

Ecumenical Statement on Addictions - news conference coverage

Contact:

John Fee – (906) 227-9129

Jamie Gualdoni – (906) 227-9134

news@dioceseofmarquette.org

A copy of the full statement follows the story.

Photos from the news conference follow the additional quotes.

Video of the news conference follows the photos below.

Story:

The leaders of four Upper Peninsula faith communities have released an “Ecumenical Statement on Addictions.” The statement notes the “destruction caused by addiction in our communities, parishes and families” and pledges to “work together to bring awareness, resources and healing for those suffering the effects of addictions and substance abuse.” It further states that “(p)eople of faith are called to provide healing not only for the soul, but also the body of our neighbors in need.

Bishop Rayford J. Ray of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan; Rev. Thomas Skrenes, Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; The Rev. Elbert P. Dulworth, District Superintendent of the Marquette District of the United Methodist Church; and Most Rev. John Doerfler, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette all signed the statement. It was released at a news conference on Wednesday morning, April 12, at the Marquette Hope United Methodist Church Connection Center. The four faith communities represent those denominations that have headquarters in the Upper Peninsula.

As referenced in the statement, excessive alcohol use, nationally, remains a factor in 50 percent of all deaths from traumatic injuries. Substance abuse disorders are also intertwined with other psychiatric problems and considered a contributing factor in 40-60 percent of all suicides. At the local level, substance abuse disorders have impacted our communities by increasing crime, unemployment, homelessness, and health care costs. “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.”

During the news conference, Bishop Skrenes shared a story of a relative who died of a heroin overdose and how he brought that to the other ecumenical church leaders. “We talked about our own personal experiences with people in our own churches and our own families who have had struggles with addictions of all types. We began to think about and pray about and reflect on how the Christian faith communities could make a difference in this work.”

The statement also points out, “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.”

The Rev. Kristi Hintz, who represented The Rev. Dulworth during the news conference added, “We understand that addressing this problem of addiction in our communities, we have to deal with the whole person. It’s not surprising that we get overwhelmed, that any effective treatment plan has to care for the whole person and we have to provide comprehensive support for physical and spiritual and emotional facets of those caught up in the addiction cycle.”

“Addiction professionals and persons in recovery treatment know that hope can be found through the grace and strength of God,” according to the statement. The faith communities also offer to “serve as the outstretched hand to offer God’s love and new hope for those afflicted with this disease.” During the news conference, Bishop John Doerfler noted that the faith communities in the U.P. have agencies in place that are already operating to address these needs and hopes the ecumenical statement will bring about great awareness of the needs and the resources. He further stated that licensed counselors who help those struggling with addictions in the recovery journey have locations across the U.P., including at Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Social Services, which help people regardless of their faith or income.

(www.lsswis.org and www.cssup.org).

Bishop Rayford Ray was unable to attend the news conference due to a weather delay.

-END-

For a full copy of the ecumenical statement, click here: **[Ecumenical Statement on Addictions](#)**

Addendum (additional quotes)

Rev. Thomas Skrenes, Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“We conveyed a round table of various groups and organizations that serve the needs of person who are struggling with addictions here in the Upper Peninsula. We had state legislators, a prosecuting attorney, people from the social work community, and from the hospitals, and from the social ministries of our churches that gathered together one day. We spent time thinking about how the faith communities and how the communities in general can help those who are struggling with addiction. We learned from each other that day and we decided that we had to begin to think about what our congregations can be about and to do.”

“It’s been a fruitful experience which has culminated so far at least in this statement that has been prepared.”

Rev. Christi Henz, Pastor of Hope United Methodist Faith Community

"We all cope with the instability in our communities that addiction causes and that addiction crosses all possible boundaries of cultural boundaries, ethnic and economic boundaries. The struggles that are brought on by addiction include but are not limited to separation that those struggling with addiction feel isolation, and exclusion from society, unemployment, homelessness, poverty, medical and mental health issues, chronic domestic violence, managing stress and hopelessness."

"The solutions are just as complex as the problem. Solutions that are developed need to address the unique needs of each person. Our social systems are straining to provide needed funding and care. We need a consolation of services, both acute and sustained to successfully address this problem."

"We are called to be faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to us. Most importantly, to care for one another, to find real and concrete ways to affirm the whole worth of each individual to recognize and respond to brokenness, to be an instrument of education, healing and restoration. We as faith communities come together to advocate for ways that every member of our communities can be engaged in making positive contributions to be recognized as valuable members of our communities."

Most Rev. Bishop Doerfler, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette

"As followers of Jesus we cannot simply utter pious platitudes and turn our backs on our sisters and brothers who are suffering from addictions. The love of Christ moves us to embrace and walk with them."

"Moreover, we fellow Christian leaders act together as citizens. A good citizen cultivates the virtue of patriotism which embodies the love of our country, our state and our local community. To be truly patriotic means to look beyond our own needs as individuals and offer ourselves in service to society. To be patriotic means to live with the common good in central focus. We address the problem of addictions as good citizens who want to make a difference."



(Left to right) The Rev. Kristi Hintz, pastor of Marquette Hope United Methodist Church representing The Rev. Elbert P. Dulworth, District Superintendent of the Marquette District of the United Methodist Church; Rev. Thomas Skrenes, Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Most Rev. John Doerfler, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette speak at the April 12, 2017 news conference. Photo by Jamie Gualdoni



***The Rev. Kristi Hintz, pastor of Marquette Hope United Methodist Church.
Photo by Jamie Gualdoni***



Most Rev. John Doerfler, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette. Photo by Jamie Gualdoni



Rev. Thomas Skrenes, Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Photo by Jamie Gualdoni



Diocese of Marquette ~ 1004 Harbor Hills Drive, Marquette, MI 49855-8851 ~ (906) 225-1141

[CONTACT US](#) | [Login](#)

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

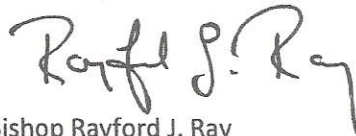
⁶ R.H. Moos, 2003, p. 3

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.



Bishop Rayford J. Ray
Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan



Rev. Thomas Skrenes
Bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



The Rev. Elbert P. Dulworth
District Superintendent of the Marquette District of the United Methodist Church



Most Rev. John F. Doerfler
Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Marquette