

Join the synod's new Substance Abuse Network

by Pastor Tom Martin, Substance Abuse Network Facilitator

At our Synod Assembly in June, only four resolutions were presented and approved. I felt honored to be the one bringing to the floor of the assembly resolution number four. At the microphone, I started by sharing that 45 years ago I began my recovery from addiction to alcohol. It had been a struggle like no other in my 25 years of living. I was fortunate to have resources and compassionate people along the way who could lead me from darkness to the light of recovery. Some would say I was blessed by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Others thought it foolish to put any faith in me, given my past. And yet, my church, my pastor, my family, my new friends in recovery stood by me.

It is with that sense of gratitude that I would want the very same grace and mercy for the churches of the Northeastern Iowa Synod and for its shepherds and their flocks. So I am humbled that our synod approved the establishment of a network dedicated to those caught up in the grasp of addiction, to those family members often caught in the cross-fire, and to congregations who feel helpless but are not hopeless.

The Substance Abuse Network will encourage and promote ways that synod staff, rostered ministers and congregations can bring hope and healing to those affected by substance abuse. It will advise how our leaders and congregations can collaborate and form effective partnerships with organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, the Center of Addiction and Faith, and Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy, as well as state and local authorities. The purpose is not to condemn but to promote health,

healing and hope. In this way it can be a resource and a blessing for the entire synod.

This new network can provide education for both lay people and clergy alike. Drug addiction, alcoholism, codependency, and behavioral addictions are among the most prevalent, complex, and destructive illnesses in human society. They are found in every segment of society, regardless of race, religion, or economic class. It has long been recognized that addiction contains a spiritual dimension that must be integrated into treatment more than oth-



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er disorders. Alcoholics Anonymous calls this faith connection a power greater than ourselves. We cannot do recovery on our own understanding or strength. Here is where the community of faith has a marvelous role to play, given the stigma, denial, and secrecy that comes with addiction. Thanks be to God that this illness is a treatable medical condition and spirituality makes a difference!

We are looking for lay and clergy members to make up our newest network, perhaps six to eight people. In January we will be scheduling a network kick off meeting. If you are interested in being a part of this adventure, I would love to hear from you: please contact Pastor Tom Martin, cell phone 563-419-3173, email tommartin@comm1net.net.

Candidates for Ministry —

Where are they now?

Menzi Nkambule entered the Northeastern Iowa Synod Candidacy process in August 2018. Nkambule grew up in Eswatini and came to the United States in 2014 to attend Luther College, Decorah, where he majored in business administration. While at Luther, Nkambule attended Good Shepherd Lutheran, Decorah, where he was baptized into the Lutheran faith.



Menzi Nkambule

Following graduation in 2018, Nkambule enrolled in Luther Seminary at St. Paul, Minn. He completed his internship at Salem Evangelical Lutheran, St. Paul, and graduated from seminary in May 2022 with his Master of Divinity degree.

Nkambule accepted a call to St. Matthew's Lutheran, Jersey City, N.J., and was ordained and installed at St. Matthew's on Sept. 18. He lives in Jersey City and is engaged to be married in 2023.