

Healing Legacies: Bridging Faith and Mental Wellness in the Black/African Ancestry Communities

In the Black/African Ancestry communities, the intersection of mental health, faith and spirituality is deeply intertwined, offering avenues for healing, resilience and well-being. Recognizing historical traumas and systemic injustices, faith traditions provide solace, strength and communal support. Faith leaders serve as trusted sources of guidance, offering spiritual counsel, community connections and access to local resources. Faith institutions can foster a sense of belonging and empowerment through storytelling, music and expressions of resilience.

With decreasing attendance and increasing stressors, faith leaders are feeling ill equipped to lead post COVID. Data reflects:

- 35% of pastors battle depression or fear of inadequacy.
- 26% of pastors report being over fatigued.
- 28% of pastors report they are spiritually undernourished.
- 70% of pastors report they have a lower self-image now than when they first started (pastoralcare.inc).

These statistics reveal the necessity for education and awareness as well as the impact untreated mental health and substance use conditions have on faith communities.

NAMI FaithNet® recognizes the vital role of spirituality in the recovery journey and understands the need for faith leaders to create stigma-free, mental health friendly and trauma-informed communities; and to have resources that can support them in their role and on their healing journey.

At NAMI, we're focused on supporting our frontline workers. So, we've designed initiatives and resources to help connect faith leaders to much needed support to build healthy spiritual communities:

- **FaithNet®** brings together NAMI affiliates, faith communities, mental health providers, families, individuals and community organizations to build sustainable partnerships that help build awareness, improve care navigation and support people living with mental health conditions. NAMI FaithNet hosts an annual **Pathways to Hope Conference**, a hybrid, transformative event aimed at uniting communities to create sustainable support systems for individuals living with mental health conditions.
- **Sharing Hope** is a three-part community conversation series in which sacred stories are shared through community conversations prompted by videos and guided by a facilitator who helps participants understand support strategies and community resources rooted in collective community wisdom and empowerment; and creates pathways to healing for Black/African Ancestry and immigrant communities.
- **Community Health Equity Alliance (CHEA)**, in partnership with Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, works with coalition partners providing tailored programs and resources to improve access, navigation and advocacy for equitable and culturally-responsive mental health care.

To learn more, please visit us at www.nami.org to learn about [Sharing Hope](#), [FaithNet](#) or nami.chea.org.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988*. The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides a 24-hour confidential connection with a trained crisis counselor. You may also reach out to NAMI's Helpline for mental health related information and resources by calling 800-950-NAMI (6242), texting "Helpline" to 62640 or emailing helpline@nami.org, Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–10 p.m. ET.

