

Holston's RESPONSE to the Opioid Crisis

Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church • May 2019



By now, there is no doubt you have seen and heard the statistics surrounding our national opioid epidemic. Statistics like:

- *More than 140 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.*
- *In our Holston Conference area, more people died from opioid overdoses than perished in traffic accidents, homicides, or suicides in 2015, 2016 and 2017.*
- *Opioid overdose deaths totaled 1,186 in 2016, up 14.7% from 2015.*
- *According to the 2018 Drug Enforcement Agency report, Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia are in the top 10 states impacted by opioid overdose deaths.*
- *Tennessee is ranked first in the nation in opioid sales.*

The problem is real. The results are scary. And the effects are astronomical, because let's face it, we are all affected by this epidemic. We all know someone or some family that has been directly impacted by opioid addiction. Church, it is time we step up and do something about this! So here is what we are asking you to do ... **Pray.**

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- *Start praying now.*
- *Begin by asking God how you and your church can get involved to help stop this epidemic.*
- *Consider creating a task force or committee to research the needs within your community and how you can begin meeting these needs.*
- *Join with other churches in your areas to form a Missional Hub that focuses on an opioid recovery ministry.*
- *Give to this year's Annual Conference Offering.*

While you are doing these things, here is what we want to do for you. Our 2019 Annual Conference offering will be used for grants to help churches and missional hubs begin new, or strengthen existing, ministries addressing the opioid crisis. We understand entire communities are being destroyed, and we believe it will take entire communities to turn things around. We also understand each area, church, or missional hub may need to focus on different areas of the crisis in order to meet the needs of their community. Some churches may start a Celebrate Recovery ministry while others focus on ministering to families who have been affected. We will need training, and we may need additional help identifying the social justice issues that need to be addressed as we battle opioids in our communities, and this will take money.

And so, we are asking you to give. Please consider collecting a special offering in May that can be used to help end this crisis. Give, so we can make a difference in our communities. Give, so we can change these statistics we are hearing and seeing. Give, so we can remind the world The United Methodist Church is a Connectional Church that exists to “transform the world.” Give, so we can help end the opioid epidemic that is destroying our nation.

Thank you for your generosity. • Thank you for your faithfulness.



Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church
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www.holston.org/opioidcrisis



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