

Ecumenical Statement on Addictions

The faith communities of the Upper Peninsula have seen the destruction caused by addiction in our communities, parishes and families. We are dedicated to help prevent this destruction by reaching out to all those in need. We want to provide hope to all of our families and friends plagued with destructive addiction behaviors.

Substance abuse and addiction impacts all of us. In spite of the best efforts to thwart illicit drugs or attempt to punish those who engage in their use, illegal drug abuse remains a deeply ingrained aspect of life in our Upper Peninsula community. Substance abuse is intertwined with social problems that face our communities. The costs of substance abuse and addiction are staggering and extend throughout our entire country. Nationally, excessive alcohol use remains a factor in 50% of all deaths from traumatic injuries.¹ Substance abuse disorders are also intertwined with other psychiatric problems and considered a contributing factor in 40-60% of all suicides.² At the local level, substance abuse disorders have impacted our communities by increasing crime, unemployment, homelessness, and health care costs. As faith communities we cannot stand idly by and do nothing as this epidemic threatens our communities.

We must start by exposing the incidence of addiction and the havoc it brings to families and individuals. It is a disease that can be treated. Additionally, we must understand that treatment for substance abuse disorders can no longer be viewed as a single entity with a fixed duration. We can better serve those suffering from addiction by understanding the importance of aftercare programs following the intensive portion of their treatment.³ Recovery for addictions can best be addressed with an array of services provided by caring professionals on behalf of the individual, family and community, and centered on Christ.

Substance abuse disorders present the same clinical picture as other chronic, relapsing disorders similar to diabetes or multiple sclerosis. Much like the results of medical treatments for diseases such as heart disease or cancer, treatment for substance abuse disorders is not universally effective; however, early detection and long term treatment can improve the rate of successful recovery.⁴ Stable factors in people's lives, such as informal help and ongoing social resources tend to play a more enduring role in assisting people's recovery efforts.⁵ Specifically, providing an environment based on mutual dignity and respect, promotes well-being, and encourages positive social contribution. Involvement in support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and religious organizations have been proven to help individuals understand the damage caused by their disorder and provide critical and timely support for their recovery.⁶

Addiction professionals and persons in recovery treatment know that hope can be found through the grace and strength of God. Recovery is available even to persons who are experiencing the

¹ D. Baron, Garbely, and Boyd, 2009

² D. Karch, Cosby, and Simon, 2006; Scott and Marcotte, 2010

³ Mee-Lee and Gastfriend, 2008

⁴ McLellan, 2001

⁵ R.H. Moos, 2003, p. 3

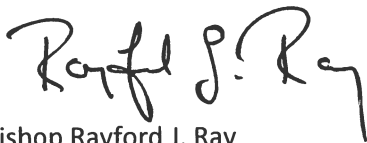
⁶ R.H. Moos, 2003, p. 3

overwhelming sense of abandonment caused by their addiction and may not at first be able to perceive this hope. With God, all things are possible!

To the person suffering from addiction the path to recovery can appear scary and overwhelming, but as faith based communities, we serve as the outstretched hand to offer God's love and new hope for those afflicted with this disease. Our faith communities wish to provide new hope to all those suffering from addiction and assure them that help for recovery is available.

To those struggling with addiction we say: the loving hands of your faith communities stand ready to catch you and stand by your side to assist in bearing the cross that you carry from the darkness of addiction into the light along your path to recovery. We extend our hand to you and ask you to take our hand. Ask for help to take the first step out of the darkness towards the light of recovery. We can only help you if you take our hand and ask for help. We stand ready to receive your hand and will continue to pray for the day you reach out your hand to ours.

People of faith are called to provide healing not only for the soul, but also the body of our neighbors in need. We, the leaders of the Episcopal, Lutheran, United Methodist and Catholic faith families in the Upper Peninsula pledge to work together to bring awareness, resources and healing for those suffering the effects of addictions and substance abuse. We call our communities to join us in this much needed effort.



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Rev. Thomas Skrenes
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