



A Pastor's Perspective

by Rev. Betsy Haas, Kitty Hawk United Methodist Church



What do the Scriptures say about addiction? A quick concordance search (old school Google) reveals that the word "addiction" does not appear in the Bible per se, but the Scriptures are full of guidance and instruction about compassion, the power of unity in the fellowship of believers, the strength of temptation, and more. God has called us as a people of faith to be allies for people suffering with the disease of addiction in our Dare County community, recognizing the unique place that our religious institutions can take in supporting those who are in addiction recovery.

Understanding the issues facing people who suffer with Substance Abuse Disorder is a first and important step. Recognizing the power of language and words to either help or hurt is another. And embracing people with addiction disease by eliminating the stigma that surrounds them is critical. The church has an amazing opportunity to be an impactful part of the effort to address and reduce substance use in Dare County. And doing so is biblical.

Consider Paul's words to the church from the 3rd Chapter of Colossians:

"12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body."
(Colossians 3: 12-15 New Revised Standard Version.)

Above all, clothe yourselves with love. Love bears all things. Love believes all things. Love hopes all things. Love endures all things. As people of faith, regardless of which church we attend, we are in a unique position to be the face of love in the substance abuse recovery community.

So how can people of faith help? First, by not judging. When you encounter a situation where someone is struggling, don't judge. Pray, offer a ride to a place of help, deliver a casserole (Methodists are famous for this), but don't judge. By informing ourselves about the many available options right here in our county, we church folk can be a part of the hope. We can participate in the Walk Against Addiction. We can teach our children and youth about the dangers of substance use. We can make our facilities available for counseling and group work. We can join the team.

I am blessed to serve in a local church that has a strong history of supporting recovery groups. We have provided space, warmth, storage, and coffee makers to AA, Al-Anon, NA groups, etc. over the years. When the pandemic hit, we made a bold decision to not close our church to our recovery groups, even when we closed our sanctuary for worship for several months. In fact, we added a group. We moved all the groups to larger spaces for social distancing and instituted safety protocols to keep our friends safe. A few months later, the AA coordinator called to thank us, and said that we had literally saved lives with our decision to allow people in lock-down to be able to come together and continue the work of recovery.

Jesus would have liked that. He was all about saving lives.

The call to the people of faith in Dare County is this: substance abuse is an "us" problem, not a "them" problem. Let us find ways to fully engage in the solution through education, compassion, financial support, patience, and above all ... love.

What is Cross Roads OBX?

Hearts have come together to offer a service that will support individuals seeking new direction to wholeness and hope. Cross Roads OBX is a Christ-centered outreach, offering discernment, guidance and objective planning for those who desire to change the course of their lives. Many have been thrown off-course by homelessness, addiction, incarceration, or other events which have led to a loss of direction and trust in God, themselves, and others. Some are actively seeking a new path while others need assistance making that decision. Either way, like all of the members of the Savings Lives Task Force, Cross Roads OBX strives to find ways to help them in a new direction. Our guiding principle is that "With God, all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

SAVING LIVES TASK FORCE

The Initiative is a quarterly newsletter presented by the Saving Lives Task Force, the goal of this publication is to educate, inform and engage residents of Dare County.

- Our Task Force is a team of professionals and community members working toward the prevention of substance use disorders and the availability of effective treatment for all Dare county citizens in need of help.
- **Join us for our Virtual Meetings** on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 2:00 pm.
- **For More Information** please contact Roxana Ballinger, Saving Lives Task Force Co-Chair, at 252.475.5619 or roxana.ballinger@darenc.com.

savinglivesobx.com
facebook.com/savinglivesobx

Cross Roads OBX MAIN EVENT

When: April 1, 2022, 5pm until 8:30pm

Where: Liberty Fellowship Church, in Colington

Cross Roads OBX will hold its first annual Main Event

Food truck and silent auction followed by music and speakers.

Crossroadsobx.org



THE INITIATIVE Resources:

savinglivesobx.com

PORT/New Horizons
2808 S Croatan Hwy,
Nags Head, NC 27959
252.441.2324

Trillium Health Resources
www.trilliumncaccesspoint.org
877.685.2415 – 24 Hours a Day

Mobile Crisis Team
24 Hours a Day / 7 Days a Week
866.437.1821

2-1-1 Directory
www.nc211.org

Community Care Clinic of Dare
Syringe Services Program
M-Th | 9 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
252.261.3041

Contact your insurance company to find out more information on local providers and your plan's benefits.

S M T W T F S

ONGOING EVENTS

Substance Use Summit & Workshop for Faith Leaders

When: Thursday, March 31st, 10:00am - 1:30pm
Where: St. Andrews by the Sea, Nags Head
Eric Landry, with the Faith-Based Community Initiatives from Tennessee, will share the successes of their faith community in addressing substance disorder issues in their congregations and local communities. Hosted by The Faith-Based Subcommittee of the Dare County Saving Lives Task Force. A light, working lunch will be provided.

Cross Roads OBX Main Event

When: April 1, 2022, 5pm until 8:30pm
Where: Liberty Fellowship Church, in Colington
Cross Roads OBX will hold its first annual Main Event Food truck and silent auction followed by music and speakers.
Crossroadsobx.org

SMART Recovery OBX Addiction Support Group

When: Mondays, 6-7pm for 60 minutes
Where: Nags Head Treatment Center, 2224 S. Croatan Hwy., Nags Head
Facilitators: Scott and Katy Haslar, smartrecoveryobx@gmail.com

Alcoholics Anonymous: Meetings 7 days a week.

Visit the website AAOBX.com for current virtual meeting schedule
Outer Banks AA Hotline 252-256-0850
<https://aaoxb.com/>

Outer Banks Alateen, Outer Banks Alateen Meeting, Saturdays, 10-11am, Kitty Hawk Baptist Church, email alateen@alanonobx.com for information. Alateen is a fellowship of young people whose lives have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or friend.

OBX Nar-anon is a means of coping with the insanity brought about from having a family member or friend struggling with addiction. For more details, please contact Holly Henry West at 252-489-7778.

Recovery Learning Circle

A peer facilitated, virtual support, coping skills and recovery planning group for everyone. We will be learning awareness and coping skills for dealing with depression, anxiety, isolation, substance use, stress, emotions, interpersonal skills and mindfulness. We develop awareness of our own strengths and priorities, and learn from and support each other in recovery by building hope, empowerment, resilience, personal responsibility and support.

Call Dave Edmonds 252-305-4056 or David.Edmonds@darenc.com

Women of Worth

Groups are being held virtually on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00am-12:00pm. The groups will focus on recovery from the evidence-based curriculum, "Helping Women Recover."

Please contact Catisha Bryant at catisha.bryant@darenc.com for more information or if you would like to join the group.

Breaking Through Task Force, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 8:30 am

The Breaking Through Task Force is composed of community members who wish to address communication and stigma concerns about mental health conditions and substance use disorders.

Contact Kelly.Nettin@darenc.com
www.breakthestigmaobx.com

Dare Community Collaborative, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 1:30-2:30 pm

A partnership among providers and families of youth and adults with mental health issues and/or substance use issues. Together, they identify services, support needs and try to find ways to meet those needs.

Contact [Stephanie Webb](mailto:Stephanie.Webb@trilliumnc.org), stephanie.webb@trilliumnc.org



Teens, Drugs and Rock & Roll: Part 2

When it comes to anti-drug use messages promoted through programs like D.A.R.E., G.R.E.A.T. and in talking with adults about drugs, a couple of problems were identified. The first was grouping marijuana in with other drugs and all being treated as equally bad. One student said, "The use and who uses (the drugs) is different." Also, there was a perception that alcohol was treated differently than drugs (particularly marijuana) as taught by some programs.

Alcohol was more openly talked about and accepted as something people are more likely to use. They talk about it like, 'Don't use it, but if you are going to use it, use it safely,' like having a designated driver or using it in a safe place. Perhaps if they had a similar conversation about marijuana where they viewed it not as a shameful thin but instead treated it with the same approach as used when talking about alcohol, it might be more beneficial. Also noted was that teens, in general, are rebellious in nature so that when told not to do something, they are a bit more motivated to actually do it.

There is not a lot of concern by many teens for the effects marijuana use has on teen health. Most view it as "just a plant".

"Most kids don't think about the brain and how it changes," a student noted. "They think even less about the lung impact." As far as the impact on school performance, many students feel there is more benefit than harm. Some students feel marijuana helps them get enough sleep and others see it as a treatment for eating disorders. Students in athletic programs are more careful about drug use due to testing, but once their sports' season is over "they make up for it."

The students felt the most commonly abused drugs (in order of abuse) were nicotine (vapes and cigarettes), marijuana, alcohol and pills, though marijuana and alcohol were very close and frequently the use of both went "hand-in-hand". There was a consensus that "inexperienced drinkers" could potentially do more harm to themselves than someone who smoked too much marijuana.

As far as anti-drug use messaging in general, there were a variety of opinions of what works and what does not. Promoting statistics and studies is not particularly helpful because (chiefly in the example of marijuana use) there is a lot of literature about the benign and beneficial aspects of marijuana. A parallel with the sex education approach was discussed, with the idea that abstinence messaging was unhelpful, whereas information about safe sex practices and the availability of resources were more useful. Also, having an individual at the school to talk to who existed as a resource in that space somewhere between peers and parents was thought of as highly desirable.

Finally, the students were not aware of any addiction-related resources in the community. There is "More focus on 'don't do it' as opposed to 'what to do' if drugs become a problem and you want to stop." They were familiar with the Dare County's Narcotic's Task Force but not the Saving Lives Task Force.

Eric Landry, with the Faith-Based Community Initiatives from Tennessee, will share the successes of their faith community in addressing substance disorder issues in their congregations and local communities.

A light, working lunch will be provided. We invite YOU, as leaders in our local Faith community, to join us for this informative workshop.

We hope to provide you and your congregations with a better understanding of Substance Use Disorder and how we can use faith in prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts. We will also introduce you to our "Saving Lives, Faith-Based Committee Substance Use and Mental Health Resource Guide" and share with you some of the organizations and local resources available to you to help those and their families suffering from substance use disorders. Your presence and participation will be a big step forward toward uniting our faith community in attacking this national epidemic that is killing our youth and destroying families. Please see the following link to register for the Summit. We thank you for your support and look forward to seeing you at the event.

Please RSVP at:
www.savinglivesobx.com/events



please join us
FAITH COMMUNITY
SUBSTANCE USE SUMMIT

March 31, 2022
10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

St. Andrews By the Sea Episcopal Church

4212 S. Virginia Dare Trail | Nags Head, NC

For more information or to register
SavingLivesOBX.com/Events

This event is for Faith Leaders. Registration opens to the Public on March 10, 2022. Please register today, as seating is limited.

A Pastor's Perspective *Continued from page 1*

A first step in the healing process is to offer a relationship with the individual in crisis so that physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual needs may be identified. What we learn and discern through relationship allows Cross Roads OBX to assist a person who desires a different path to find services and connections that will benefit their well-being. We support each person in their journey to develop the skills and relationships with self, God and loved ones that are necessary to maintain lasting health. Feelings of emptiness, longing, and lack of fulfillment can create a deep need to use drugs or alcohol. Cross Roads OBX staff and volunteers work towards connecting individuals in need with a Christ-centered "Friend" to walk alongside them as they connect or reconnect to community, while instilling personal responsibility and accountability to each other and to God. Our objective is steadfast- to give our friends tools needed to build a better life. Such tools are broad and may include getting access to mental and physical healthcare, detox, rehab, group housing, job opportunities, church fellowship and healthy relationships.