

## Addressing the Addiction Crisis: A Pilgrimage of Prayer

*God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them (Genesis 1:27)*

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### **Narcan (naloxone) training for local clergy and faith leaders precedes 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Prayer Pilgrimage, a countywide public witness of prayer and support**

The faith communities of Berkshire County will gather for a public training on Narcan (naloxone), the opioid overdose reversal medication on **Tuesday, October 17th at 10:30am at Trinity Church in Lenox**. Some clergy will then go purchase Narcan at local pharmacies to further raise awareness and help reduce the stigma associated with the purchase of Narcan. The training is part of the effort by the faith community of Berkshire County to de-stigmatize opioid addiction treatment in our communities.

On **Sunday, October 22** the second annual public services of prayer and witness will be held at **12pm** in the following communities: **Sheffield, Great Barrington, Monterey, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox, Dalton, Adams, North Adams**. A **county wide rally and service** will be follow at **2pm at St. Joseph's Church in Pittsfield**. The rally will be followed by a public discussion on addiction, treatment, and recovery led by Dr. Jennifer Michaels from the Brien Center.

This pilgrimage of prayer is supported by the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Deanery of Berkshire County, the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, the Pittsfield Area Council of Congregations, as well as individual faith communities from the Jewish, Congregational, Lutheran, and Methodist traditions.

Across the county, churches, synagogues, and other faith communities are already quietly at work helping with the addiction crisis in our county. Many congregations offer space to 12-step programs, and some congregations host mindfulness programs that have been shown to help some people with non-opioid pain management. Now the faith community is speaking out with one voice to remind us all that that there is an essential dignity that we all share, and we are all worthy of getting the help we need.

Over the past few years, the crisis of addiction and opioid addiction in particular has exploded in the region. The faith community is adding its voice to all those calling for a reduction in the stigma and shame associated with addiction and substance misuse related disorders. Clergy and local faith leaders play an important role in changing the conversation about addiction. Expanding the understanding of naloxone and its use in combatting overdose is the next step.

For too many people, the greatest single barrier standing between them and the help they need is they shame they feel in asking for it. The Reverend Michael Tuck, rector of the Episcopal



Hope  
&  
Healing  

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*in*  
*Berkshire*  
*County*

Church of Lenox, commented on the naloxone training, “I can only imagine how hard it would be to walk into a pharmacy to buy Narcan. Maybe if someone sees me, an Episcopal priest, buying Narcan, it might give them a little courage to get the help they need for themselves or for their loved ones.”

The effects of addiction ripple through our communities. The Reverend Quentin Chin, chaplain to Soldier On reflects on his experience working with people suffering from addiction and their families, “Opioid addiction is devastating to our communities. Certainly, a person addicted to opioids struggles on many levels with it. However, we can't ignore the toll it takes on the person's family and friends. Jesus healed many people of their diseases. Addiction is a disease. We are following Jesus' example.”