The month of September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. As a faith community, we are using this article, along with each WISE Moment for Mental Wellness page of the weekly Order of Worship, to raise awareness on this stigmatized topic. As a WISE Congregation for Mental Wellness, it is our desire to offer a safe space to talk about and learn the warning signs of suicide, offer resources to those who may have thoughts of suicide, offer support to those who are family or friends of individuals who have completed suicide, and discover ways in which we can help prevent suicide.

It can be alarming if someone you love talks about suicidal thoughts. It can be even more frightening if you find yourself thinking about giving up on life. It can be helpful to have some tools to draw upon when a person demonstrates warning signs such as:

- Increased alcohol use
- Aggressive/impulsive/reckless behavior
- Withdrawal from family/friends/community
- Dramatic mood swings

Suicidal behaviors are a psychiatric emergency. If you or a loved one take any of these steps, seek immediate help from a mental health care provider or call 911:

- *Collecting and saving medications or buying a weapon*
- *Giving away possessions*
- *Tying up loose ends, paying off debts, organizing personal papers or effects*
- *Saying goodbye to friends and family*

Research has found that 46% of people who complete suicide had a known mental health condition. Several other factors can come into play which may put a person at risk such as:

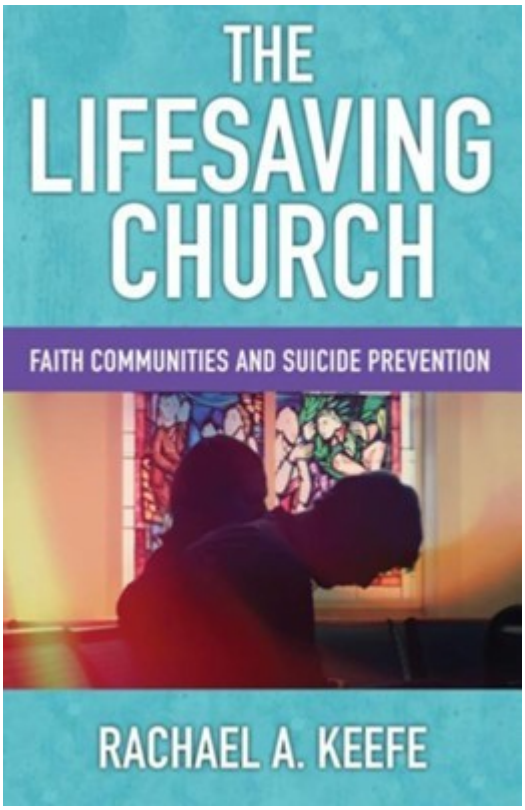
- A family history of suicide
- Substance use which causes mental highs/lows
  More than 1 in 3 people who complete suicide are under the influence of a substance at the time of death
- Access to firearms
- A serious or chronic medical illness
- Gender
  More women than men attempt suicide, but are 4 times more likely to complete it
- A History of trauma or abuse
- Prolonged stress
- A recent tragedy or loss

Supporting people who are in a suicide-related crisis is key. Here are some ways to approach the crisis: **Talk** openly and honestly. Don't be afraid to **ask** questions like, *"Do you have a plan for how you would kill yourself?" "Can I help you call your counselor/ psychiatrist?"* **Remove** potential means by which the person may harm themselves (guns, pills, knives). **Express** empathy and concern. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong. If you are nervous, try to limit pacing or fidgeting. **Call** for professional help. **Be patient** and **present** until that help arrives.

Check out this helpful guide or ask the church office for a copy.

If a family member or friend struggles with suicidal ideation day-to-day, let them know that you are there and are willing to talk with you about what they are going through. Make sure to maintain and open and compassionate mindset. Active listening and being "present" with them will go a long way in helping them feel heard and validated. Encourage them to utilize the help of a mental health professional and offer to help them find one and facilitate the initial call when appropriate.

As we continue to be a
Welcoming, Inclusive,
Supportive & Engaged
congregation for Mental Wellness,
we will observe Suicide Prevention week by incorporating liturgy and prayer focus on Sunday, September 12, 2021 during our 10:00 a.m. worship service.
We are also offering a book study and discussion sessions based on



You are invited to check out the book from Pastor Jim, write down your thoughts, questions and reflections based on your reading. Then, plan to attend the discussion session on **Tuesday, November 9th and Tuesday, November 16th from 10:00-11:30 a.m.** Although helpful, reading the book is not required for attending the Tuesday discussion sessions.

About The Author:

Rachael A. Keefe is the pastor of Living Table United Church of Christ in the Twin Cities and a former pastoral counselor and clinical chaplain. Since being ordained by the UCC in 1992, Keefe has served in many different ministry settings both traditional and decidedly nontraditional, in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Minnesota.

Rachael is currently a PhD student in sociology at the University of Minnesota and is also a student at St. Catherine's University working toward a certificate in spiritual direction. She is an artist and a poet.

In this book, Rachael tells the story of her own experiences of suicidality, suicidal behaviors, and romancing of death at age 15. As a pastor and clinical chaplain, her desire is to facilitate conversations within the Body of Christ about mental wellness and the need to speak into the silence that surrounds suicide. She frequently says, "As with one, so with all. If one member of the church is mentally ill, the Body of Christ is mentally ill. If one member is suicidal, the Body of Christ is suicidal and so on down the line. The Body of Christ is a lifesaver."

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future and a hope. —Jeremiah 29:11

CARE Corner

Brought to you by Church of the Palms' CARE Team

Know Someone in Need of Prayers?

With all the ongoing changes in our lives and the church life, many of us have special prayer needs for ourselves or others. Since the pencils and forms for submitting names for the prayer list are no longer available in the pews, there are several ways to communicate this desire. The first step is to ask the individual if they would like to be placed on the church's prayer list. Then you have several options as outlined below:

1. Call the church office and ask Lindsey to add the individual to the prayer list;
2. Tell Pastor Paul or Pastor Jim; or
3. Inform a member of the Care Team. The members are:

a. Jan Alexander
b. Vickie Ashenbrenner
c. Suzanne Boisclair
d. Laurie Cathey
e. Bobbie Chapman
f. John and Pat Durbin
g. Doris Gott
h. Eric Holmes
i. Judy Jondahl
j. Dave Klingensmith
k. Kay Klinkenborg
l. Lurene Ladd
m. Steve Meoli
n. Carolyn Modeen
o. Randolph Omahana
p. Scott Patrick
q. Diana Shalzi

You can also contact one of the Care Team members — consult your church directory for contact information — if you have need for other services, such as transportation for appointments or events, someone to check in or visit, or who would benefit from a greeting card and one or more of the team will assist in making that happen. Once we can say goodbye to COVID restrictions, the Care Team will also be providing educational opportunities for maintaining healthy lives and maybe even changing our lifestyles a bit.

Together, we can send forth our prayers and continue being the church, sharing unconditional love, justice and extravagant welcome.

WISE Steering Committee

Andrea Stefanov, Anita Paulson, Judy Jondahl, Karen Lapointe, Kay Klinkenborg, Mike Astle, Nancy Nonini, Phil Ladd, Pastor Paul, Pastor Jim

The Care Team Mission

Assist the Pastors when our community needs help spiritually, physically, emotionally or socially