

Mental Health Sunday Planning Checklist

A Mental Health Sunday can open doors for healing, reduce stigma, and connect your congregation to hope and help. This checklist is meant to help you plan an emphasis that fits your church's size, culture, and community. Use it with your worship planning team, health ministry, or leadership group.

You can adapt these items into a printable checklist or a planning worksheet for your team.

Step 1: Clarify purpose and audience

- We have named the primary purpose of this emphasis (for example, awareness, testimony, education, or connection to resources).
- We have clarified the primary audience (for example, entire congregation, youth focus, caregivers, or leaders).
- We have named one or two key messages we hope people will remember.
- We have considered how this emphasis might feel for people who live with mental health challenges or trauma.

Step 2: Identify partners and collaborators

- We have identified at least one mental health professional or trusted community partner to consult.
- We have considered inviting a clinician, peer specialist, or advocate to participate in worship or a post-service forum.
- We have reviewed denominational or community resources that might support this emphasis.
- We have checked in with our security or safety team about any practical considerations.

Step 3: Design sermon and worship elements

- Sermon text and theme are chosen with mental health in mind (for example, lament, hope, healing, or community support).
- Prayers include language that honors both faith and the reality of suffering.

- Any testimonies or stories have been prepared with care and consent, including time limits and support for the storyteller.
- Music selections are sensitive to trauma and do not pressure people to appear “fine” in the moment.
- Language from the pulpit avoids shaming and does not reduce mental health to willpower or prayer alone.

Step 4: Prepare leaders and volunteers

- Greeters, ushers, and hospitality teams know that the service is focused on mental health and may stir emotion.
- Prayer team or altar workers have received basic guidance on listening, boundaries, and referring people to additional support.
- Children’s and youth leaders know what is planned and how it may affect young people.
- Leaders know how to respond if someone becomes distressed or needs a quiet space.

Step 5: Plan follow-up and support

- We have identified specific next steps at the end of the service (for example, resource table, support groups, pastoral appointments).
- We have prepared a simple printed or digital resource list with local hotlines, agencies, and counseling options.
- We have considered how to continue the conversation in the weeks following this emphasis.
- We have a plan to follow up with anyone who shares a significant concern or crisis during this time.

You may want to debrief as a team one or two weeks after Mental Health Sunday. Ask, “What went well? What felt tender? What do we want to try differently next time?”