

Select Page



# Hope First UMC Offers Mental Health Coaching Through Online Training Program

Mar 17, 2021 | Arkansas United Methodist



Hope FUMC in Hope, AR. *Photo by Rodney Steele*

By Caleb Hennington

Digital Content Editor



Mental health has become an important facet of a person's overall well-being, even more so as the world continues the slow recovery from the last year of pandemic isolation.

That is one of the reasons why Hope First United Methodist Church has made an effort this year to assist their church and community with its mental health needs by providing mental health counseling to anyone who needs it.

The Rev. Steve Johnson said the church's efforts to provide mental health help started with his own experience going through a training program with the **American Association of Christian Counselors**.

"I'm a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors, and have been for many years," said Johnson, senior pastor at Hope FUMC. "I got an email about this course and how, especially with a pandemic, that they were hoping to train some people to help others as they try to cope with mental health issues, not just considering the pandemic, but just in general."

Johnson said to get his church enrolled in the program, he signed up through the organization's website. He said that there is no cost for a church to enroll in the program and tuition is free for members who take the training.

The name of the training program that Johnson underwent is called the Mental Health Coach First Responder Training. It's a 40-hour, all online training program that consists of on-demand video lectures from "some of the world's leading mental health experts," according to a brochure provided by Johnson.

The training is Biblically-based, and training courses can be accessed at any time from any internet-connected device.

"It's broken down lesson by lesson, and each lesson is usually 45 minutes to an hour. Then there's a short quiz after each lesson that you take and then it'll move on to the next one," Johnson said.

Johnson said after churches go through the training and complete it, they can then advertise to their community that they offer Christian counseling.

There are currently five other people from Hope FUMC who hope to go through the training, and all of them are laity in the church.

One of the new students hoping to complete his training this year is Bobby Hart, superintendent for Hope Public Schools in Hope, Arkansas.

Hart attends Hope FUMC and said that he entered the program from a referral that Rev. Johnson gave to him.

"I hope this training will help me to offer a kind ear and trained voice when working with students and staff in my school district," Hart said.

He said that mental health help for the community is more important than ever, and it's becoming a more common issue, especially in schools.

"As an educator, I see this in children and in adults. We have to find ways to remove the stigma attached to these issues and make seeking help for mental health issues no different than any other health care issue."

Johnson said that he's happy that a group like AACC is offering free training to churches, and hopes that more churches in the Arkansas Conference will take advantage of this.

"A lot of communities, and a lot of people, can't afford coaching or counseling, and so this kind of fills the gap. It's not so much based on trying to cure someone of a mental health illness. It's more based on providing life skills and coping skills; helping someone reach the goal that they want to have an abundant life.

As for the future, Johnson hopes that he can get more people to undergo this training, and provide a support system for the community in Hope.

"Hopefully, we can get a mental health ministry established by using these coaches and offering it to the community as a way to have outreach. Not necessarily to draw people into the church, per se, but to help them with life. Of course, a side benefit would be if they became part of the church. But it's not the total goal."

---

**Share this:**

## Archives

[July 2021](#)

[June 2021](#)

[May 2021](#)

[April 2021](#)

[March 2021](#)

[February 2021](#)