

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

"... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
– Matthew 22:37-39

Social Ministry

In the midst of the increased needs many people face in this current financial downturn, a discussion about the church's obligation for health as part of its social ministry seems particularly appropriate. Social ministries arise from congregations that realize there is a need to care not only for themselves and their families, but also to care for their community. In a very real sense, this was Christ's health ministry, to extend the healing love and care of God to those around him who were suffering, far beyond his own circle of friends and family.

The Lutheran church has a long tradition of responding through God's love to community health needs. Organizations within our church and in our local community are part of the social ministry of the church. Church-sponsored hospitals and efforts that extend care far beyond the borders of our country such as Lutheran World Relief have existed for many decades, and continue to be a strong healing force in the world. And I would include our initiatives that are designed to alleviate hunger, loneliness and homelessness as being very direct expressions of our concern for other's health and well-being.

As part of our total ministry, social ministry continues to increase our ability to care broadly and boldly. As *"Caring for Health, Our Shared Endeavor"* says, "Lutheran social ministry organizations provide ... services help to treat acute and chronic illnesses of body and mind, provide care for the whole person in need, and strengthen and empower individuals and families to care for themselves, for one another, and for their communities. Supporting and developing these institutions and vocations are the work of our whole church." - JL

What does the Health and Wellness Cabinet hope to do for the people of Bethany?

I am writing this article after watching my nine-year-old son have his feet washed by Pastor Ron on Maundy Thursday. I remember feeling a bit uneasy about having our pastor wash the feet of my son, who usually has very dirty feet with a very pungent smell. EEWWW... how unhealthy! Luckily, I did have my son shower right before church and he was wearing new shoes!! It took me a moment to realize that it was not my son's feet that I needed to focus on but the act of Pastor Ron lovingly washing the feet of my son just as Jesus so lovingly washed the feet of his disciples so long ago. That is a perfect picture of health and wellness surrounded by the Holy Spirit!

As a wife and mother of four children, health and wellness has always been a concern of mine. I not only have to worry about my own health and wellness but also feel responsible for my family. I want my family to be 'healthy' while keeping both their minds and bodies "well." I want to feed them healthy food (although junk food on occasion is always yummy), make sure they get plenty of exercise and sleep and see a doctor for annual checkups. In addition, I encourage them to feed their spirit with faith

and love from God. It is important to realize that what we take into our bodies both physically and spiritually impacts our entire well-being. Not feeding our bodies with proper food and exercise is just as harmful as not feeding our mind and bodies with the Holy Spirit! Keeping Jesus as the center of our core and body is the most important way to stay healthy as Christians even with stinky feet!

Because I have dealt with some very difficult times in my life, I have struggled with my health in both mental and physical forms. Several years ago, after a tragic death in my family, I struggled with my faith and was definitely not well. It was a very unhappy time. Today, I feel it is important for me to help others going through similar struggles. As a member of the Health and Wellness Cabinet, I feel I can offer my experiences to the Congregation of Bethany and help form a church body that centers on Christ as well as the people it serves. We are all one body in Christ, and we have a duty as Christians to help one another be well and healthy in body, mind and spirit. I am a willing servant of Christ, thus a willing servant of the Health and Wellness Cabinet! It is an amazing group of people and I feel honored to be a part of the journey helping us all achieve great health and wellness with Jesus as our focus! – Tiffany Haynes

If you have ideas to share with us or are interested in the work of the Health and Wellness Cabinet, please contact Anne Gatzke: littlezookie@yahoo.com.