

## The Center of Addiction & Faith

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### **Conference gives faith communities knowledge, tools to respond to addiction crisis**

**(St. Bonifacius, Minn., July 14, 2021 )** *If the religious organization where you grew up were to talk about addiction, would it invoke fear, morality, punishment, “tough love”—or crickets?* If so, Pastor Ed Treat is extending an invitation to attend the Center of Addiction & Faith’s third [Addiction & Faith Conference](#), October 7-9, 2021 in Bloomington, Minn., at the Doubletree Hotel.

Hundreds of faith leaders representing denominations from more than 30 U.S. states and Canada are expected. Along with health-care, treatment-center and mental-health professionals, other advocates and civic and state leaders, they’ll hear experts in their fields discuss not only faith but science, justice and compassion, too. These are the building blocks of the Center’s mission to awaken faith communities to be more fully places of welcome and healing for persons with addiction and those who love them.

“The [studies](#) show that faith is a positive factor in addiction prevention and recovery,” said the Rev. Dr. Ed Treat, executive director of the Center of Addiction & Faith. “Faith communities are in an ideal position to make a difference in healing addiction, and yet their messages are either ineffective or nonexistent. We want to help teach them what they can do and why.”

Spurred on by evidence of worsening mental health and addictions in our post-pandemic world, conference attendance is expected to double from previous years, with the addition of a virtual attendance option.

- More than 93,000 people died of drug overdoses in the U.S. in 2020—that’s 21,000 more sons and daughters, or nearly 30 percent more, than in 2019, according to [The Washington Post](#).
- During the pandemic women have increased their heavy drinking days by 41% compared to before the pandemic. Additional [research](#) has shown that the psychological stress related to COVID-19 was associated with greater drinking for women, but not men, [Harvard Health Publishing](#) reported.
- Eating disorders are thriving during the pandemic. [Hotline](#) calls to the [National Eating Disorders Association](#) are up 70-80% in recent months,” according to a [NPR report](#).

- A growing body of evidence suggests an unprecedented increase in internet use and consumption of online pornography during the pandemic, and possibly even directly caused by it, said a *Frontiers in Psychiatry* report published on the [National Center for Biotechnology Information branch](#) site of NIH.

“People are doing what they can to cope, but the isolation and stress imposed by the pandemic tested us all,” said Treat, in recovery from his own addiction since 1986. “Addiction doesn’t discriminate, and many people—including clergy, who have few places to turn for support—have become caught up in an insidious biological process that demands more. We offer a safe place for people of faith to share and learn.”

Conference keynote speakers will include:

- Rev. Deacon Jan Brown, of Virginia, executive director of [Spiritworks Foundation](#)
- Timothy McMahan King, of New Hampshire, author of “[Addiction Nation: What the Opioid Crisis Says About Us.](#)”
- Rev. Kal William Rissman, of Indiana, author of “[Knowledge to Power: Understanding and Overcoming Addiction.](#)”
- D. Richard Wright, CI, LADC *Ojibwe Nation*, of Minnesota, author of “Mukwa and Adjidamoo,” “[The Way of Our People,](#)” and “From Wine To Mouthwash.”

More than a dozen breakout sessions are also included for in-person conference registrants, in the areas of addiction & the family, addiction science, addiction & justice, equipping the church for addiction ministry, and best practices.

Treat said, “We want to show faith leaders how to offer hope and healing in their communities, not only to persons with addiction but also their families, especially children. Too many people are suffering. Such an offering has the potential to transform our world.”

A 2020 [Gallup survey](#) reported that 47 percent of U.S. adults belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down more than 20 points from the turn of the century.

“The Center of Addiction & Faith Conference is open to anyone who wants to be part of the solution to our addiction crisis,” Treat said. Registration is open at [www.addictionandfaithconference.com](#). Through July, the in-person cost is \$300. A virtual option is also available this year for \$100. Costs increase by \$50 in August.

The Center of Addiction & Faith grew out of the Fellowship of Recovering Lutheran Clergy, formed in 1990 to provide help and give encouragement to pastors recovering from alcoholism and addiction. Treat was an active Lutheran pastor in 2018 when he held the first Addiction & Faith Conference. The success encouraged him to parish ministry after 25 years and dedicate himself full-time to The Center of Addiction & Faith, which became a 501©(3) nonprofit organization in 2020.