

# **Rick Warren's Saddleback Church Organizing 'Mental Health and the Church' Gathering**

Pastor Rick and Kay Warren of Saddleback Church, the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Orange County (NAMI-OC) are joining together to host the "Gathering on Mental Health and the Church" on March 28 at Saddleback Church in Southern California.

Open to everyone, the gathering is designed to encourage individuals living with mental illness, educate family members, and equip church leaders to provide effective and compassionate care to any who face the challenges of mental illness.

"It's so important that people know, no matter how desperate their despair, there is hope, and not to give up," Kay Warren says. "We want this to be a hopeful event that encourages individuals and helps them realize they are not alone in dealing with mental illness."

This event marks the first initiative in the Warrens' mission to remove the stigma of mental illness following the April 5 passing of their son Matthew, who struggled with mental illness.

"Any other part of the body, you can have it hurt and there is no shame in it," Pastor Warren says. "If your brain doesn't work right, why do you have stigma? It's just another organ in your body."

According to the National Institutes of Health, one in four

adults—approximately 61.5 million Americans—experiences mental illness in a given year. One in 17—about 13.6 million—live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder.

The first place many go for help is to their faith leader because the heart of Jesus and the church has always been for those who suffer.

“As a Catholic community of faith, we are blessed to join with the Warren family, NAMI-OC and the Saddleback community in co-hosting this important gathering,” says Bishop Vann. “It is my hope that this opportunity for prayer, support, dialogue and education will encourage our society to share the healing mission and the love of Christ with those who suffer from mental illnesses.”

The Gathering on Mental Health and the Church will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. PDT at the main campus of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. Tickets for the Worship Center and overflow locations are currently available for \$20. The event will also be webcast live, with additional details to be announced soon. For more information or to purchase tickets, [click here](#).

Founded in 1980 by the Warrens, Saddleback Church is located in Orange County, Calif. With an average weekly attendance of 22,000, it is one of the largest churches in America.