

champs

Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs & Services

DEVELOPING A WELLNESS COMMITTEE



These resources have been developed by the Champs program.
They may be used or adapted for use in the context of the local church.
Acknowledgement of the Center for Healthy Aging, Ministries,
Programs & Services is requested.

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*Champs is funded by a grant from
the Alegent Health Community Benefit Trust*

Development of a Wellness Committee In Support of Healthy Aging

The Need for the Wellness Committee

The church is the ideal place to support people who are in need or have an interest in pursuing healthy living choices. Involvement in church programs is guided by the trust people put in their church for safe and reliable information. The Wellness Committee is charged with honoring that trust and can become a focal point for a senior ministry. So whether it is called a senior ministry, health committee, health cabinet, wellness team or some other title, is probably secondary to the goal of healthy aging. Poor health is no respecter of people.

Champs goal is to encourage healthy aging among seniors in congregations. What we realize is that healthy aging is a process which begins at birth and needs to involve people across their lifespan and connect one generation to another. Grandparents need to tell and show their grandkids what healthy choices are. Spouses need to support each other in health and illness; children need to support parents in life transitions and so it goes with each connected to the other.

Most congregations tell us they have no organized wellness committee and their ministry is the occasional activity. It is not that churches have not thought about the responsibility to foster health and wellness in the congregation and community but it requires a group that is motivated to build a program where we “minister one to the other” in all aspects of life.

- This is a ministry issue within the church and community served
Caring for the whole person is within the reach of the church
- Some churches have care and compassion ministries, but rarely include actual health promotion, prevention and wellness within their scope of function that are focused on the most common preventable controllable issues
There is a positive impact of health on spiritual life
- Members and persons within the community at large do not know how to access community health resources effectively and efficiently
The church can be a vital part of healthy living
- Half of all deaths nationally are linked to diet, lack of physical activity smoking, alcohol and other behavior choices
Education and support are ongoing issues to manage health

The Goal of a Wellness Committee

The concept of a wellness committee is one in which members of congregations honestly examine the health needs within the congregation and the community at large and take responsibility for encouraging the active pursuit of health in body, mind and spirit. Knowing that healthy aging applies to everyone it is purposeful to have a program that serves all age groups but has a focus on older adults. The support and education across generations and families lends support in ones efforts toward wellness.

The opportunity for the church to promote wellness within the congregation and the community is to take seriously the biblical charge of building one another up and caring for our neighbors. There are inseparable concepts within the scripture of caring for the gifts we have been given and sharing the impact of those gifts with others. (The Theology of Aging is an attached document that offers thoughts on the connection of faith and healthy aging.)

Wellness is a shaped by the choices one makes everyday. The greatest threat to health might be lack of exercise, smoking and diabetes, not wearing your seat belt, or falling in your home. It varies for each individual. But what we know is:

Wellness is more than the absence of disease.

Steps to Consider

Before You Begin

- The support of pastoral staff is critical to the success of the Wellness Committee
Approach the pastor and other church leaders to share ways a health ministry could positively impact the lives of the congregation and community
- Actively seek the support of other formal and informal leadership for the establishment and participation in a health ministry within the church
Draw members with different backgrounds with a mix of interested parties, medical background and the highly motivated
- Review the types of health ministry that currently exist within the congregational structure
Review the activities that currently occur

- Once need for a health ministry is established
Develop a mission statement, goals and objectives;
Identify the theological and philosophical basis for the ministry;
Create a timeline for development and implementation of the committee.
- Establish the number of persons, lay and professional who will serve on the health committee and the length of time they are committing to service
Select persons and /or request persons to voluntarily serve on a health committee from the congregation who are capable of leading others and actively involving congregants and community partners to achieve positive outcomes related to healthy aging issues;
A limit of time to serve on the committee and clear functions help members maintain their purpose.
- Have the leadership within the congregation establish where in their organizational chart/structure a health ministry would be most effective
A reporting system helps maintain good communication
- Identify budgetary implications of adding the ministry
Costs involved need to be defined and understood

As You Progress

- Actively seek input from the committee members of issues they are aware of within the congregation that need to be addressed
Look for a starting point of service
- Establish a survey instrument to ascertain health ministry needs within the congregation
Ask the congregation what their concerns and needs are
- Have health committee members schedule meeting times to discuss congregant needs
Determine a meeting schedule for the Committee
- Create interest in the congregation through the church bulletin, newsletters and other forms of written materials that are disseminated within the congregation
Communication in all forms is very important to promote success of your vision

Think Outside the Box

- Examine the feasibility of adopting a parish nurse model within the congregation
Some churches share a Parish Nurse function through a paid position or volunteers

- Decide if the health ministry is to be operated with volunteers and how the ministry will be supervised
The ministry position in the organizational chart may define this
- Delegate members of the health committee who will seek input from other churches and community resources for programs that already exist to meet needs
Each member of the committee should define what they do best and how their skills can best be used to serve on the committee
- Prioritize needs and evaluate these against resources available
There are many choices that can be made which should be weighed against the mission statement for current relevance
- Changing behavior is not easy
Even with a wealth of information changing behavior is not always easy; Recognize that although health depends in part on individual behavior, it is also to a significant degree beyond individual control due to genetics, physical and social environments, individual behaviors and access to care

Lack of hope is found to be a common element in illness where no cause is found. Let your ministry of wellness support and draw people to your faith community giving hope to those in need.

Attached Forms

Survey Form Example

Vision Statements

Before You Begin

Theology of Aging

NEEDS & INTEREST SURVEY



(402)-895-2224

www.crossandheart.org/champs

Congregation Name _____ Denomination _____

Address _____

Age of Person Completing Survey (*check one*)

- 18 to 29 years old
- 30 to 39 years old
- 40 to 50 years old
- 51 to 60 years old
- 61 to 70 years old
- 71 to 80 years old
- 81+ years old

Marital Status (*check one*)

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widow
- Widower
- One parent household

Gender: Male Female

Do you consider yourself primarily: (*check one*)

- African American
- Caucasian
- Native American
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other _____

Describe a ministry you have seen a need for in your congregation. _____

What obstacles prevent you from participating in ministry or church activities? _____

NEEDS & INTEREST SURVEY

Please indicate how likely you would be to participate in each Of the following programs if they were offered through the church during the next year. Where there is more than one program listed, please circle those that apply.

1. Wellness	Unlikely	Likely	Extremely Likely
Cancer / Prevention	1	2	3
Heart Disease / Hypertension / Prevention	1	2	3
Stroke / Prevention	1	2	3
Cholesterol Reduction	1	2	3
Home & Community Safety	1	2	3
Home Healthcare	1	2	3
Substance Abuse / Addiction Information	1	2	3
Elder Abuse—Physical / Financial	1	2	3
Alzheimer's	1	2	3
Diet & Nutrition	1	2	3
Healthy Cooking / Healthy Snacks	1	2	3
Re-employment Assistance	1	2	3
CPR/First Aid	1	2	3
Death & Dying / Grief & Loss / Hospice	1	2	3
Foot Care	1	2	3
Tax Assistance	1	2	3
Drivers' Safety	1	2	3
Dance Classes	1	2	3
Language Classes	1	2	3
Organ Donation	1	2	3
Planning for Retirement	1	2	3
Insomnia / Snoring / Sleep Apnea	1	2	3
Pet Therapy	1	2	3
Joint Disorders / Arthritis	1	2	3
Back Pain	1	2	3
Sexuality and Aging / Intimacy	1	2	3
Dental Health / Vision Disorders / Hearing Loss	1	2	3
Diabetes	1	2	3
Sexually Transmitted Disease	1	2	3
Resources on Aging Issues (books, videos, DVDs)	1	2	3
Women's Health Issues:			
Breast Cancer	1	2	3
Estrogen Replacement	1	2	3
Menopause	1	2	3
Osteoporosis	1	2	3
Men's Health Issues:			
Prostate	1	2	3
Male Menopause	1	2	3

NEEDS & INTEREST SURVEY *(cont'd)*

2. Managing Health

	Unlikely	Likely	Extremely Likely
Health Fair	1	2	3
Flu Shot Clinic	1	2	3
Exercise (low-impact, walking, strength & balance)	1	2	3
Medication Review	1	2	3
Smoking Cessation	1	2	3
Weight Reduction	1	2	3
Preparing for a Doctor Visit	1	2	3
Communicating Effectively with Doctor	1	2	3
Mental Health Issues	1	2	3
Insurance—Medicaid B & D, Medicaid, Supplemental	1	2	3
Long Term / Home Health Insurance	1	2	3
Medical Billing Issues	1	2	3
Fellowship Groups: Hobby / Craft / Book Clubs	1	2	3
Telephone Contact Ministry	1	2	3
Support Groups			
Alzheimers	1	2	3
Grief	1	2	3
Cancer	1	2	3
Living with Chronic Illness	1	2	3
Families of Persons with Mental Illness	1	2	3
Alcohol & Addiction	1	2	3
Disability	1	2	3
Anger / Conflict Management	1	2	3
Stress Reduction	1	2	3
Grandparenting	1	2	3
Parenting Your Parents	1	2	3
Caregiver	1	2	3

3. Life Transitions

Guardianship / Power of Attorney / Conservatorship	1	2	3
Spiritual Life Review	1	2	3
Retirement Issues			
Financial, Emotional & Relational	1	2	3
Housing			
Downsizing	1	2	3
Selecting a living facility	1	2	3
Widow or Widowhood	1	2	3
Loneliness / Isolation	1	2	3
Spiritual Growth	1	2	3
Volunteering	1	2	3
Respite Care	1	2	3
Divorce	1	2	3

	Unlikely	Likely	Extremely Likely
A. Mornings	1	2	3
B. Afternoons	1	2	3
C. Evenings	1	2	3

ANY OTHER INTEREST OR SUGGESTION (PLEASE SPECIFY) List any suggestions on programming you would like to see implemented. Your input is an IMPORTANT element to the success of our program.

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CHAMPS - Before You Begin

CHAMPS is the Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs, and Services. It was initially launched as a ministry of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska with the plan that similar programs would be launched in other congregations with our support and help. As we developed our programs we learned several lessons that we think other may benefit from. To that end, we have developed **Before You Begin** as a resource for leaders.

Our Vision

Our vision for CHAMPS is that Christian congregations will develop health and wellness programs for all church members, with a focus on older adults.

Our vision for **Before You Begin** is to inform and equip leaders starting a program similar to CHAMPS in their own congregation.

CHAMPS will provide material and support that will help leaders understand sources of resistance in the local congregation so they can develop viable wellness programs for their members and their community.

Current Reality

Needs exist for education, guidance and coaching for healthy living with regard to the physical, emotional and spiritual health of people in the church and community.

Barriers exist in the church. Wellness and physical health are integrally related to spirituality, but many people maintain a silo mentality. We are learning ways to help people make needed connections and overcome resistance.

Barriers exist in the home. We tend to identify people as unhealthy and treat them as individuals. We fail to recognize that people exist in family systems or networks of relationships. We are learning that wellness includes environmental factors and requires system wide solutions.

Barriers exist in our attitudes. While CHAMPS is about healthy aging, we are learning that healthy aging needs to start young and work through all of life to enhance health.

Resources exist for overcoming resistance to change in the church. God has provided his Word. In the Bible there is a strong foundation for healthy aging. God has provided the church itself. The church is a network of people. Wellness requires real life change. Change occurs best in the context of a highly relational environment. We are learning that trust levels increase and resistance decreases as closer connections are developed. The church also has a staff and leaders that yearn for wellness in themselves and others.

Resources exist outside the church. There is an amazing array of resources available through the Alegent Health System, including the Faith Community Nursing Network. There are resources available through local universities and partnership with community agencies.

Action Steps

TEAM FOUNDATION - Provide a framework for gathering a team to develop a CHAMPS ministry for healthy aging in their own congregation.

THEOLOGY OF HEALTH - Provide the team a biblical foundation for spirituality, wellness, aging, and health. Assist leaders in making connections between health and faith. CHAMPS will make these connections by developing bible study and devotional materials for personal reflection, along with sermons and group study materials for corporate reflection. These will be web-based tools, with parallel DVD and hard copy resources, to equip congregational leaders Before They Begin.

FAMILY SYSTEMS - Provide a sense of the family system and its inherent dynamics. Educate leaders and congregations on behavioral and systems change.

LEADER INTEGRITY - Educate church leaders and influence them to adopt healthy habits for their benefit and as an example to the congregants.

CHANGE DYNAMICS - Prepare leaders regarding the change process and the realities of the time line associated with system changes and the behavioral responses as related to health. Identify a change readiness assessment tool so people can assess their own internal resources and survey their system for support of change.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT- Provide tools for assessing church demographics and the interest level of congregants.

CHAMPS – A Theology of Aging

CHAMPS is the Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs, and Services. It was initially launched as a ministry of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska with the plan that similar programs would be launched in other congregations with our support and help. As we developed our programs we learned several lessons that we think other may benefit from. To that end, we have developed **A Theology of Aging** as a resource for leaders.

Our Vision

Our vision for CHAMPS is that Christian congregations will develop health and wellness programs for all church members, with a focus on older adults.

Our vision for **A Theology of Aging** is to provide practical tools that will help leaders make connections between their biblical faith and various issues related to physical health and aging.

As pastors and leaders launch a program similar to CHAMPS in their own congregation, they will be aided by knowing the biblical foundations for such a ministry. CHAMPS will provide material and support that will help leaders establish a theology of aging in their local context and communicate biblical truths regarding wellness to their members and their community.

Current Reality

The Need exists for church leaders and members to have a strong theological foundation for their congregation's wellness ministry.

Barriers exist in the church. Wellness and physical health are integrally related to spirituality, but many people maintain a silo mentality. They see the Bible speaking to spiritual matters, but somehow not addressing matters related to wellness and health. Someone goes to their pastor for spiritual matters and their doctor for health related matters.

Barriers exist in our attitudes. While CHAMPS is about healthy aging, people have little understanding of all the Bible has to say about aging and wellness. Many people have never heard a sermon on aging or barely a reference to wellness beyond a quick example that God wants us to take care of ourselves.

Resources exist in the Bible that provide a strong foundation for healthy aging and physical wellness. People are open to hearing what God says. As we help people make connections between faith and health, they will understand the riches resources that the faith brings to physical wellness and healthy aging.

Resources exist for translating a theology of aging so people can grasp Biblical truths and integrate them into attitudes and daily lifestyles.

Biblical Foundations

Aging is normal – Healthy aging is a natural part of God's plan and He promises to stay with us throughout the journey to the very end. (Isaiah 46:4)

Respect those who are aging – We are called to honor our parents and all persons who are aging (Leviticus 19:32)

Source of **wisdom** – Because of their extensive life experience, the aging are rich reservoirs of wisdom and understanding for the rest of us. (Deuteronomy 32:7)

Gifted to serve – Aging persons are gifted to serve and the Bible has no concept of retiring. Aging persons are of great value to God and the church. (Psalm 92:14)

Change is inevitable – As we age, our bodies experience physiological changes that change how we see the world and how the world see us. (2 Samuel 19:35)

Growth in **righteousness** – God equips the aging to be continuing examples of right living for all of us (Proverbs 16:31)

Caring for those in need – Loved ones have a responsibility to care for the needs of dependent aging persons (1 Timothy 5:4)

Legacy to our **children** – Aging persons are God's plan enabling us to leave a legacy as we teach our children. (Titus 2:3)

This is the outline and biblical foundation for a sermon that was preached at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Omaha, Nebraska by Pastor Lou Forney at the dedication of the new Legacy Windows on 3/4 June 2006. It focuses on responsibilities related to aging.

(Proverbs 16:31) Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life.

1. PARENTS: TEACH THE FAITH TO YOUR CHILDREN.

(Deuteronomy 4:1,6,9) Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you . . . Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations . . . Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

(Psalms 78:5-7) He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

2.) CHILDREN: HONOR YOUR PARENTS.

(Deuteronomy 5:16) Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

(Colossians 3:20) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

3.) EVERYONE: SHOW RESPECT TO THE AGING.

(Leviticus 19:32) Rise in the presence of the aged and show respect for the elderly.