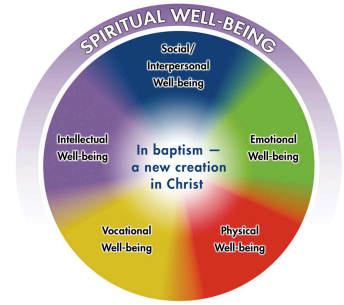


## Heart of Gold

### From the Bethany Lutheran Church Health and Wellness Cabinet



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*“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” – (Ephesians 3:16-17)*

It’s an obvious connection, of course. February, Valentine’s Day, a discussion of the heart. But in my defense, it wasn’t just my idea. The American Heart Association designates February to be American Heart Month. Despite our advances in technology and knowledge of health and wellness, heart disease is still the number one killer in this country. Since we are stewards of these bodies and this important organ, given to us by God, we have a duty to know something about its operation and maintenance in order to be good stewards.

There are many sources of information about lifestyle choices that promote heart health, including those dealing with diet (check the Mayo Clinic website for advice on a hearth healthy diet). And there is an abundance of information available from our health care providers about exercise and heart health. Even Nintendo has partnered with the American Heart Association to promote increased activity levels in children and adults (see <http://www.activeplaynow.com/> for more information).

Another important thing to do is to familiarize yourself with the signs that indicate that someone may be having a heart attack or stroke. (See the box on this page) Even if you do not think you will suffer a heart attach anytime soon, knowing the signs in others and acting earlier in the process can help save a life. So, following our ideas of the wholeness of body, mind and spirit, what can we discern about our hearts’ role in Christian living?

The heart is not only central to life; it is central to our language about ourselves and our relationship to God. Did you know that there are about 884 references to “heart” in the King James version of the Bible? The American Standard version tops that with 896 occurrences. Jewish orthodoxy tells us that God gave 316 laws to the tribes wandering in the desert. In the scriptures the story is told of one of the Pharisees, a lawyer, asking Christ what the greatest of all these laws was. He responded, “You shall love the lord with all your heart ...” (Matthew 22:37)

This passage captures the idea that one must love God with total passion, not just intellect, and identifies your heart as the seat of that passion. So, the heart is also central to our relationship to the Spirit as well as sustenance for our body. Our heart is very much part of our connection to the sacred, so taking care of it does more than just let us live longer. You might even say that the Golden Rule applies: treat your heart the way you would like your heart to treat you. – JL

### **Heart Attack Warning Signs**

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense -- the "movie heart attack," where no one doubts what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often the people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening.

- **Chest Discomfort** - Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in Other Areas of the Upper Body** - Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of Breath** - This feeling often comes along with chest discomfort. But it can occur before the chest discomfort.
- **Other Signs** - These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
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### **Stroke Warning Signs:**

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

*Source – American Heart Association*