

A memo to pastors...

As pastors who minister and lead in a culture where addictions of all kinds exist, we are constantly deluged with the direct and indirect consequences of those addictions. Our options, it seems to me, are two; bury our head in the sand and hope that it all works out somehow or take an active role in our community and bring the kingdom of God to bear on these overwhelming needs.

Here in Oroville we're committed to the latter. We have brought the recovery ministry into the life of our church. We are working towards a fully integrated recovery ministry that embraces the Mission, Vision and Values of our local church. The challenge has been to maintain a balanced focus in terms of our core ministries and not get too focused in any one area of ministry (recovery or otherwise).

One of the challenges that recovery ministries have in many churches is that they wind up being an adjunct to the focus of the church instead of a reflection of the love and care for our communities at large. When recovery ministry is not seen as a core ministry of the church it can create a disconnect which can result in an ungodly attitude of "those people over there"...or an "us versus them" mentality. It becomes something we do as opposed to who we are.

What makes our Serenity ministry different from other church recovery programs is our approach to the issue of 12 Step. We fully embrace the 12 Step recovery ministries in our community. We see ourselves as the place where people who are connected to other AA and NA groups in our city can come to and feel safe whether they know Jesus as their 'Higher Power' or not. We call this our Front Porch environment. It allows us a deeper penetration into the overall recovery programs into the city. As a

result of this approach our leaders are welcome into, and often speak at, those programs.

When people come to our Serenity program on our church campus they are invited into a large group environment that is similar to any other recovery program in the city. Birthdays are celebrated, chips are given, and testimonies are heard. They are then gently introduced to smaller group environments where they can explore who Jesus is and the healing and freedom He provides. We do this through groups like:

- Men and women groups
- Anger classes
- Couples groups
- Serenity 12Step and Third Step studies
- Pure Desire Sexual Purity Classes
- Clarence Snyder 12 Step Study
- Early History of AA Class

We call these groups our Living Room environments. It is a place where God is freely discussed and people can come into a more personal knowledge of Christ.

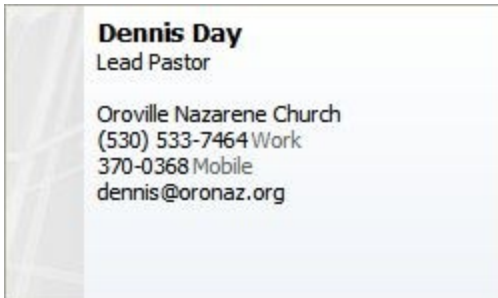
In the following pages you will see a model of recovery ministry called "**Serenity**". Our church has been pursuing this ministry for nearly 20 years. We've still got a lot to learn! We have two men (and their wives) who have spearheaded the ministry from its inception. Kenn Mariano and Dale Marsh are our champion leaders in the area of recovery ministries. Dale is currently on the Elder track through SDIM and serves as our Recovery Pastor and Kenn has served as a board leader in our church for a couple of decades as well as a host of other ministry 'jobs'. Both of these men are godly, stable and key leaders in our community.

Through the hard work of a handful of committed and dedicated men and women God has built a vibrant and growing recovery ministry where people in our community can come and receive hope and healing. God is allowing us to truly see our community change..."one life at a time."

I encourage you to stop by the resource tent and speak with Dale or Kenn or one of our pastors. I would be more than happy to speak with you about issues that pertain to the nuts and bolts of how a recovery ministry can fit into the overall Mission of your church.

Bless you as you advance the kingdom in your city!

Dennis



A Brief History of Serenity Group

We started Serenity Group recovery ministry at the Oroville Church of the Nazarene in the summer of 1992. Had I realized what God was going to do with it I might have written down the date. However, at the time I was just concerned with staying sober and doing so in the context of my faith.

I had been attending a small group using the Serenity format that was not affiliated with a church. The group fell apart after some leadership failings. I had really enjoyed the format and was learning much about Jesus in group. I was saved while reading my Serenity Bible. When the group was disbanded, some other folks in the group came to me and asked me to restart the group. I felt I could not do this due to the fact that I had only been Christian for a few months. After they continued asking me to try to restart the group, I went to Pastor Ed Redfern to see if we could start a Christian recovery group at the Oroville Church. I did not want to begin a group that was not under the authority of the church.

Looking back I kind of felt sorry for Ed because he must have been thinking “Are you even saved?” Rather than discouraging me, he suggested I talk to Kenn Mariano. Kenn had been sober for almost ten years at the time and had been a Christian since the time he got sober. I went to Kenn as suggested and asked him if he would be interested in starting a Christian recovery group using our Serenity Bible as the format. Kenn’s response was that he was way too busy since he was so involved in children’s ministries. At this point I handed him one of our Serenity Bibles and asked him if he would just read it before he gave me an answer. I wasn’t very optimistic about our chances but I hoped he would like the book.

The next Sunday at church I looked up and Kenn was coming at me with the Serenity Bible in his hand saying “This is awesome, we have to do this!” With that we set up a meeting with the others who had wanted to start the new group. We met on a Saturday and made arrangements to begin the next Saturday. To my surprise the only ones to show up were Kenn, his wife Abby and I. Undaunted, we proceeded with the meeting. This went on for some time. Each week the sign in sheet read, Kenn, Abby, Dale. Kenn always reminded me to keep the faith. To help me remember, he had me set up forty chairs each week because he said we had to have faith that God would fill them.

God’s plan does not always fit with our plans but He did have a plan. This first year was the time that I received the mentoring I would need to see

Serenity become what it is today. Kenn has been my sponsor since those early days.

Finally with everything in place the way God planned it, Serenity began to grow. The vision he gave us from those early days has been the key to our success. That vision was this: Serenity Group was to be the bridge from the recovery community to Jesus. With the original AA program coming directly from the bible this made a good fit. It made it easy to make the connection to our AA roots and show those new to recovery the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Of the many things we do, the roots remain the same, one alcoholic or addict helping another through the healing power of Jesus Christ.

This value has led us to fully, respect, and support AA, NA and any of the state licensed recovery facilities. Most of our folks attend AA or NA and we reach out to the recovery houses with services including rides, start up housing supplies, and bible studies at the recovery facilities. God has been so good to us healing us from this terrible affliction that we just want to tell others what He has done and show them how He can and will do it for them too. We just want to give away what was so freely given us, to anyone, anywhere, any time.

Dale Marsh
Recovery Pastor
Oroville Church of the Nazarene

Starting a Christ Centered Recovery Ministry

First things first

This AA slogan is important to remember when starting a recovery ministry. The saying came from Matthew 6:33, and has been used throughout AA from its beginnings. Once you seek God and you know you are led to create a recovery ministry, you are ready to get started.

We started with two leaders who were committed to Jesus Christ as their Higher Power and had a desire to participate for the long haul. With this and a dozen Serenity Bibles, you can begin. Consistency and commitment are critical. We almost never cancel our recovery meetings unless the entire church building will be in use for a special event. This means we are there on all holidays including Christmas, Thanksgiving or any other holidays. These times of the year can be very hard on people in recovery so we need to be there for them in the difficult times.

The Serenity Bible makes for an excellent Bible study and relates to our folks in recovery well as it has the 12 Steps with corresponding bible verses. We do our Serenity Bible study as a step study. Beginning at step one we work our way through the 12 Steps and the bible at the same time. The guide in the front of the book, Serenity: A 12 Step Companion will get you started. The 12 Step writings get people talking recovery. Reading the bible verses gets them talking about the Biblical application. It is such a joy watching folks in recovery beginning to understand the Bible for the first time. As they relate the steps to the corresponding verses, the Bible comes alive for them.

In the early days we offered only this group as we were small in numbers. It is important to not get discouraged when the group grows slowly. Once we got going, we were able to start offering special groups such as our men's, women's, anger management and other groups. As God fills the seats, you can diversify and expand into offering even more small groups. Besides our New Comers Group, we like the small groups to be up to about fifteen people, if possible. Our New Comers can run up to forty people, which works well with our method as it gives the New Comer a chance to get acquainted with us. It is easier for the New Comer to just watch, learn and get comfortable before they feel they have to share at a meeting. In the larger setting they can do this.

Mentoring leaders

One of my most important jobs as recovery pastor is staying in touch with our group leaders on a personal level. We do this for several reasons. Often a small group leader may have a question about how to handle a situation. They may have a personal problem they need to talk to the pastor about. It is also important for the pastor to spend time with them so we can see any difficulties our leader may have regarding their own sobriety. Since all of our small group leaders are in recovery too, we need to be sensitive to things that might lead up to a personal failure of some kind. We must walk side by side in our recovery with our small group leaders. Over the years when we did not do this as well as we should have, we had some huge disappointments.

Our small group leaders are really more like facilitators so their job is to keep the meeting moving and calling on people when things bog down a bit. They need the support of the pastor to advise them on theological and spiritual questions. They also just need and deserve a pat on the back for the important work they do.

Child Care / Kids Like Me

If you want your recovery ministry to get off to a good start, childcare will give you an advantage over many other recovery programs available in your area. Most AA and NA meetings I know of do not offer childcare. It can be very difficult for a mom in recovery to pay attention at the meeting with a fussing child. Here again, you must stick to it because in the beginning there may not be any children. Word will get out in the recovery community of your town and the mom's will begin to show up. If you give up and don't have the childcare one week, that will be the time a mom or dad with a child shows up. You don't want to miss your chance to come along side a mom or dad in recovery. At Serenity we are all about healing families. There are some very good children's programs that specifically reach out to families in recovery. We use Kids Like Me and have had good success. Even if you don't have a specific program, childcare will help you grow.

Freedom to find the programs that fit best with your Church

With our open affiliation you can choose the best program for your ministry. There are many excellent options available for small groups. With our recovery ministry I am free to search out the programs that best fit in our community and with our church model. If you need help finding options for your ministry we are glad to help in any way we can. We have done much research in this area and can offer suggestions at any time. For the programs we use, see our small group outlines in this booklet. One of our most

successful small groups was created by Pastor Ed Redfern on the biblical response to anger. I am sure Ed would be glad to provide the information he put together in creating this class. The point is you can create your own groups or use materials that help assimilate folks into the life of your church body.

Think Community

One of our strong values is our relationship with the recovery community of Oroville. We encourage our folks to participate in AA and NA. We have been successful in establishing our ministry as *not* in competition with other recovery options. We specifically make an effort to set our meeting times in consideration of schedules of other groups as much as possible. Our goal is to love recovery folks into the kingdom of God. A big win for Serenity is when someone comes up to me at an AA or NA meeting and asks me to tell them about my Higher Power. Our reputation in the Oroville recovery community (AA and NA groups) is one of “*the Christian meetings that respect us.*”

Love and Service

Dr Bob Smith, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, often said, “The whole program simmers down to this, Love and Service.” With this as your guide, you can now reach out to the recovery community in your area and give those in need of recovery a chance to serve in and become part of the family of God. We at Serenity Group and the Oroville Church of the Nazarene would be glad to help you get started in any way we can. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about our approach to Christ centered recovery.

Serenity Group Statement on Holiness

Step Six

(We) were entirely ready to have God remove
all these defects of character

1Peter1:13-16

13. Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

14. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

15. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

16. for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." NIV

In the first five steps of recovery, we engage in much looking back and digging, many times painfully, into our pasts. Step 6 is the turning point. Now it is time to prepare for action, to "gird up the loins of (our minds)". The word picture here is of a man in Bible times tucking his long, flowing robes into his wide belt to move them out of the way so he can better accomplish his work. Peter used this metaphor to show us that we must prepare to invite God's serious work in our minds. "Be sober" means "be self controlled." These two phrases, along with "rest your hope fully upon... Jesus Christ," help us to know the mind-set necessary to live the holy life commanded in verses 14-16.

Sometimes we think of holiness as a very pious, abnormal way of living. But being holy simply means having a fully integrated personality. God wants us to enjoy and delight as whole persons in the life He has given us. *Serenity: a companion for 12 step recovery pp333*

Our beginning point to teach those in recovery about a walk with God is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, teaching fellow brothers and sisters about the enabling and cleansing power of the Spirit in regards to our old nature. Once a person in recovery understands that Jesus is their Higher Power they are now in a spiritual posture to embrace the healing power of the Holy Spirit and therefore are able to walk more successfully as a follower of Jesus.

Serenity Group, Values and Traditions

**Mission Statement: Reaching the City of Oroville one addict at a time
Serenity Group is a Christ centered recovery group.**

We believe in Jesus Christ as our higher power.

Serenity is here for the believer that struggles with addiction of any kind.

It is our desire to extend the same grace and love to the unbeliever in addiction that Jesus Christ extended to us.

We believe AA, NA and all other recovery programs are under one God be it sponsored by a church or community outreach, we are on the journey to knowing our loving God even if we are not sure where we are headed.

We know that each person's journey may look different but that Jesus is calling us all to the same goal.

We understand that many who are new to recovery may have hard feelings toward the church, and religion generally.

We love the addict or alcoholic during the growth process, believing that God's love shown through us can overcome the addict's animosity toward the church and Christianity in general.

We trust God to lead individuals to the truth even when it appears that this may never happen.

Serenity is open to the gospel being preached everywhere in demonstration as well as with words or when words have no effect.

The members of Serenity actively participate in the "recovery community" of Oroville.

Serenity provides a safe place for 12 Step work with sponsors and in small groups.

We all agree that individual anonymity is the glue that holds us together and makes it safe for the honesty and openness required for complete healing from our addictive diseases.

Serenity Group Dinner / Birthday / Speaker Night

The last Wednesday of each month is a celebration of our recovery successes. The evening includes dinner served to, usually around, 250 people in the sanctuary. This is a great front porch event each month as many people who do not regularly attend come to have a meal and pick up a birthday chip. This gives our regulars a chance to fellowship and show the love of Jesus with folks who do not know Him as their Higher Power yet. It also helps the Oroville recovery community understand that the church loves them and wants them to know that they can fit into Gods kingdom.

Once dinner is served and folks are done eating we have a time of praise and worship. All of our small group leaders are part of the praise and worship team. This is not because we can sing. We do this to demonstrate to all in attendance the joy of praising God. Since many in attendance are not Christians, or very new Christians, and do not understand the reverence of praise and worship, we make this effort to demonstrate a posture of praise. Many of our folks do not attend church on Sundays but if you asked the name of their church they would say “The Naz.”

With praise and worship completed, we move on to the birthday chips. Birthday chips are coins that have the sobriety time inscribed on them. The chips say anything from thirty days up to thirty years or more. As each person comes up to get his or her chip, a roar comes up from the crowd, followed by hand shakes, pats on the back, and hugs. This is a real time of celebration for us and everyone looks forward to it each month.

With the birthdays done, we move on to our guest speaker. We normally select a guest speaker with at least ten years of sobriety. Often we get someone who has had a substantial impact on the recovery community of Oroville. We are also able to get guest speakers from out of town with some kind of special contribution to the Christian recovery movement. At least once a year we have one of our pastors as the guest speaker. This again helps folks to understand that the Oroville Church of the Nazarene wants them to be a part of us.

We have several special events for our dinner night each year. We started off with our annual Barbeque at the park because of space issues during Vacation Bible School at our church. This has grown to be our biggest special event of the year with 500 in attendance last June. There is also a large Thanksgiving dinner which everyone looks forward to each

season. We try to have at least one concert every year with such performers as Doug Hallock, Kenny Munds, and others.

Monthly dinner night is all about making those new to recovery feel like they can be “part of” what God is doing in Oroville. We show them the love of Jesus, the love He showed us when we did not understand what it meant to be a Christian.

General Meeting Procedures

The following pages describe the normal flow of our opening and move to the small groups we have at the present time. The small groups are where people can connect with each other and Jesus on a more personal level. We meet Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm. On Dinner nights (last Wednesday of the month) we start at 6:00pm. We now use the entire facility on Wednesdays, so our intent is to add an additional evening as we expand into new groups such as Pure Desire. We do the Clarence Snyder step study and other special groups on Monday evening at this time.

Opening Devotional

The opening session of Serenity brings the entire group together for about thirty minutes prior to breaking into small groups. This time is started with the Serenity Prayer, followed by the reading of the list of addictive agents, the 12 Steps of AA and the AA promises. As a front porch session we make this feel similar to other recovery groups that people are used to attending. Our distinction is as a Christian recovery group, so we do not sacrifice that value. After the readings we take announcements from the recovery community of Oroville. We make a point of giving announcements from AA, NA and other Christian recovery groups in the area.

Announcements are always followed by a chip check. This is where we call for everyone in the room to hold up of their latest recovery birthday coin. We stress that folks carry the coin with them at all times. This gives them many opportunities to share Jesus and Serenity Group in other settings.

Once the opening rituals are completed we have a devotional time. This devotional is at the discretion of Dale Marsh or Ken Mariano depending who is leading at the time. The devotional duties are traded every six months. The devotionals are always recovery related often using the AA

Big Book with a Biblical comparison. We also rely on historical information to demonstrate the biblical origins of the 12 Steps and the AA program. Our desire is to connect the dots between 12 Step recovery and Jesus. Our vision was from the beginning, and still is, to be a bridge between recovery in the community of Oroville and Jesus Christ.

Once the devotional time is completed we take ten to fifteen minutes to share praise testimonies from the floor. The praise time has evolved to become an extremely important part of what we do. Often times at the small group level very distressing and difficult circumstances are shared. This praise time gives our folks the chance to see that many good things await them in their recovery. We often allow the praise time to run a bit longer if the spirit leads. We try to follow God's lead to work in unique ways if this is what He wants to do on a given evening. After praises we break for small groups.

New Comers Group (also known as Big Group)

New Comers Group is an entry-level group that is designed for someone who is new to recovery, and anyone who needs to start on the basics of 12 Step recovery.

Our study is in a small group setting (ten to forty people) so that participants feel they may share at a more intimate level. The 12 Step Study of Alcoholics Anonymous is our format, but we use the Serenity Bible as the material for the study. Each session starts out with a short introduction and the Serenity Prayer. We read the introduction to the study of the step that we are working that week. As we go, we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in sensitivity to the needs at the time.

Time is allowed for much discussion so we will be on any given step for several weeks at a time. More time is spent on the first four steps so as to help the new comer to become acquainted with the road to recovery.

Although we are a Christ centered recovery group, a new comer is not required to be a Christian in order to participate in the group. The 12 Steps work for anyone who desires to get and maintain sobriety. The spiritual side of the program may take some time to develop. We are patient and loving to each new person to recovery. Our desire is that each person will come to know the freedom of sobriety from addictive substances also, to come to a personal relationship with our Savior.

Group Facilitator: Pete Garcia
Co-Facilitators: Dale Marsh & Kenn Mariano

Anger & Attitudes Group

Understanding Anger

This class is designed to help anyone recognize and identify the emotional reactions of anger in themselves and in others. The study deals with subjects like, “What is anger? What causes it? The different levels of anger, and the effect anger has on our health and relationships. We also deal with four questions that God asks in his desire to bring us to health:

- Where are you (Genesis 3:9)?
- Why are you angry (Genesis 4:6)?
- Do you have a right to be angry (Jonah 4:4)?
- Do you want to get well (John 5:6)?

Heart Attitudes

This class is designed to examine the way we think and the positive or negative effects of our attitudes. The model of the study is Jesus and there are six attitudes that are examined:

- humility
- brokenness
- forgiveness
- submission
- trust
- gentleness

The fruit of developing these attitudes will be enjoying the journey through life rather than reacting to the stressful obstacles everyone faces.

Group Facilitator: Pastor Ed Redfern

Men's Group

The Men's Group is a gender specific group dealing with topics of a more intimate nature than should be discussed in a mixed group. These topics are of

- marriage
- sexual purity
- sexual addiction
- the responsibility of a husband to his wife
- letting go and letting God
- loving God and others

This group uses the 12 Step format of Alcoholics Anonymous but with material from the Serenity Bible and New Believers Bible. For the more intimate discussions we use, What's on your Mind by Merlin R. Carothers, and also Seductions by Gary L. Greenwald. It is the purpose of this group to bring men to a place where they can make decisions for Christ.

Group Facilitator: Bill Kevil

Co-Facilitator: Randy Ross

Women's Group

The Women's Group is a gender specific group. The topics of discussion are of an intimate nature. It is a safe place to lay out your most intimate thoughts and feelings without the fear of repercussion. Topics dealt with are:

- self worth
- abstinence
- patience
- kindness
- love
- how to be loved
- how to deal with life God's way
- dealing with past hurts that interfere with present day life
- dealing with relationships
- finding work and going to meetings
- the tearing down of strongholds
- the building up of the spirit

- declaring spiritual warfare on the enemy of the soul

Materials used for discussion are Battlefield of the Mind By Joyce Meyer, The Serenity Bible, The Bondage Breaker By Neil T. Anderson and Scripture Reference By John G. Kruis.

Group Facilitator: Lisa Sorrell
Co-Facilitator: Abbie Mariano

Seren-Anon

Seren-Anon is a small group designed and designated for the Co-Dependant (family members of alcoholics or addicts). Our study is taken from Paths to Recovery (Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and concepts); and Codependent No More (How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself); And the Serenity Bible for scriptures that relate to our step work.

We run the group in the same manner as AA or NA, utilizing the 12 steps just as Al-Anon has done for many years. What makes Seren-Anon different than an average Al-Anon group is we infuse our studies with scriptures and accept Christ as our higher power.

Each session starts with a topic or step. As the session progresses we have an open discussion on the topic or step and how it relates in our lives. Each step and topic takes more than one session to complete, as the step work for the Co-Dependent can seem confusing at first and they also, understandably, need time to come to grips with some of the issues.

The goal of the group is to help the family members of alcoholics and or addicts recognize the pattern of destructive loving that they have learned while they are in their individual situations. Also to help them realize they are not alone. God is faithful and will help them realize how their self-will is destructive. He will reveal His will to us and as we learn to rely on Him to show us how to love unconditionally.

Our desire is for families (not just the alcoholic or addict) to heal and have serenity from sin and mind altering drugs.

Group Facilitator: Valori Marsh

Couples Group

Couples in recovery, is a group meeting designed to help couples restore or recapture their relationship from the hurts caused by addiction. An important but frightening part of recovery is the work of healing our most intimate relationships. Often the relationship most bruised and damaged by the addictive process is the one we most cherish. Standing firmly to face the hurts, tears, fears, and anger created within this most important relationship takes willingness and courage. The process may be difficult, but we must persevere in order to heal.

The Couples Group, though designed for couples recovering from addiction, may also be helpful to other couples working to deepen, renew, or repair their intimate relationship. Part of any relationship is a regular reexamining and recommitting to the relationship. Couples without addiction issues but with other concerns have used the process and information to better understand and deepen their commitment and love for each other.

Curriculum:

Reclaim your Family from Addiction Workbook, Craig Nakken

Serenity Bible

The Power of Prayer for Couples, Stormie Omartian

Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling, third edition, John G. Craig

Group Facilitators: Albert & Patricia Lanegan

Kids Like Me



Kids Like Me is a Christian support group for children whose parents suffer from addiction and other recovery issues. It is held Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00pm for all children up to 6th grade. Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. It is located in the Children's Sunday school rooms 110-114.

Why a support group for children?

Because times have changed. The emotional needs of children growing up in America today are greater than ever before. Growing up with divorce, stepparents, and stepsiblings, drugs and alcohol, gangs, community violence, absent parents and more is taking its toll.

Goals:

- To teach the skills necessary to understand, talk about, and cope with their life circumstances in healthy and positive ways.
- Encourage children to talk about their experiences in a loving, safe environment.
- Build self-esteem and a sense of trust through relationships with caring adults.
- Influence homes by teaching parents the same skills being taught to their children.
- Guide children and parents into a relationship with God and teach them to value prayer and Scripture as resources.

Facilitators:

Pastor Shane Heldman
Bob Trank

Sharon DeHoff
Becky Spafford