

# HARM REDUCTION JUSTICE SUNDAY

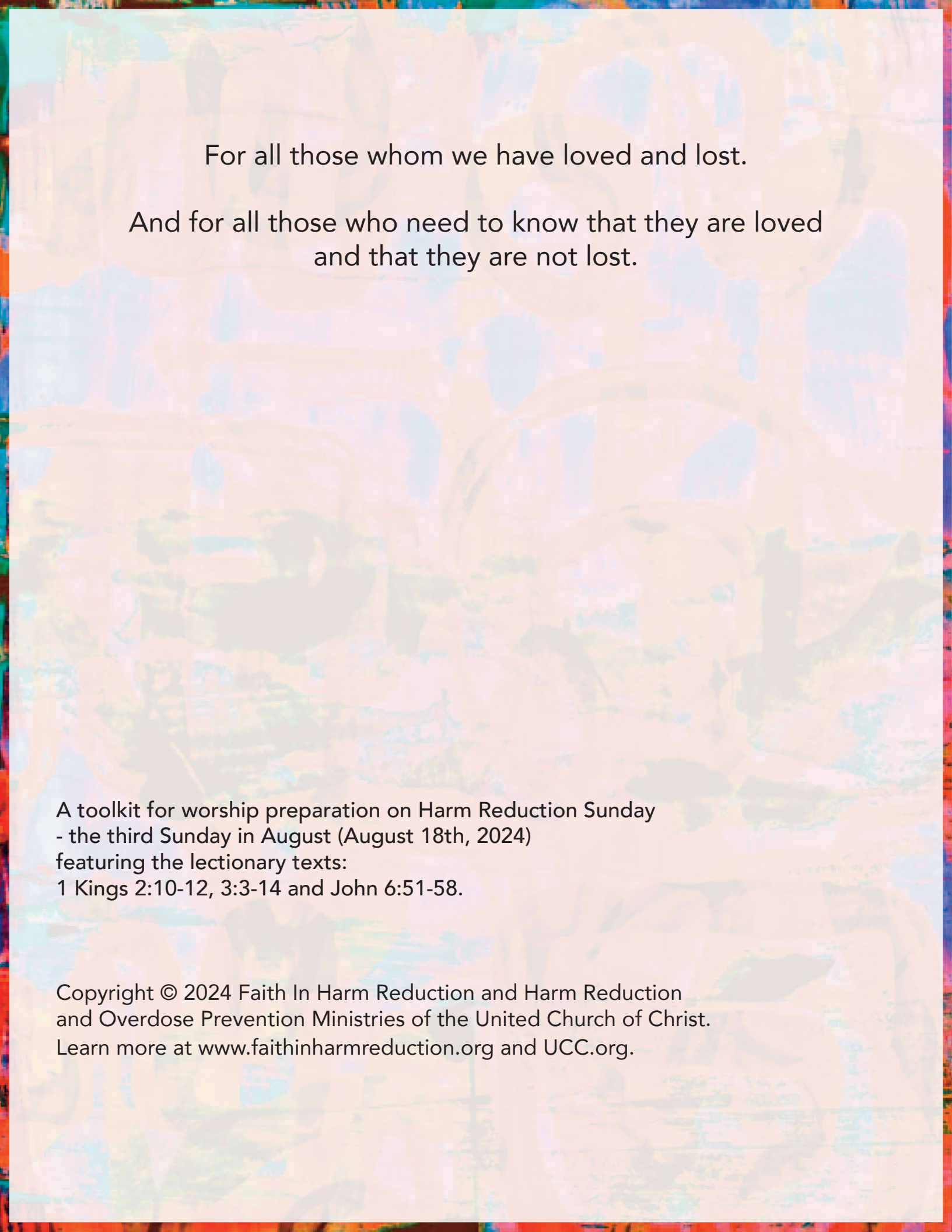
**Toolkit for Worship Preparation**



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST



**FAITH IN**  
HARM REDUCTION



For all those whom we have loved and lost.  
And for all those who need to know that they are loved  
and that they are not lost.

A toolkit for worship preparation on Harm Reduction Sunday  
- the third Sunday in August (August 18th, 2024)  
featuring the lectionary texts:  
1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14 and John 6:51-58.

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and Overdose Prevention Ministries of the United Church of Christ.  
Learn more at [www.faithinharmreduction.org](http://www.faithinharmreduction.org) and [UCC.org](http://UCC.org).

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# Introduction to Harm Reduction Sunday

by Rev. Erica Poellot

**Welcome to the Harm Reduction and Justice Sunday Service Toolkit, a collaboration between Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries and Faith in Harm Reduction.**

The prophetic and pastoral wisdom of Harm Reduction movement leaders and ministers, and the sacred stories of our faith traditions, offer us a model for building liberation with people impacted by the war on people who use drugs, and for building congregations and communities of care and compassion.

Eradicating drug related stigma, and the connected criminalization of people who use drugs, will be critical if we hope to achieve justice with our most marginalized neighbors and bring an end to the overdose crisis.

Faith communities are uniquely poised to lend their voice and influence to this work, in order to reshape moral narratives about substance use and people that use substances into ones that rehumanize people who use drugs, and which affirm our worth and dignity.

We pray these worship materials will bless you and your faith communities. Thank you for being part of the global movement to eradicate the stigma of substance use, celebrate the leadership of people with lived and living experience of substance use and overdose, and bring liberation to all people impacted by the war on people who use drugs.

In faith,



Rev. Erica Poellot,  
Minister of Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries, UCC  
and Executive Director, Faith in Harm Reduction

***The United Church of Christ celebrates Harm Reduction Justice Sunday the third Sunday in August, before International Overdose Awareness Day which is August 31st.***



# Liturgical Elements

# Call to Worship

by Rev. Elyse Berry

Inspired by the first reading from 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

**One:** We came with our satchels of sorrow, our grains ground from grief, and God said,

**All:** "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

**One:** We came with our uncommon favor and celebration of second, third, and as-the-day-is-long chances, and God said,

**All:** "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

**One:** We came with the weight of uncertainty and with questions—perhaps—impossible to answer, and still God said,

**All:** "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

**One:** Some of us came having left behind the hope we thought was for forever, others let down the shame and stigma of yesterday, and some lost our way when silence was all we heard, and still God said,

**All:** "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

**One:** Today we have come here for worship, for communion, for an at-one-moment in time to proclaim a faith that says we are beloved in our wanting and are part of an abundant creation. So, we pause for a moment to hear God say to us, yet again,

**All:** "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

**One:** And so, my kin in Christ, what say you? On this Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Sunday, what might we ask of our God today?

**All:** How might we listen, search, and discern with an open heart for God's response?

**One:** How might we find the strength to trust what we find? The vulnerability to be in relationship?

**All:** How might we lean on the kindness of our ancestors and the wisdom from within us to turn imagining into reality?

**One:** O Spirit of the Resurrection, living and breathing among us now, surround us with your grace to call to worship all of our deepest longings,

**All:** that they may be consecrated by you. Amen.

# Call to Worship

by Min. Blyth Barnow

**One:** We are called to be a resurrection people.

**Many:** It is not only a metaphor.

**One:** We are asked to come alive again.

**Many:** Everyday.

**One:** Everyday we are called to bring our heart,

**Many:** our spirit,

**One:** our community,

**Many:** our relationships,

**One:** back to life.

**Many:** Everyday we begin again.

**One:** Everyday we love someone back from  
the tomb of oppression.

**Many:** Sometimes it is us.

**One:** Everyday we practice resurrection.

**Many:** We call it our resilience.



# Opening Prayer

by Rev. Elyse Berry

O Creator of the Cosmos, in Christ you came to us in space and time, through the Spirit you collapse all things linear and linger with us in our past, present, and all that is yet to come. Bless us with the wisdom of your spiral galaxies, that each moment is another opportunity for return, for connection, for taking the next best step in our journey. As we enter more deeply into worship together, help us to really feel that next step, no matter where we are or where we're going exactly. May we sense that step's depth and width, allow its density to sink into this moment, and feel the rumble of the countless feet and mobility aids moving toward the kin-dom of God. For we are the Body of Christ, flesh of the flesh, bone and blood, right here and now, ready to say yes to the Good News. Amen.



# A Prayer for A Community Being Crushed

by Rev. Micah Bucey

When danger descends,  
There is a ferocity that first feels like fear.  
It may be quiet.  
It may be small.  
It might not shimmer with the glimmer of certainty,  
But that doesn't mean it isn't there.

This fierceness grows,  
Not through competition,  
But through collaboration,  
Not through the destructive draw of despair,  
But through the co-creative care of connection.

The weight of the world is heavy,  
And grief often feels greater than the strength of your spirit,  
But have you stopped to see how many spirits surround you?  
Have you stopped to realize how many revolutionaries are reaching for  
you?  
Have you stopped to understand that you are not the only one  
breathing?

Stop, see, realize, understand, breathe.

See the potential of a people who will not leave wounds to simply  
fester.  
Realize the charisma of a collective that heals harm through the heat of  
kinship.  
Understand the power of a lineage that doesn't disappear into the  
inferno,

But instead allows it to soften them, to mold them, to reshape them into the free and flaming creatures we were all always meant to be.

Be the breath that fans these familial flames.

Don't burn by yourself.

Even a Phoenix needs friends.

Move out from underneath that load you think you're lifting alone.

Remember: Heat rises, but it also needs to rest.

So rest,

Rise,

Repeat,

And add your irritated energy to the unified force.

The heft is always horrifically humbling,

But there is also always a you-shaped hole in the united net.

Empire doesn't want you to accept the invitation,

But this is the only party that is worth your exertion.

Inhale and exhale.

When danger descends,

There is a ferocity that first feels like fear,

Don't fear it. Queer it.

This world might be threatening to make us martyrs.

But we are far more than mere memories to be dismissed after death.

This world might already have our names engraved on gravestones.

This world likes its saviors safely deceased,

Free of grit,

Free of glitter,

Neutered and obscured by innocuous gratitude.

But don't let them bury you in the grimy ground just yet.

As long as we're trying to overturn these tombs,

We are the livid grit

And we are the loving gratitude

And we are the living glitter we wish to see in the world.

Amen

# Prayer of Confession

by Rev. Sonny Graves

**One:** God, before you we confess that when it comes to our own or our neighbors' use of drugs, we have allowed stigma, shame, judgment, and punishment to deny what you have taught us:

**All:** That you love us just as we are and in all that we struggle with. That all people are made in your image. That we are called to love our neighbor, and ourselves, as you love us.

**[Time for silent reflection]**

**One:** God, you know every part of our lives and our souls. You are a Creator of mercy and grace, love everlasting, and resurrection power.

**All:** We know a God who calls us as a community to help each other reduce harm and injustice. To comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable. We claim this purpose with our Liberating Christ.

## Assurance of Grace

Loving God, you bring healing and compassion to each and to all, blessing us with grace, as You sow liberation for the beloved community. Amen.

# Sermon Seed- Year B

by Hill Brown

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

Our text for today says God is pleased with Solomon because he asks for a discerning heart. God notes that Solomon could have asked for wealth or revenge. God has received these kinds of requests from other rulers whose imaginations are curtailed and informed by the culture of scarcity and violence.

Many of us in the US are not thinking like Solomon when we are asked about how to end the overdose crisis or the war on people who use drugs. We ask for more naloxone or a few more beds at a substance use treatment center or fewer arrests for drug possession. But what if we asked for whatever we wanted? What if we asked for what we all really needed? We need folks to receive appropriate medical care regardless of income, safe and affordable housing, reparation for generational harm, an end to carceral responses to public health issues. What we want, what we need is a humane society. What if we believed this reality was possible and we asked God for it?

Other questions to consider when reading this passage:

Are leaders in your community able to discern how to steward resources intended to address the overdose crisis? Is it apparent that they have chosen good over evil when you review how they are budgeting opioid settlement funds?

Solomon was incredibly powerful and richly blessed but he had advisers to help him understand what was happening in the world and among the people he ruled? Who is advising your leaders? Who is helping shape their imagination as it relates to the ongoing war on people who use drugs and the overdose crisis?

# Invitation to Offering

by Rev. Erica Poellot

We believe in the God of justice and love and give of our talents, treasure, and time to this sacred work of Harm Reduction. We have the tools and the leadership we need to build congregations and communities of care and compassion for all who have touched by the stigma of substance use. Our gifts, no matter the size – will proudly proclaim that people who use drugs are beloved by God and by us.

# Prayer of Dedication

by Sue Kaiser

We offer these gifts to the God of all people. We cheerfully give our treasures to bring love, hope, peace, joy, justice and healing to those who are hurting. May these gifts be blessed and used to provide ministry for those who are too often forgotten in our society. Let the generosity represented here be magnified and amplified to stretch beyond our mortal thought and imagination.

(Acknowledgment to Rev. Daniel Schultz)



# Benediction

by Hill Brown

God, as you journey with us in the coming week help us to see one another as you see us, beloved children who can do nothing to be separated from your affection. Mold our imaginations so that we might envision and then create a world where people who use drugs live full lives free of oppression, incarceration, and the fear of overdose. We know you want to give us a kinder, more just world and we are ready to receive it!





# Music

# BE LOVED, BELOVED

words by Micah Bucey  
music by Henco Espag

1. Be loved, Be-lo - ved. Be hope - ful and held. Be cu - ri - ous. Be o - pen. Be  
2. Be loved, Be-lo - ved. Be ten - der and true. Be spi - rit. Be vi - sion. Be  
3. Be loved, Be-lo - ved. Be won - drous and weird. Be cer - tain. Be sha - ky. Be

6

strong. \_\_\_\_\_ Be loved, Be - lo - ved. Be joy - ful and  
song. \_\_\_\_\_ Be loved, Be - lo - ved. Be ra - diant and  
wrong. \_\_\_\_\_ Be loved, Be - lo - ved. Be fi - 'ry and

11

just. Be lo - ving be - cause you be - long. \_\_\_\_\_  
rare. Be lo - ving be - cause you be - long. \_\_\_\_\_  
found. Be lo - ving be - cause you be - long. \_\_\_\_\_



# WHAT IS SACRED?

words by Micah Bucey  
music by Henco Espag

1. What is ho - ly? What is good? What's not heard or un - der - stood? What is  
va - lued? What is cursed? What's con - si - dered best or worst? What is  
sac - red Is our joy, Some - thing no - thing can de - stroy. Free your

4  
3de keer/time fine 1.2.

ho - nored? What is loved? What is sac - red? 2. What is  
lif - ted? What is blessed? What is sac - red? 3. What is  
mind. That's How we find What is sac - red.

Kopiereg Voorbehou © Henco Espag (ASCAP) & Micah Bucey 2024

# Musical Resources

I Need You to Survive	David Frazier	Lead Me, Guide Me (2nd ed.) #668; Zion Still Sings #214
Beautiful Things	Michael Gungor & Lisa Gungor	<a href="http://worshiptogether.com">worshiptogether.com</a> Songs
Now the Green Blade Rises	John M. C. Crum	Evangelical Lutheran Worship #379, Glory to God #247, etc.
Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service	Albert F. Bayly	Gather #681, The Presbyterian Hymnal #427, etc.
Brokenness Aside	David Leonard & Leslie Leonard	All Sons and Daughters
I'm Gonna Live so God Can Use Me	African-American Spiritual	Glory to God #700, The Faith We Sing #2153, etc.
Make Me a Channel of Your Peace	Sebastian Temple	A Catholic Christian prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, set to music by Sebastian Temple - could also be used as a sung response
All Belong Here	The Many	<a href="https://shop.themanyarehere.com/collections/digital-albums/products/all-belong-here-digital-album-download">https://shop.themanyarehere.com/collections/digital-albums/products/all-belong-here-digital-album-download</a>
Fear is a Liar	Zach Williams	



# Additional Litanies

# Erasure Poem on the Lectionary Readings

by Rev. Elyse Berry

10 Then David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. 11 The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 12 So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. 4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

6 Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

7 "Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.

8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. 9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours "

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 God said to him, "Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. 14 I will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David

walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.  
52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day, 55 for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which the ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will

### Final text:

Then with his ancestors, Solomon firmly loved the Lord,  
walking in incense of a thousand burnt offerings.

That was the most important night,

God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

Soloman answered, “great kindness given to

a little child and the people,

a great heart in yours.”

God said, “Indeed I arise all your life with you. I will walk,  
keeping and living heaven in the life of the world.

Very truly, I tell you,

you have life in you.

and I will raise up Those who abide in me and I in them.

living like the ancestors, one bread forever.”

# Remembrance Litany

by Rev. Erica Poellot

Gracious God, Loving Creator,  
We listen for your voice which calls us here, together.  
This place, made holy by our shared presence.

We listen for your voice  
which calls us to remember we belong to each other -  
Inextricably and lovingly bound together.

For your voice which call us to our sacred charge –  
to presence, to hope, to persistence for liberation.  
Refusing to be silenced.

And just as we are called to listen,  
we are called to act as the voice—the heart—the hands of your call:

To meet each other, exactly where and as we are.  
To celebrate the gift of second, third, and more chances, because we all  
need them.  
To revel in radical welcome, no matter our paths.  
To honor the memory of those no longer with us.

We gather to imagine a collective way forward  
of truth telling and life affirming connection.

We gather to honor and learn from people who use drugs -  
those who have been saving one another, loving one another back to  
life.

We gather to honor life and the living -  
and also, to remember those who are no longer bodily among us,  
that their remembrance may inspire a way forward.  
To them, we are present now.

[moment of remembrance in silence]

Please join me in keeping alive the spirit of the beloveds we have lost to overdose,  
calling them each by name:

[Saying of the names]

We love you.

We are witnesses to the sacredness of your lives:  
Your names and memories pave our way forward,  
igniting, again and again, your lives through our love for you and all.



# Blessing of the Naloxone

## by Dr. Sharon Fennema

**One:** New life is before us. I invite you to extend your hands toward these kits as we offer this blessing.

**All:** Creator of resurrection and light, we come to you with grateful hearts for all the ways your love continues to rise up in our midst. We give you thanks and praise for the Holy drug, naloxone, and the new life that it can bring.

**One:** We know that we need each other to survive, so we ask you to bless these kits, and all those who will use them, and all those who will be in need of them.

**All:** Make them and us instruments of resurrection, that suffering will be released, that injury will be transformed, that joy will arise, that strength will take hold, that hope will take wing, and that death will yield to new life.

**One:** Empower us to live into our vocations as people of resurrection, bringers of new life, proclaimers in word and deed of a new day rising. In the name of all that unfurls hope in our midst every moment, we pray. Amen.



By Minister Blyth Barnow of Feminary





# Resources

# Language Matters: Reducing Stigma

“And God said, ‘Let there be...’”

This is how creation happens in the Abrahamic faiths: not as a meticulous engineering project, nor a work of magic, but entirely spoken into being. The Word not only communicates the divine intention, it actively accomplishes it. A Word created the world.

Our words, too, create worlds. Words spoken harshly or carelessly may create a world that is unsafe for someone who is sensitive or struggling. Derogatory language, whether used intentionally or unintentionally, can construct a space that may be unwelcoming.

Many common phrases used to talk about people who use drugs and people who do sex work imply stigma, judgment, and shame. This is easy to understand in overtly derogatory instances like the use of terms such as “junkie,” “crackhead,” etc., but language matters in much more subtle ways and can reveal assumptions about a person or their substance use that may be unfair, inaccurate, and harmful.

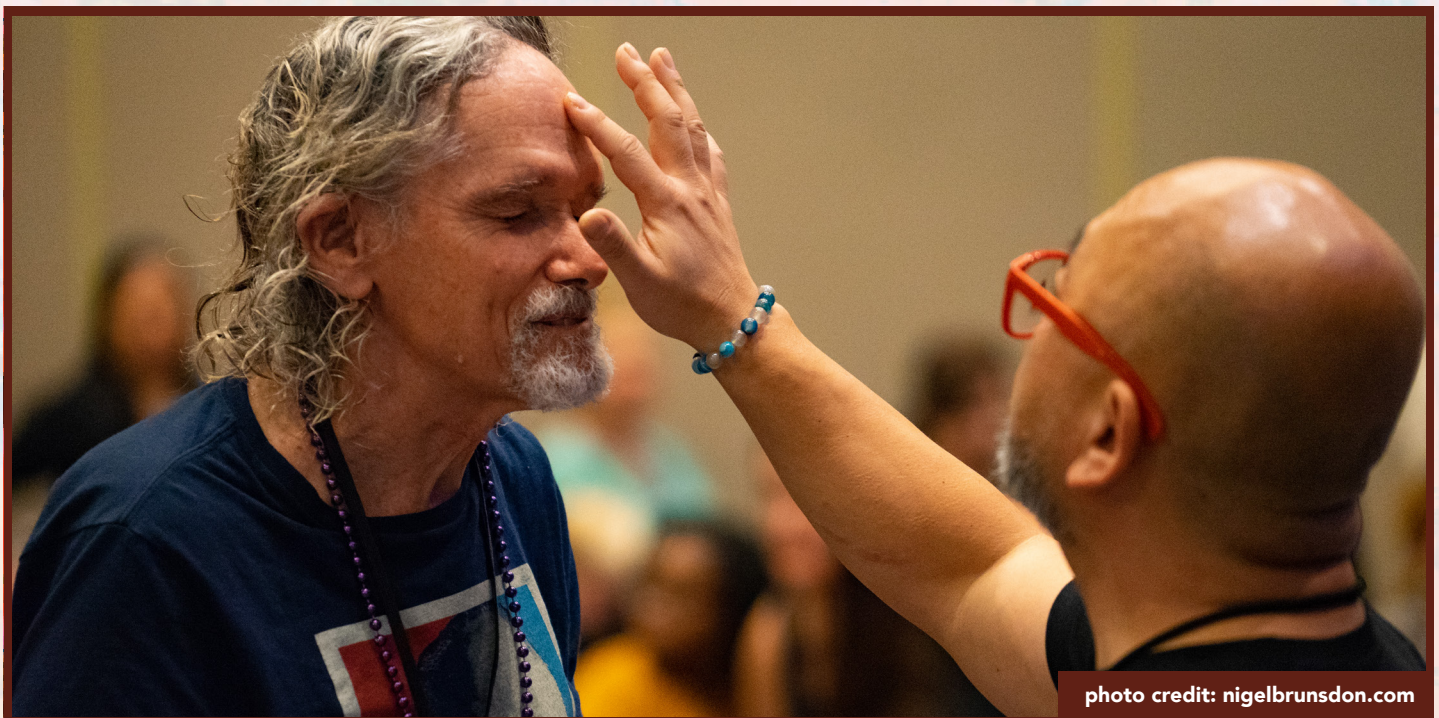


photo credit: nigelbrunsdon.com

**We at Faith in Harm Reduction encourage the use of person-centered language—language that refuses to reduce a person to their substance use but keeps their humanity at the forefront—to affirm that people who use drugs are sacred, worthy, and beloved. We offer these examples of how to consider words to create a more hospitable world for people who use drugs and people who do sex work.**

## Instead of...

## Try this...

Addict, Junkie, Drug User	Person Who Uses Drugs, Person Who Injects Drugs
Drug problem, Drug abuse	Drug use, Substance use, non-prescribed use
Needle-sharing program	Syringe service program, Syringe exchange programs
Clean	Not actively using, abstinent; (re: supplies) sterile, unused
Opioid Replacement Therapy	Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)
Prostitute, whore, hooker	Person who does sex work
Relapse, On a bender	Return to use, Currently using drugs
Enabling	Supporting, helping, overdose prevention
Dirty/clean urine	Positive/negative drug screen

# Resource Lists

## Books

- *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander
- *Beyond Addiction* by Jeffrey Foote et al
- *Chasing the Scream* by Johann Hari
- *High Price* by Carl Hart
- *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain* by Marc Lewis
- *The Biology of Desire* by Marc Lewis
- *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* by Gabor Mate
- *The Big Fix* by Tracey Helton Mitchell
- *Getting Wrecked* by Kimberly Sue
- *Unbroken Brain and Undoing Drugs* by Maia Szalavitz
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk
- *Coming to Harm Reduction Kicking and Screaming: Looking for Harm Reduction in a Twelve Step World* by DeeDee Stout
- *Saving Our Own Lives : A Liberatory Practice of Harm Reduction* by Shira Hassan
- *The Harm Reduction Gap* by Sheila P. Vakharia
- *Prison By Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms* by Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law
- *Abolition and Spirituality* edited by Ashon Crawley and Roberto Sirvent
- *Healing Justice Lineages: Dreaming at the Crossroads of Liberation, Collective Care, and Safety* by Cara Page and Erica Woodland
- *Practicing New Worlds: Abolition and Emergent Strategies* by Andrea Ritchie

## Podcasts

- American Diagnosis – Season 2
- Blindspot: The Plague in the Shadows
- Crackdown
- Drugs and Stuff
- Narcotica
- Prohibited

## Websites

- [www.faithinharmreduction.org](http://www.faithinharmreduction.org)
- [www.naloxoneforall.org](http://www.naloxoneforall.org)
- [www.harmreduction.org](http://www.harmreduction.org)
- [www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org)
- [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

## Events

- The National Harm Reduction Conference (Harm Reduction Coalition)
- International Drug Policy Reform Conference (Drug Policy Alliance)
- International Overdose Awareness Day ([overdoseday.com](http://overdoseday.com))
- Other state, regional, and virtual conferences by area/topic

## Videos

- “The War on Drugs: From Prohibition to Gold Rush” Jay Z:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el5mE5PBGJg>
- “Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong” Johann Hari:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY9DcIMGxMs>
- “Harm Reduction 101” Harm Reduction Action Center, Denver:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7epsLmN604>



***Find a Harm Reduction Resource Near You:***  
[\*https://harmreduction.org/connect-locally\*](https://harmreduction.org/connect-locally)

## Spirit of Harm Reduction

An Abridged Toolkit  
for Faith Leaders



Access the  
**Spirit of Harm  
Reduction Toolkit**  
by visiting  
[faithinharmreduction.org/  
spirit-of-harm-  
reduction-toolkits](https://faithinharmreduction.org/spirit-of-harm-reduction-toolkits)  
**or click here.**

Access Virtual Narcan  
trainings and other  
overdose prevention  
resources from  
**NEXT Distro**

[https://nextdistro.org/  
overdose](https://nextdistro.org/overdose)

Read the  
**FAITHFUL  
ADVOCACY FOR  
INTERSECTIONAL AND  
TRANSFORMATIONAL  
HEALING IN HARM  
REDUCTION  
A RESOLUTION OF  
WITNESS**

Submitted by the Metropolitan Association of  
the New York Conference

[https://www.faithinharmreduction.org/s/  
Faith-in-Harm-Reduction-Resolution-1.pdf](https://www.faithinharmreduction.org/s/Faith-in-Harm-Reduction-Resolution-1.pdf)

