# The Convening Summary

**Title of Convening:** Mental Health and the Church: A Conversation with Kay Warren and Local Lead Pastors

**Event date and time:** March 3, 2021, 12:00-2:00pm

**Format (Zoom or Location):** ZOOM

**Attendance Total:** 22

**Convening Organizer(s):** Ken Weigel (with Kimberly Thornbury and Jill Lemke)

**Summary:** An interactive discussion with Kay Warren on mental health and the church. The time was spent asking questions of Kay and each other as we talked about what is working in this space.

**Next Steps:** Harold Smith to write blog post. Ken Weigel to follow-up with the pastors to encourage “now what” collaboration.

**Participants:**

Chris Yarco (Willamette Christian Church), Daniel De Beer (Columbia Presbyterian Church), Marc Estes (Mannahouse), Mark McIlraith (Lake Grove Presbyterian Church), Mary Ann Noack (River West Church), Rick McKinley (Imago Dei Community), Chris Kainu (Vancouver Church), Ashley Bell (Cedar Mill Bible Church), Mark Strong (Life Change Church), Shon Neyland (Highland Christian Center), Levell Thomas (Oasis of Praise)

**From Murdock:** Steve Moore, Jill Lemke, Kimberly Thornbury, Amy Dickerson, Conner Peckham, Amy Winegardner, Harold and Judy Smith

**Observations and Learnings:** The Church has to be in the thick of this. Know how to refer, but that is not enough. Pointing to resources is not enough. You have to walk alongside those dealing with this issue.“Mental illness is real, common and treatable.”You are miles ahead of most churches if you can articulate this statement. Millions of Christians have not settled this issue.

1:5 adults will experience a mental health issue this year (43 million Americans.) There are treatments that can help.

*What every church can do:*

C – Care for and support individuals and families

H – Help with practical needs. (Mental Health can be the “no casserole” illness)

U – Unleash trained volunteers

R – Remove the stigma

C – Collaborate with the Community

H – Offer Hope.

*To be mental health literate:*

**Crawl**

* Offer (once a month!) support groups
* Pray publicly for people with mental illness. “Not everyone came to church happy. Some hearts are broken.”
* Speak a message on mental illness
* Look for volunteers
* Have a list of vetted counselors and resources
* The National Alliance for Mental Illness will come and speak for free
* Congregations embody the personality of the leader. When the pastor is open to lament, sadness, incomplete answers, unresolved pain, mystery, the congregation changes.
* Don’t: Ignore this issue

Weave this issue into everything. When you are preaching on Elijah under the tree, don’t gloss over (or shame) his depressive state. Validate that God is an emotional God – validate people’s wide range of emotions as part of how we are created.

Allow people to tell their stories. (Wow, my Bible Study leader has depression! Humanize the issue.)

Rick Warren doesn’t lead the mental health initiative at Saddleback but his role is legitimizing the program as the senior pastor is key.

**Walk**

* Start a Celebrate Recovery

**Run**

* Saddleback has a mental health strategy funnel including: Community, classes, groups, and care.

**Questions such as:**

* How, as a pastor with a family member with mental illness, do I protect them and still be open to remove the stigma?
* How can we create community change? (Fred Smith’s work in Tyler, Tx for citywide impact, including work with Catholics and hosting in a hotel and church – pros to both.)
* The benefit of tapping into Behavioral Health departments, faith communities, nonprofits and businesses.

**Resources:**

* [Kaywarren.com/mentalhealth](http://kaywarren.com/mentalhealth/)
* The Loveland Foundation - Therapy for Black women and girls - <https://thelovelandfoundation.org/>
* Dr. Anita Phillips: <https://www.anitaphillips.com/>
* Man Therapy: <https://mantherapy.org/> (\*not an endorsement of the entire site)
* Article: Suicide Prevention in the Black Community: <https://sprc.org/news/black-lives-matter-suicide-prevention>
* Faith. Hope. Life. weekend for Suicide Prevention <https://theactionalliance.org/faith-hope-life>
* [Nami.org](https://nami.org/Home) is National Alliance of Mental Illness
* <AFSP.org> - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
* [CelebrateRecovery.com](https://celebraterecovery.com/)
* <https://www.stephenministries.org/default.cfm>
* [www.BeWellOC.org](http://www.BeWellOC.org) (Orange County aspirational public/private initiative to provide the best mental health care regardless of ability to pay.)
* John Swinton, “Resurrecting the Person” – her key recommended book.
* Matthew Stanford, “Grace for the Afflicted”