ADDICTION
ADDICTION

OPENING 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;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next. Amen.

— The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr

INDIVIDUAL WARM-UP

Take time to reflect on addiction in your community and in our nation:
1. What do you know about addiction?
2. What do you assume about addiction or addicts?
3. Addiction is a brain disease that is manifested by compulsive substance use despite negative consequences. Often, there is a belief that if addicts just tried harder to quit they could. What do you believe about addiction, addicts, and the role of the church in responding to addiction in your community?

GROUP WARM-UP

Together review the RESPECTful Guidelines and Mutual Invitation process and recommit to your small group covenant.

Discuss the following questions:
1. In our community- what is the role and significance of addiction?
2. How do our actions and inactions contribute or challenge addiction in our community?
GROUND IN SCRIPTURE

“I can anticipate the response that is coming: “I know that all God’s commands are spiritual, but I’m not. Isn’t this also your experience?” Yes. I’m full of myself—after all, I’ve spent a long time in sin’s prison. What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary.

But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it’s predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God’s commands, but it’s pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn’t that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. — Romans 7:15-25 (MSG)

DISCUSS AS A GROUP

What stands out to you in this scripture? Why?

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?

“In response to the alcohol and other drug crisis, The United Methodist Church commits itself to a holistic approach, which emphasizes prevention, intervention, treatment, community organization, public advocacy, and abstinence. Out of love for God and our neighbors, the church must have a positive role by offering a renewed spiritual perspective on this crisis. We commend local congregations, annual conferences, and general agencies and seminaries to take action in the areas of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Our love for our neighbor obligates us to seek healing, justice, and the alleviation of the social conditions that create and perpetuate alcohol [and other drug] abuse.

…The United Methodist Church supports efforts to keep children and youth alcohol free, drug free, and safe from access to illicit drug use. By following a comprehensive approach to this issue young people can understand the importance of avoiding use of alcohol and other illicit drugs to ensure that they live full and healthy lives.”

— Book of Resolution ¶3042 & ¶3043

DISCUSS AS A GROUP

What stands out to you from our UMC doctrine?
PRAY TOGETHER...

God, you’ve taught that all things work together for good from those whom love you. Well, I love you and I need more good in my life.

God, help me find the support I need to extinguish my addiction and heal the relationships I have shattered.

God, help me find the confidence to claim my place next to you as your beloved child.

God, prepare churches to welcome me, to honor my truth and my story, to walk with me even if who I am and what I do challenges them.

God, help me understand how to be your child first, to love myself even with my flaws, to love your children as you love them, and to be bold in my recovery.

Amen.

HOW DOES ADDICTION AFFECT OUR COMMUNITIES?

This session’s video will feature the stories and testimonies of Tammy and Chris Reese whose lives have been deeply impacted by addiction.

IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL HEAR HOW...

“God loves the addict, too.”

“The addict has a small window of opportunity for others to reach them at different points in their addiction. If they are sitting in our churches, they are in that window of time. They are looking for something other than a drink or drugs.”

“The people of the church, acting as the hands, feet, and heart of Christ, are the hope this world needs.”

“Pray, open, listen, provide, visit... You can do this. We need you to do this. Someone’s life may depend upon it.”
AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. How has addiction affected your life and what has been its impact on how you view faith, other people, and the world?

2. God instructs us to not fear, yet often our hope is for the quick and effortless eradication of addiction while not being personally affected or needing to address addicts, their families, or addiction in our community. As Christians, how does God call us to confront our fear and develop meaningful relationships with addicts, their families, and addiction in our communities?

3. Chris Reese tells us, “Most addicts want help. But they feel like outcasts in the community. We need to create a welcoming environment for ALL people. How can you…your family… your congregation create an environment where addicts and their families know they are welcomed in?”
| **PRAY** | Pray for and with those affected by addiction.  
|          | Pray for God to reveal ways that you can be inspired toward action that will eradicate addiction in your community and across the world. |
| **SERVE** | Serve families affected by addiction by providing coffee and snack materials to established groups like Celebrate Recovery or Al-Anon.  
|          | Consider hosting recovery or support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon |
| **PARTNER** | Partner with local & national organizations such as:  
|          | Ohio Citizen Advocates for Addiction Recovery:  
|          | [www.oca-ohio.org](http://www.oca-ohio.org)  
|          | NAMI Ohio  
|          | [www.namiohio.org](http://www.namiohio.org)  
|          | Prevention Action Alliance  
|          | [www.preventionactionalliance.org](http://www.preventionactionalliance.org)  
|          | SAMHSA  
|          | [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
| **LEARN** | Learn what other churches are doing:  
|          | [https://www.celebraterecovery.com/](https://www.celebraterecovery.com/)  
|          | [https://al-anon.org/](https://al-anon.org/)  
| **LEAD** | Lead an awareness event for your congregation and community about ministering to persons who are addicted and their family members.  
| **CONNECT** | Organize and participate in a Circles of Grace conversation about addiction with your church and community:  
|          | [https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/circles-grace](https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/circles-grace)  
| **ACT** | Remind your member of Congress and state legislators that alcohol is a leading cause of addiction:  
|          | • Encourage strong investment in enforcing state’s criminal laws regarding alcohol and to update regulations for alcohol advertising directed at youth and children  
|          | • Take action at [www.umpower.org](http://www.umpower.org)  