan and prayer structure and then draw on prayer elements and music from each tradition.
3. A common plan and structure is agreed upon and then prayers are written for the occasion by representatives of each faith tradition.

INTERCESSIONS

(These may be used as a set for prayer services. For Mass, select one or two intercessions to add to your usual intentions and then change them each week.)

Let us bring our concerns and needs before our Lord and pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those bound by the chains of addiction, may they find courage and strength from God to take the next step on a journey toward healing: **R.**

For families who have been robbed of their loved one because of addiction, that they may be able to show their love and compassion with faith and patience, we pray: **R.**

For all those who minister to those struggling with the impact of the illness of addiction, that they may seek strength, support, and healing in their God, we pray: **R.**

For those who have lost loved ones due to drugs, that they may know that the ties of love that bind us together on earth do not dissolve with death. **R.**

For those who have died, having lost the battle against drugs and addiction, that they may find peace, forgiveness and eternal rest. **R.**

For all of us here, that we may be attentive to those who are weighed down with the burden of addiction, and seek ways to stand by them and their families through prayer, encouragement and assistance, we pray: **R.**

The minister says:

Let us bring our concerns and needs before our Lord and pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

Our God gives us life and constantly calls us to new life; let us pray to God with confidence.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Assisting minister:

For those addicted to opioid drugs, that God may be their strength and support, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For those bound by the chains of addiction, that we encourage and assist them in their struggle, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For those who are despondent, that they may trust in the mercy of God through whom all things are possible, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For family and friends, that with faith and patience they may show them their love, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For first responders, hospital personnel and medical professionals, who support those dealing with addiction and substance abuse, we pray. **R.**

Assisting minister:

For the Church, that it may always be attentive to those in need, we pray. **R.**

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
forever and ever in the next.

Amen.

(prayer attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, 1892-1971)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Job 1:13-21	The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.
Ps 6	Have mercy Lord, my strength is gone
Ps 23	The Lord is my Shepherd
Ps 80	Stir up your might and come and save us.
Ps 90	In every age you have been our refuge
Ps 102	Hear my prayer
Ps 103	The Lord is Kind and Merciful
Ps 130	Out of the Depths I cry to you
Ps 139	Where can I go from your spirit?
Ps 147	Bless the Lord my soul who heals the brokenhearted
Isaiah 63:7-9	He has favored us according to his mercy
Lamentations 3:17-26	My soul is bereft of peace but then I call to mind and therefore have hope; the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.
Lament Psalms	Ps – 33, 51, 55, 56, 59, 74,
Ps 33	Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you
Ps 51	Be merciful O Lord for we have sinned
Ps 55,	Hearken, O God, to my prayer; turn not away my pleading
Ps 56	Have pity on me, O God
Ps 59	Rescue me from my enemies, O my God
Ps 74	Why, O God, have you cast us off forever?
Romans 8:18-25	The Spirit helps us in our weakness...
Romans 8:35, 37-39	Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
James 5:13-16	Is anyone among you sick?
Matt 11:25-30	Come to me all who are weary
Matt 15:21-25	Troubled by a demon. Your faith has saved you.
Mark 10: 46-52	The blind Bartimaeus sees.
John 11:17-28	Lazarus' death: "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died"

MUSIC

Christ Be Our Light, B. Farrell

Healer of Our Every Ill, Haugen

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Jesus, Heal Us

Lord, If You Want To, You can Make Me Whole. David Haas

Lord of All Hopefulness

Why Stand So Far Away, My God?, Michael Mahler, lyrics-Ruth Duck

You Are Mine, David Haas

“I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fears”

“Do not be afraid, I am with you...”

Ps 27 The Lord is my light and my salvation

Ps 51 Create in me a clean heart

Ps 23 Shepherd Me, O God, Haugen, GIA

Ps 90 In every age you have been our refuge, Whitaker

Ps 103 The Lord is Kind and Merciful, Haugen/Haas?, GIA

Ps 121 Our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth

Ps 130 Out of the Depths I Cry to You, S. Soper

Ps 138 Lord on the day I cried for help, you answered.