

Resurrecting Hope: Harm Reduction and Healing Centered Engagement to End Overdose

Description:

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“Harm reduction is holy, faith-full resistance, rooted in love, and unapologetically insistent on justice. It is the expression of radical welcome, the welcoming of all stories and paths. Harm reduction calls people by name, and attends to and cherishes the particularities. It is a hospitality that seeks people out, meets them where they are and invites them into loving community. Harm reduction is love that stands with people, in awe of the hardships they carry and without judgment for how they get through.”

At a time when preventable drug overdose deaths continue to grow, it is essential to ensure that spiritual community building and care with people with lived experience of substance use and overdose is aligned in a way that optimizes connection, decreases stigma, is strengths based, and reduces the social and health complications associated with drug use.

Harm Reduction is a compassionate and pragmatic approach to addressing substance use that centers the humanity, dignity, and wisdom of people who use drugs. It meets people where they are, celebrates any positive change, and supports people in developing their own unique path to wellness and healing. Harm Reduction also recognizes the structural vulnerabilities which place people in harm’s way and seeks to address and dismantle these barriers to health and human flourishing.

Join us as we examine harm reduction in practice and principle, and its spiritual impact. Together we will illustrate the gospel of harm reduction, the power of language in shaping liberation, make connections with harm reduction movements for social, racial, and economic justice, and explore opportunities for faith communities to co-create healing with people who use drugs and their loved ones.

Bios on Presenters:

Rev. Erica M. Poellot, MSW, MDiv serves as the Minister of Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries for the National United Church of Christ and the Director of Faith in Harm Reduction, a project of the National Harm Reduction Coalition and Judson Memorial Church. As a faith leader in long-term recovery, Erica founded ‘Faith in Harm Reduction’ to co-create a justice movement which connects people who use drugs, their loved ones, and communities of faith through the development of harm reduction centered spiritual resources, ritual support, and spiritual care. With joint MDiv/MSW degrees from Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University in NYC, Erica is based at Judson Memorial Church in NYC.

Terrell Jones is the Outreach and Advocacy Program Manager at New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE). Terrell is a passionate advocate, activist, and inspiration for drug users, sex workers, the houseless, and other marginalized communities. Terrell Jones is a former drug user who, like many other people of color, was incarcerated because of his drug use. Determined to change the racist drug laws in New York State, stigma associated with drug use that often resulted in his being denied job and housing opportunities, Terrell became an advocate for drug policy reform, and an activist to advance harm reduction in NYC and NYS, as well as across the United States. Terrell is also Senior Co-Chair of the Peer Network of New York, BOD for Faith In Harm Reduction, and a member of the National UCC Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries Working Group.