

MY SPIRITUAL CALLING:
A JOURNEY OF ENCOURAGING HEALTH AND WHOLENESS

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The journey of health and wellness is one that I have travelled for many decades and even with the difficult task of enlisting others to join me on the journey, it is a journey that I would not halt. Many lives are cut short and those that are not are lived with unnecessary pain and suffering due to a lack of knowledge and encouragement to seek the best possible health.

The issue of poor health is chronic for minority and low-income communities. The societal issues behind these circumstances are complex and difficult. This matter does not negate the fact that solutions are to be sought. There are too many smart and bright children who need the opportunity to grow up to become all that God intends.

One strategy is to call on the church and the pastors. As pastors learn to take the time to care for their own health, they can become the example that their congregations and communities need to see to start an epidemic of improved health. Pastors have a heart for people, pastors know that they have been called to elicit positive change, but most of all pastors know how to invite God into the midst of difficult circumstances and trust that God will show up to make the difference.

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ABSTRACT

Knowing and living up to the purpose that God has for each of us is a journey that must be acknowledged and worked toward. Quite often, God puts us on the journey even before we are aware and uses circumstances and people to point us to what that journey should be. Living in to our purpose provides true fulfillment in life.

God began to reveal God's will for my life to promote health with a simple three-word prophecy to, "Keep on Running". It was through and while running that God revealed the importance for me to strive to remain fit and healthy and to encourage others of the importance to do the same.

It did not take long for the reality of the difficulty of the task to become clear. Encouraging and making changes to improved health, even for Christians is a daunting task. The ills of a society that is and has been for generations geared toward causing sickness, especially for people of color, are hard to counteract. Poor health and illness is big business.

Even with this realization, I hold on to the words of Jesus in Matthew 16: 18, "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". I believe in the power of the church and the power of the pastors placed in those churches. If pastors can be encouraged, the pews can be encouraged. My Doctor of Ministry project allowed six local pastors to take time out of their busy schedules, a day and a half, to focus on their own individual health. They were assessed in areas to include physical, nutritional, emotional and spiritual health. They received individual recommendations of steps to take to improve their health in order be even more effective in their churches and communities. As pastors catch on to the need for intentional care of their health, they will share with others who will also become intentional of encouraging care for themselves, their families, friends, and communities. God will be glorified in the midst of it all!

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CHAPTER 1: THE START OF THE JOURNEY

Quite often, God reveals the direction for our life in a gradual way with our having little to no understanding at the beginning of the process. Fortunately, if we pay attention to the ups and downs, the curves and straight paths, and the mountains and valleys, we can receive continued understanding and grow during the process of receiving revelation from God. My belief is that God desires that each of us comes to an acceptance and understanding of God's importance in providing us life and of God's willingness to guide us through our lives, if we would but allow.

As I consider where I am now in my life, especially spiritually, my desire is always to seek to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ. My journey to this point has brought me to a place of agreement with a quotation by Rev. William Watley in his book, *“God Wants You to Grow!”* He states that “God has a vision for each of our lives that is greater than any vision that either we or others could possibly have for ourselves. Our responsibility, calling, and mission is to grow to the vision that God has for each of us so that our lives can glorify God in ways that we never envisioned”.¹ Even with my very humble beginnings, I truly believe these words.

My life journey began when I was born to a single mom on welfare raising four children in a small town in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania. For the most part, it was a normal upbringing for a poor, single, African-American mother who never worked and considered that her primary purpose in life was to raise her children. Even as a small child, I sensed God's involvement in my life. This perception of God's intervention falls in line with words stated by Rick Warren early in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren attests that “Long before you

¹ William D. Watley., *God Wants You to Grow!: How to Live Beyond Your Limitations* (Judson Press 2003) xi.

were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God.”² The seed of the understanding of this formulation by God of a purpose and plan for my life would be planted early in my life and continues to bloom as God provides me with life each new day. My process of spiritual growth has also allowed me to accept that Warren is right when he attests that the beginning point is God. He states, “If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.”³ I also accept and try to remind myself often of words stated by Pastor Warren that “You were made by God and for God — and until you understand that, life will never make sense.”⁴

Our making sense of life’s journey is indeed a gradual process that should come as we grow physically but happens, more importantly, as we grow spiritually. As God intervenes in our lives, we do not understand what God is doing while life events are happening, especially if those events are difficult, sorrowful, or painful. But if we learn to trust and have faith in God, we will be able to look back and acknowledge that the words of the Bible, attributed to the apostle Paul, are true: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”⁵

As I share my journey of faith, which is a journey to promote health and wholeness, it will be in the context of my life story. My initial acceptance of this passion occurred with my expectation to see transformation in others, as I provided the education and the encouragement needed for improved health. At this stage of my life, I now concur with how Hester and Walker-Jones viewed their project in the book, “*Know Your Story and Lead with It*”. Their work, a six-year Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project, allowed them to experience and lead groups of

² Rick Warren., *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan, 2002) 19.

³ Ibid., 17.

⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵ *The Holy Bible* (Nelson Bibles) Romans 8:28

clergy.⁶ As decades have passed since I first accepted the assignment given to me by God, to promote and encourage health, I, like Hester and Walker-Jones, have come “to understand it as a pilgrimage where the focus is more on the journey than on the destination.”⁷ I have come to realize that just like our spiritual journey, our journey toward improved health is ongoing and will not end until Jesus calls our name. Along with this realization is my acceptance that living up to the calling of encouraging improved health is a journey based on hearing from God and working to be obedient to what I hear. I also want to explore the advice of Hester and Walker-Jones to become better acquainted with my inner story.⁸ One suggested strategy to accomplish this goal is to consider one’s earliest childhood memory. I admit that providing narrative of my life is usually difficult for me, not necessarily because of those early events, but because I have a hard time with remembering. When I get together with my siblings, my two older brothers and my younger sister, I am surprised at the people and events whom my sister remembers quite vividly and whom I have a hard time recalling. The contention by Hester and Walker-Jones that our stories come into view when a change occurs— something unwanted or something unplanned—resonates well with me.⁹ I realize that memories that are clear to me normally center upon loss or challenges that needed to be faced. Since I have determined that it is all about God, this is where I begin. I begin by detailing my earliest memories of being introduced to God.

⁶ Richard L. Hester & Kelli Walker-Jones, *Know Your Story and Lead With It: The Power of Narrative in Clergy Leadership*. (The Alban Institute, 2009), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

Condemnation or Grace

Up to the approximate age of seven, I recall two events that laid a foundation for my initial learning of God, each pointing to a different characteristic of my early understanding of God. My mother had an orange book that contained the primary Bible stories, along with illustrations. She would sit the four of us down from time to time to read the stories, which included Noah's Ark, Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors, and Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand. These were memorable, but the story and picture that stayed with me the most, perhaps because it was first in the book, was of Eve in the garden with the serpent. Adam was in the picture but seemed to have been hidden in the shadows with no important part to play. Eve, however, was pictured having an in-depth conversation with the serpent who looked to be very sinister, and who fooled her into eating the forbidden fruit. This led me to believe that girls and women have to be extra careful because it is easier for us to be fooled into sinning, and the punishment of that sin could be very severe and lead to dire consequences. This realization introduced me to a God who could and would provide condemnation and punishment if they were called for and surely would have a hard time pardoning a girl or a woman.

This might easily have explained the dilemma that my mother found herself in as she worked to raise us while living a life that included drinking, smoking, and gambling. My mother's life was a life of survival, and she often just prayed that she could live to see her children grow up and make it through high school. Even with this background, her saving grace was Sunday mornings which were a sacred time for her. The sacredness of Sunday did not happen because she made her way to the church house, but because she transformed her kitchen (my mother was a remarkable cook) into a space that invited God to enter into and dwell. Each Sunday morning, she played what she called her spirituals, and we would hear songs by greats like James Cleveland, Mahalia Jackson, and the Caravans as she made homemade biscuits for

breakfast. No matter what turmoil and chaos may have taken place late into the night on Saturday, early Sunday morning pointed to a new opportunity to look to God for help, hope, and forgiveness, as my mother sang the words of these songs that meant so much to her. Since they were so inspirational to her, they also became inspirational to me. Whether she realized it or not, she ministered to me and planted seeds in the possibility of a God who could be met “In the Upper Room,” who could calm all storms with three simple words, “Peace Be Still,” and who would someday take us home to “Walk Around Heaven All Day.”

God Sends Mrs. Mary Taylor

With my early introductions to God, I found myself somewhat confused. The orange book laid the foundation of my learning the stories of the Bible and the one that kept my attention pointed to a God of condemnation. Could I escape, (“for I was a girl”) and what about the life that my mother lived that did not seem to point to following God? But hearing those spirituals pointed to the possibility of a God that would offer grace to all, and that might include my mother and even me. The sanctuary that my mother created each Sunday morning was real and seemed to highlight a God who had enough love to overpower any and all sin. Could grace win over condemnation?

God insured that the scale would tip toward the side of grace by leading and guiding a little lady named Mrs. Mary Taylor. She opened her home each Tuesday evening for the area children to come for Bible Study, and I attended from about the age of eight until the age of eleven. What was remarkable about Mrs. Taylor is that she was white, but followed the command of the Lord to open her home to the area children, who happened to be mostly black at a time when this was not heard of. This sweet soul, taught us Bible stories and had us sing songs like “Jesus Loves Me” and “This Little Light of Mine.” The twenty-third Psalm, Psalm 1, and John 3:16 were scripture passages that she had us to memorize. Mrs. Taylor determined that my

sister and I might enjoy and grow from a week-long Christian summer camp. We took part in swimming, horseback riding, and most importantly fellowship with other children whom we otherwise would have never met. She drove us personally, and I look back with great appreciation, as I know that she also paid personally or figured out how to pay for our attending. I continue to have nothing but fond memories of Mrs. Taylor, as she gave me my first Bible which had my name engraved on it. Everything that she sacrificed and did for me pointed to a God filled with grace. These seeds of faith, planted by Mrs. Taylor, are still producing a harvest in my life to this day, and I will be forever grateful.

Mount Olive Baptist Church - Accepting God's Gift

By the age of ten, I had begun to attend Mount Olive Baptist Church occasionally. My mother's side of the family were not regular church goers, but most of my dad's siblings, excluding him, attended Mount Olive Baptist Church. My dad had married my mother, and six children were born to them, but I never remember my dad living with us or even being in our home. He always lived with Ms. Shirley Williams and fathered my three half-sisters who were all younger than me. I knew who my dad was and vaguely remember him riding around in the neighborhood in a red truck. If he would notice us out playing, he would sometimes call us over and give us each a dollar. I did not miss having a dad, because he never lived up to the title and you don't miss what you never had, even though I sensed the pain that my mother endured. I made myself cry when I was told that he was tragically killed in an automobile accident when I was ten years old, because I thought tears were appropriate for the situation.

I enjoyed attending church, where there was an unspoken rule that by the age of twelve, children should make their way to the front to accept Christ and join the church. Groups of youth would generally join at the same time, usually making this trek on Easter Sunday. It may have been because I was not made to go to church like some of my cousins and friends that I did

not feel this pressure. But I do remember on one hot Sunday in July, after I had turned twelve that I found myself making my way down to the front all by myself, where Rev. Donald Turner was waiting. My initial reason for moving from my seat was to avoid a burning hell, but midway between my seat and the altar, I felt the presence of love like I had never felt before as I had decided to accept God's wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. By the time that I stood in front of the preacher, I was a ball of tears. I clearly remember my little cousin, Penny, asking her mother, "Why is she crying?" which if someone had asked me I could not have provided an answer. My Aunt Marg's simple answer makes sense to me today. She simply stated, "Because she's happy." A couple of weeks later, I was baptized, and today, I can attest that my aunt truly knew what she was talking about; I was happy.

CHAPTER 2: GOD ORCHESTRATES IN SPITE OF

For the next two decades, God kept me but did not force God's will on me.

Unfortunately, as I look back, I do not remember being taught much about how to be a Christian, especially a young one. I am not sure if I was provided the opportunity and did not realize it or heed, or if the spiritual direction was not made available. It may have been beneficial if what I heard at church was reinforced at home, but my mother had her hands full trying to keep four children fed and on track. She knew and loved the Lord, but she had not surrendered to the will of God and lived her life the best she could. Until my early thirties, I followed this model.

A year or so after I was baptized, Mount Olive called a new pastor, Rev. Hickerson, who was a musician. He played the piano and saxophone and organized the youth choir, which I truly enjoyed being a part of. We travelled to various Baptist churches to sing, but singing in the choir did not provide me with the guidance needed to avoid making decisions that I would later come to regret. I handled life the best that I could, and looking back now I know that God provided protection and provision for me in spite of me, but I truly wish that someone had pointed me to the need to surrender truly to God while I was young. Would I have heeded? That answer will never be known.

God Uses an English Teacher

I have come to understand that God will use events that seem devastating to get us to where God wants us to be. An unfortunate occurrence happened as I completed my junior year of high school. The rental house that we lived in was condemned, and we were forced to move from Canonsburg to Washington, Pennsylvania. Moving to another town about ten miles away and having to attend a rival school for my final year of high school seemed to be the worst possible events that could happen. I had to leave friends whom I had known for years, but I tried to make the best of the situation and to make friends at the new school. One girl who befriended

me suggested that I try out for the track team, which I did. As hard as I thought the practices were, the meets were even more grueling. I was slated to run the 440, one lap around the track. In my first meet, I came in seventh out of eight, and in my second meet, I came in fifth out of eight. These finishes weren't too bad for a novice runner, but because I felt like my heart was going to explode from my chest and that I was going to die by the time I crossed the finish line, I determined that it was not worth it. Two meets was all that I could handle, and I quit. I made it through the year and hated that I had to graduate with what seemed to be strangers, while all of my friends I had known since sixth grade enjoyed being together for graduation.

As hard as it was, I believe that God was involved, simply because he instructed Mrs. Alston to become involved in my life. Attending college was not the norm for my family and friends, but my mother did expect us to graduate from high school. As far as she was concerned, at that point she had done what was required, we were grown, and we were then on our own. I always made good grades in school, but did not give college a second thought, even though I had no idea what I would do after high school graduation. This is when God orchestrated the involvement of Mrs. Alston, my twelfth grade English teacher, into the situation. About half way through the school year, Mrs. Alston stated that she wanted to discuss something with me and asked me to stay after class. She was always cordial to me, but I had no idea what she wanted. She got right to the point and asked what I planned to do after graduation. I quickly and easily admitted that I had no idea. She stated directly and emphatically, "You are going to college." She did not ask, "Have you considered college?" She did not state, "Have you thought about college," but instead simply stated that I was going to college. I admit that I had not considered college because I really did not feel that I could be successful at it and had no idea how to enroll. It seemed so far from my reach and seemed like such a big step. But there was something about the directness of her statement that caused me to take notice and to begin to

believe that college might truly be possible. Mrs. Alston was intelligent and knew what to do, so I decided to follow her lead. After I told her that I would, she guided me through the whole process of applying to college and receiving financial aid. Because I was from a poor family and made good grades, my undergraduate degree at Robert Morris College, now Robert Morris University, was completely paid for. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Information Systems.

Why Run?

After my short stint on the track team, only a few years later, during my senior year of college, I determined to start running again for no particular reason. After graduating, I moved in with my cousin Rhonda into her one-bedroom apartment on the North Side of Pittsburgh as I began a job as a computer programmer for Edgewater Steel Company in Oakmont, Pennsylvania. Even with the pain of trying to run on a regular basis, the spirit within me simply said to run. I learned the streets of my new community, and running quickly became a way of life for me, so much so that when I moved to Atlanta a year later and began my career in the Bell System, I found myself running a five or ten kilometer race almost every weekend. This was God's way of simply laying the foundation for what would become my passion for life. I look back today and realize that for almost forty years, running has remained a crucial part of my life because of what God had determined that I would do. The beginning point was to run. Why did I start running? It helped to keep me healthy. It connected me with other runners. It gave me something to do. Initially, I truly did not understand, but I would soon realize that there was so much more to my running than I realized. It was God's plan for me and soon would be a command.

God Speaks a Word of Prophecy

It would be about twelve years later that I would begin to realize that my running was indeed a mandate from God as a prophetic word was delivered to me. As I look back, I liken the beginning of my receiving revelation from God to the patriarch Abraham. The similarity is not in what the Lord instructed Abram to do as the Lord said “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.”¹ No, I was not instructed to head to an unknown place, but the similarity is that at the time of my receiving this prophecy, I was beginning an unknown journey. I, like Abram, was called to walk by faith into the unknown. In the midst of a church service, a prophetess named Ros who knew absolutely nothing about me told me specifically that the Lord said to “keep on running.” This young preacher at the time was simply speaking to me what she heard from the Lord. I understand now that her obedience fell in line with words written by Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination*. Brueggemann states, “The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”² In her obedience, a seed for change to move away from the status quo was being planted. God was in the beginning phase of showing me that an alternative regard for health was going to emerge.

Along with the word to keep on running, the prophetess also instructed me to purchase and read a book, *Divine Runner* by Earl P. Paulk, Jr. The curious thing is that I had no intention to quit running, and as I was just opening myself up to the mystery and power of God, I was quite hesitant and apprehensive the next couple of times that I went out for my regular run. What was going to happen? Would God show up in some way, while I ran, and if so, how?

¹ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelson Bibles) Genesis 12:1

² Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress Press) 3.

Would God meet me in nature? What did this powerful and prophetic word mean? I knew that it came from God, but was I ready to receive it from our mysterious God in such a personal way?

Earl P. Paulk, Jr. was a prominent pastor in Atlanta and wrote *Divine Runner* to share how running became his saving grace as a young pastor. For nearly a year, he had done everything humanly possible to bring unity to his divided church. As he came close to a complete breakdown, he shares that “In the middle of this dark plight something within me began to cry out, “Run! Run, I thought, when I can hardly walk?”³ I did not understand it then, but, similar to Pastor Paulk, it was God who was instructing me to run. So after receiving my prophecy to “keep running,” I did continue with this ritual, not knowing what to expect. When God did not reveal Godself to me in a dramatic way, as I expected, I finally caught on to why I was instructed to keep running. At the end of a five-mile run about the third time out after the prophecy, I realized that I barely remembered covering the mileage. God had spoken to me so profoundly that the almost fifty minutes seemed to have lasted about five. All of what I heard from God were words of reassurance. At that time, I was in the midst of a struggling marriage with two young boys to raise. I was new to attempting to hear and follow the voice of God and needed to know that there was a place for me in the work of God’s Kingdom. One chapter of *Divine Runner* poses the question, “Is There Something Divine about Running?”⁴ For me, the answer to this question was and is a resounding “yes,” for while running has always been beneficial for my physical body, running has been for almost forty years an act of God’s divine grace. God speaks to me while I run. It has been while running that I have been lifted, strengthened, and comforted, but most of all I have received guidance and direction for my life’s journey as I put one foot in front of the other on the pavement.

³ Earl P. Paulk, Jr., *Divine Runner* (Chapel Hill Harvester Church, 1978) 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

CHAPTER 3: GOD IS NOT ONLY FOUND IN CHURCH

Trying to Trust God

After graduating from Robert Morris College, I met and began to date the man who is the father of my two sons and who would become my first husband. I moved to Atlanta to be with him and began working for the Bell System. A couple of years after relocating to Atlanta, I gave birth to my first son and purposely waited to get married. I did not want to marry just because I had my son, so he was a year old when we took that step. There was evidence of drug problems, but I, like many young adults, felt that marriage would help to solve these problems. Things were rocky, but bearable. Five years and two weeks after my first son was born, I had my second son. This is when the drug issues worsened.

It was also around this time that I realized that I needed to learn more about God. I wanted my marriage to work, but I did not know how to help my husband. It was about the time of my getting married that I joined Friendship Baptist Church and began to attend regularly. As my sons grew up, we all became very involved in the ministries of the church. My husband did not attend, but now that I was learning to pray regularly, and learning the true power of prayer, I knew that it would only be a matter of time before God would answer my prayers and we would be worshiping God and attending church as a family.

It seemed that my spiritual growth and my marital problems had an inverse relationship. My husband complained about the time that we spent at church, he complained about our asking him to join us, and he complained when I determined that I would become a tither. His exact words were, "I have a serious problem with you wanting to give all this money to the church". I understood that tithing did not make sense to him, but I was firm in my decision. Early in my desire to grow in God's grace, I concurred with what Watley states in his book, *God Wants You to Grow*. He states that it is not logical that tithing works and that we will not be able to grow to

our fullest when we rob God.¹ I explained to my husband that the tithes that I gave were based on my income alone, and that I had a right to do what I wanted to with what I earned. All of these years later, I can attest that God has faithfully supplied for my every need as I have faithfully given my tithes and offerings.

Finally, when my youngest son was about a year old, my husband decided that he would seek help for his drug problem and I initially supported him enthusiastically. He entered treatment programs each year for five years, only to return quickly to the drugs when the program ended. He was not contributing to the household, but fortunately, God had blessed me with a job that could easily take care of my boys and me.

After the five years of drug programs, he seemed to have succumbed and totally given up on becoming clean. By this time, it was evident that what we had was not a marriage, but simply an arrangement. He stopped making promises, probably because he knew that I would no longer believe them, and I stopped expecting him to live up to the title of husband and father. Deep down inside, I did not want to give up on my marriage, because I knew that he was dealing with a sickness and I also wanted God to win in the end. But, there were three events that led to me letting go.

During a Thanksgiving holiday, my husband took the boys to Memphis to be with his family. He had a drug problem, but he loved his boys. I was not concerned about their safety because I believed that he would not jeopardize the wellbeing of his sons and that he would get them there and back safely. He did what I expected and after speaking with his mother a couple of times, she shared that he had disappeared shortly after they got there. I expected that he would be on his binge for most of the time that they were there but would get himself together

¹ William D. Watley., *God Wants You to Grow!: How to Live Beyond Your Limitations* (Judson Press 2003) 34.

enough to drive back safely on Sunday when they were to return home. After they got on the road to head back, I received a frantic call from my mother-in-law begging me not to be at home when they were to arrive. He apparently was using before they got on the road and threatened to hurt me when he made it back to Atlanta. I began to pray but also made sure that I was not there when they got back. I was at a friend's house, which was less than a mile away. Up to this point, I was not fearful of living with him, as he was fine as long as he was left alone. My hope was that when they returned that things would return to this mode, but for some reason, he was angry, and the drugs seemed to have him acting crazy in a way that we had not witnessed before. Fortunately, God protected them to get back safely. He called me at my friend's when they got home but refused to allow me to come to the house. I ended up getting the police to accompany me while I got my boys and some clothes to leave. We stayed at my friend's for a couple of days and then finally came back home when he was not there.

After this incident, things fell back into the mode of him living his life, while we lived ours. He had an engineering degree from Memphis State University and even with his drug problems managed to find work, even if it was only for a few months at a time. I had long stopped bailing him out, and he no longer had access to the money that I earned. A few months later, he decided that he would make a last ditch effort of staying clean. While sober, on a Friday, after he had gotten paid, he gave me money to hold for him, stating that under no circumstances was I to give it to him prematurely. He disappeared shortly thereafter, until Saturday evening. When he returned, he demanded the money that he had given me. I, of course, reminded him of our conversation from the day before, to no avail. My hope was that he would sleep it off, but instead, he became physical. There were no physical scars, but as we scuffled, every hair roller that I had in my head was on the bathroom floor. I gave him the money, he left, and I assured him that I would not try to help in this way again.

Even after these two incidents, I truly believed that God could and would work a miracle for him and for us. I was determined to comply with the part of our vows that said, “For better or worse.” He was sick and I was determined to be there, “in sickness and in health.” I must admit that I wondered how all of the chaos was affecting our sons, and how it would affect them in the future. During this time, I was so conflicted and confused. Should I continue to trust God and wait on God to intervene or should I throw in the towel? I felt that I was growing in God’s grace and was feeling that God wanted to use me in ministry, but it was hard to stay focused when you never knew what to expect at home.

Trusting God Means Forgiving

Living with a drug addict is a life of total chaos. At home, our place of refuge had become a place of uncertainty. The boys and I never knew what to expect. He lived a life of scheming, and his mind was always working to determine how he would ensure his next high. The more time that went by, the more I wanted something to happen, one way or the other. Time was going fast; the boys were growing fast. My oldest was quickly moving through his teen years. During the many years of broken promises, one that came regularly from my husband was that if he messed up again, he would move out on his own and do what he needed to, to get his life together. If he had followed through with this promise, I would have patiently waited and would not take any legal action.

During this marriage limbo, God fortunately provided me with numerous opportunities to learn of God. My life was totally centered on God’s word. The boys and I regularly attended Sunday school, Wednesday Bible Study, and Sunday worship services. BellSouth had a Thursday Bible Study during lunch and had area ministers to come to teach. God placed several people in my life to encourage me in my faith. These included my sister, my cousin, my mentor at Friendship Baptist Church, and a good friend with whom I had lived when I first moved to

Atlanta and who was my oldest son's godmother. I was also a bridesmaid in her wedding, which took place while I was pregnant with my second son. She was very involved in her church, which was non-denominational, and she was aware of all that was going on in my marriage. She ministered to me and constantly prayed with and for me. She encouraged me not to give up on my marriage, but always let me know that she would support me in whatever I decided. There was one biblical concept that she reminded me of many times. She let me know that she understood all of the hurt and the pain that I had experienced and was continuing to experience at the hand of my husband. She also let me know that regardless of what I decided to do, whether I continued waiting on God or decided to take steps to get my husband out, it was critical for me to forgive him. My initial response was, of course, that he did not ask me to forgive him. She explained that my forgiving was not for him, but for me. Of course, all of these years later, I understand perfectly this biblical imperative.

Christian Business Women's Luncheon (CBWL)

As I look back, I understand why God placed certain people in my life and why God involved me in the ministries that God did. God knew that I needed to hear constantly the Word of God at that time. A firm foundation would be needed for where God was taking me. I had ministries at Friendship Baptist Church that I attended. I had the Thursday noonday Bible Studies at work. God also rose up a ministry at work to help provide additional support for me. I learned of another Bible Study that took place during lunchtime on Wednesdays. It was the Christian Business Women's Luncheon, and it was comprised of about ten Caucasian women who studied the Bible while they ate lunch.

A couple of other African-American women and I began to attend, and to this day, I am amazed at what God did through this ministry. Within a few months, some very drastic changes occurred. A good friend of mine became the leader of the group. An intercessory prayer

ministry of which I was a part was established. We met on Tuesdays in a separate conference room during lunch to pray for God's will for the ministry, for BellSouth, and for the persons and families who were a part of the ministry. We began taking up an offering each week, and I became the treasurer. The membership grew to about thirty-five and was not limited to women, as there were two men who attended regularly. The members were from various Christian denominations and included white and black, young and old, as well as persons who held management and non-management positions. God moved, and two persons accepted Jesus Christ as their savior through the ministry.

God allowed remarkable events to take place, which helped me to understand that God is indeed omnipresent. Within a three-year period, we had two productions in the BellSouth Auditorium. The first was a June Jubilee, where we celebrated the liberty of the Lord through the arts. Our worship included praise through song, instruments, and dance. One of the members of the ministry was led to write a play which she titled, "What's Going On?" In the play, the author tackled many issues of society that were prevalent at the time and showed the response that God wanted from us. This play highlighted issues including racism, sexism, and drug abuse. The response according to the play was to trust God in every situation and to look to God for guidance and strength. A weekend retreat was held at Caraway Conference Center in Toccoa, Georgia, which gave the twenty women who attended an opportunity to get away, to fellowship with one another, and most importantly to commune with God.

A few years after CBWL was raised up, it began to dissipate. Now, as I look back, I realize that God had a plan and a purpose for what was done. As the ministry was winding down, BellSouth began to downsize, and many positions were outsourced. Hundreds of lives were impacted. Many who were a part of the ministry retired or began to work for Andersen Consulting, which was the option afforded to me. God used the ministry to prepare those who

were a part of it for the drastic change that was coming. The years that I spent working and worshiping with CBWL will always have a special place in my heart. As much as I loved Friendship Baptist Church, God showed that God is not confined and may be found in unlikely places.

God Becomes Real

While in the midst of being blessed by CBWL, I also had the opportunity to worship with my friend on some occasions at The Sword of the Lord. This non-denominational ministry was totally different from what I was used to as a Baptist. One of the major differences was the length of the services. We began our services with devotion that would last about fifteen minutes and would include a couple of hymns, someone reading a scripture passage, and a prayer. We would sometimes have persons to offer a personal testimony. My friend's services began with praise and worship that lasted at times more than forty-five minutes. When I would attend church with her, the service could easily last three hours. The praise service included songs like "What a Mighty God we Serve" and "Stomp the Devil under your feet." Unlike our devotional service, it was very loud and somewhat chaotic. Everyone shouted praises to God in the fashion that worked for them. It was free and lasted as long as the Spirit said so. I distinctly remember that one young man's manner of praise was to shout simply, "Glory" at the top of his lungs over and over. The service would continue with the pastor, who had the title of prophet teaching, and then providing a prophetic word to everyone who was in attendance. If there were fifty people in attendance, everyone received a personal word, so one could see why the services would last so long. Attending these services was physically draining, but spiritually uplifting. I would leave feeling close to God with a feeling that I could conquer whatever might come my way.

It was at this point that I began to question the beliefs of my denomination. Mt. Olive Baptist Church, where I was baptized and received the foundation of my faith, and Friendship Baptist Church, where my sons and I were being nurtured, were both special to me. But was there more for me to tap into in a non-denominational church or ministry? While being a part of the intercessory team with CBWL, when we would meet for prayer on Tuesdays, one particular woman always prayed in the spirit. Would I grow more, and would I be able to handle my life circumstances more easily if I spoke in tongues and allowed myself to be lost in praising God? Did the ministry of my friend who seemed more charismatic, dramatic, and free-flowing have something more for me? Was I missing out on something that God had for me? When I did attend with my friend, I would leave feeling that I had surely been in the presence of God, but would then get home and the realities of my life and my marriage would be waiting for me at the door. While in the midst of trying to consider what God would have me do, while alone in my basement one evening, I determined my need to cry out to God by myself and for myself. My prayer was, "God, when I am with others in service, I feel you so powerfully. When I am with others who are calling on you, you feel so real to me. I need you to let me know that you will show up for me when I am all by myself." God answered my question about the possibility of leaving Friendship in that basement on that night. Without my speaking in tongues or shouting praises to God at the top of my lungs, God quietly but forcefully answered my prayer. I felt a wave of love, acceptance, and comfort like I had never felt before. It reminded me of moving to the altar of Mt. Olive Baptist Church when I was twelve. God showed me that God is real and that God can and will show up when needed. God could be found in Mt. Olive Baptist Church, at Friendship Baptist Church, at the Sword of the Lord Ministries, at the BellSouth Center, and even in my basement, if that is where I happen to be when I called on God.

CHAPTER 4: TIME TO MOVE IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION

God says, "Get Out of My Way"

Up until this time, I had struggled with going back and forth about what to do with my marriage. Some days I would be ready to throw in the towel, and other days, I would determine to continue to wait and see what God would do. After my husband had seemed to have lost his mind and threatened to kill me after the Thanksgiving holiday, and after he became physical, I was inclined to contact an attorney. But after my personal encounter with God in my basement, after God became real to me, I felt like I could go on and told God that I would wait and trust in God. God spoke to me and I must admit that this was the first time that I heard words spoken by God audibly. As I was praying and meditating on God's goodness, I heard God clearly speak the following words. "Get out of my way." It caught me off guard and of course caused me to want to know exactly what these words meant. After getting to a place of acceptance, God was now telling me that I could let go. But that seemed to be just like God. When we get to a place of trusting God to see us through, God then determines that it is time to go in a different direction. After a couple of weeks, and with reassurance from God, I calmly spoke to my husband. I reminded him of the many times that he had promised to leave and get his life together if he messed up just one more time. He of course let me know emphatically that he was going nowhere. I explained to him that I did not want to divorce him but would be contacting an attorney to begin separation proceedings. I told him that once he was out and on his own with the opportunity for me totally to cease from my codependent behavior, once he truly hit rock bottom, that with God's help, he would be able to become clean and stay clean. I wanted him to understand that I was not giving up on him or our marriage, but that I would take a wait-and-see attitude and that the ball was in his court. Maybe because he did not realize that I was serious, he agreed and said that once it came to that, he would do what he needed to, to keep his family.

I did get a referral for an attorney and when I met with him, he wanted to know why I was filing for a separation and not a divorce. I explained that it might take a couple of years, but that I truly expected that my husband was going to get the help that he needed and we would get back together. He explained that if things did not work out, that it would be more money to change to a divorce later. I stuck with the separation believing that this would be as far as it would go. About a month later, I got a call from my attorney with a question. He explained that he had gotten a call from my husband and he had come into his office insisting that we get a divorce rather than a separation. What did I want to do? I decided not to fight once he decided to intervene. A couple months later, the papers were filed, and he did go, kicking and screaming the whole way. He rented an apartment about six or seven miles away headed toward downtown Atlanta. The plan was that he was to get the boys every other weekend. In that first few months, I dropped them off and picked them up twice. He did not have a car at this point, and I had come to his rescue for transportation prior to his leaving and did it twice within the first few months after he left. I was finally able to disengage when my phone rang at two a.m. one morning and it was him calling with a serious sob story. I emphatically let him know that I was no longer his wife and that he was not to call me ever again asking for help. My helping days were officially over.

Georgia State University: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Time moved swiftly, the boys and I adjusted to the absence of the physical presence of my now ex-husband and their dad. My oldest seemed to adjust fairly well, but it seemed to be harder on his little brother. I appreciated peace and consistency in our home and kept the boys busy with church, cub scouts, and sports. I still had a strong desire to grow in God's grace and enjoyed all of the opportunities to learn more of God. I was beginning to sense that being a

Christian means more than attending church on Wednesday and Sunday and felt a tugging in my soul for what God had for me to do.

As God had raised up CBWL to prepare us for the outsourcing and downsizing that was to come, BellSouth also took some steps to help us with what might be on the horizon. A couple of years before I left, I attended a mandatory all-day workshop. The purpose of the workshop was for us to examine ourselves to determine what our passions were and what really drove us. By the end of the day, after going through each exercise, it was determined that my calling was to encourage the care of our health. I was amazed. Back when I had received the prophecy to “keep on running,” it was not just for my health, but God intended it to be for the health of others also.

It makes perfect sense now as I consider my ancestry on my mother’s side. There were ten siblings born to my maternal grandmother and grandfather. My mom had four sisters and five brothers. I knew all five of my uncles, but not for long for they all died in their late forties or early fifties. Alcoholism was prevalent, along with smoking, and, I realize now, improper nutrition. They suffered from heart attacks and strokes. The sisters did a little better, even though the youngest died first after being paralyzed from a stroke and suffering from diabetes. She was around fifty. The two oldest died next, and they were in their sixties. Even though my mom suffered from many ailments including two heart attacks, a stroke, gout, arthritis, and an aneurysm, God allowed her to live to be seventy-one years of age, and she died some thirteen years ago. The last five years of my mother’s life were filled with pain and suffering. The doctors explained to us that she might not survive a surgery to repair an aneurysm, and indeed the odds were not in her favor; about eight hours after the surgery, she died. The one lone remaining sibling of the ten just happens to be my favorite aunt, and today she is going strong at the age of eighty-three.

Along with this mandatory workshop, BellSouth made another major change with the hope of helping us if we decided to leave the company. Even though there were no mandatory displacements, the company realized that those who were going to be outsourced might determine that a better route might be leaving the company for a new career. Up until this point, employees could take classes and be reimbursed as long as what was studied was of benefit for the job. With outsourcing coming, it was now determined that reimbursement would be allowed for any college class regardless of the subject matter.

When I had first moved to Atlanta, I had enrolled at Georgia State University to work on a Master's degree in Business. After three courses, I discontinued this journey because I had gotten pregnant with my first son. Armed with the new knowledge of my passion to promote health and knowing that I could return to school and be reimbursed, I registered to return to Georgia State to work on a Master's degree in Exercise Science. This seemed a perfect degree for promoting the care of one's overall health, this new work that I felt that God wanted me to pursue. I was pleasantly surprised when I applied and my application fee was returned to me since I had already been accepted. Of course, the previous three classes that I had taken did not count toward this new degree. There was a foundational class that was required, though, and it was only offered during the day. For three days a week, I was allowed to take chemistry during my lunch hour. I was so excited and eagerly attended, but about two weeks in, I realized that nothing of what the professor said seemed to make any sense. I could not grasp the concepts of atoms, molecules, and compounds. We had a couple of quizzes, and not only did I not do well, but I failed miserably. I had been assigned an advisor, and he explained that in order for me to begin the classes in the Exercise Science major, I would have to obtain at least a "C" in chemistry. I felt that the end might come even before I had a chance to begin. I decided that I would stick with it and give it my best. During class in about the fourth week, my ears perked up

as the professor spoke about how he graded. His exact words pointed to a possibility of making it through after all. His words were, “As long as I see that you are truly trying, you can expect to receive no grade lower than a “C.”” I heard, and I heeded. Even though chemistry still did not make much sense, I composed questions as I tried to garner some sense of the assignments. During class, I learned to raise my hand to ask for clarification to let the professor know that I did not get it, but that I was trying. I went to him after class to show him my attempt at solving the problems and to ask him to explain what I did not understand. At the end of the course, he was a man of his word, and I received a “C” and could move on with the classes.

Fortunately, most of the classes after chemistry were easier, and I especially enjoyed the classes that I had to take for my major. My classes included exercise physiology, biomechanics, anatomy, and nutrition. It was amazing to learn of the intricate workings of all of the systems of the body. From the skeletal, the muscular, the digestive, the cardiovascular, and the nervous systems, the amazing workings of the physical body that God created is nothing short of miraculous. I also came to realize that these systems and others that include bones, blood, arteries and veins, along with major organs all work in conjunction according to God’s spectacular design. All that I learned bore witness to the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 139: 14, which declares, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.”¹ It is astounding to me that as complex as the human body is, God not only ensures that all of the parts work as they should under normal circumstances, but God also provides avenues of healing through medicine and technology when our bodies are struck with illness and should cease to function.

There were two courses that I took that focused on nutrition and what types of food and drink is most profitable for the body. I honestly admit that prior to this time, I had not given too

¹ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelson Bibles) Psalm 139: 14

much thought to nutrition. I did see people everywhere who were overweight or obese, but I would easily consider that their primary answer could be found in exercise. At the time, I was a regular runner, easily running fifteen to twenty miles a week. I did not overeat on a regular basis, but when I did, my go to, to maintain my health, was exercise. I was now beginning to understand that it all plays a part: lack of exercise, improper nutrition and overeating, both had to be considered when we are trying to improve our health.

Friendship Baptist Church was in the midst of building, and a new sanctuary was Phase One of the project. This was a very exciting time for the church. Phase Two of the building was to be a gym and recreation center. It was a blessing to devise a plan for the layout of the gym for credit toward my master's work. God was also faithful in bringing this to fruition, and about three years after I finished my degree, the gym was completed.

I grew up watching my mother smoke two packs of Pall Mall cigarettes a day. I watched her drink hard liquor all of her life. I saw the stress that she dealt with as she did her best to raise us giving it her all. When my mother's health truly began to decline, she did cut back on her drinking and also the number of cigarettes that she smoked daily, but she was never able to give up the cigarettes completely. Once I learned of the total poison that cigarettes are and how they literally contaminate every part of the body, I encouraged my mom to quit, but she could not. I truly believe that if she had been able to give up cigarettes maybe in her early sixties, that she would have lived longer and with fewer health issues.

I know that the lifestyles of my mom and of her siblings caused them to die too soon and to suffer with chronic ailments throughout their lives that did not have to be, but had become the norm for my family.

Even with the suffering that my mother endured during the last years of her life, she was only able to survive because of God's grace and through medicine that God provided to sustain

her. Even with the extra suffering, she was able to live well past the years she detailed in her constant prayer, which was to see her four children grow up. She lived long enough for us all to grow up to be in our late forties and early fifties. She lived long enough to know her over fifteen grandchildren and several great-grandchildren, simply because of God's faithfulness.

After completing my Master's degree, it was time to begin to encourage fitness and health improvement in the church. Friendship Baptist Church already had a Health Ministry, and I joined this group. The new church had a very large parking lot, and I determined how many laps were necessary to make a mile. We scheduled walking on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings and would have between five to ten persons to come. Along with the walking, I began to counsel persons in steps to take to lose weight. I recall one gentlemen in his mid-sixties who was extremely overweight who shared that he was dealing with many health issues. We sat down, and he shared with me what he ate on a regular basis. One detail that jumped out quickly is that his diet included too much meat. He shared that he ate four strips of bacon for breakfast, usually a cheeseburger for lunch, and three to four pieces of fried chicken for dinner. His daily diet included all of this meat along with potatoes, some vegetables, bread, sodas, and desserts. Now, I must admit that he was a big man, probably 6'4," but he understood that he needed to get a handle on his nutrition. As much as he wanted to walk, I advised him to start with what he ate. His weight was putting so much strain on his joints that he was having problems with his knees, so it was difficult for him to walk. He was a perfect example of how both an increase in exercise and a positive change in one's diet are needed to begin a change toward improved health.

Shouldn't Things Be Different for Christians?

Considering the plight of this brother, and knowing that God was calling me to promote health, I began to be more observant of people's lifestyles with regard to their health status. I knew the history of my mom and her siblings, and it seemed that for most people with whom I

interacted, especially people of my own race, health issues were the norm. The one alarming observance was that being unhealthy for blacks seemed to be the norm whether one was inside the church or not. Along with witnessing poor health of family members and others, I also witnessed people with poor health who were in the church and professed Christ. As I learned of what true faith in Christ meant, I was being taught that Christ gives His followers access to power. I began to wonder, if we have access to power, why did it seem that people in the church suffered just as much as others when it came to illness and early death? What were we doing with that power? Maybe I was being naïve, but I came to believe that God's children were called to lead the way in every aspect of life. Albert Winseman quotes Bill Hybels in his book, *Growing an Engaged Church*, and states, "the local church is the hope of the world."² I, of course did not believe that anyone could reach perfection in any area, but based on what I read in the Bible, it would seem that a follower of Christ should be the go-to person for answers when it comes to how to live an abundant life. I began to believe this based on what Jesus said in John 10 and 10. "The thief does not come except to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."³ If one wanted to know how to be successful in business, simply look to a Christian. If your abundant life was to help you to do well in school, just look to a Christian. If you were seeking to use your gift as a singer, dancer, or artist, it would be a Christian who could lead you in the right direction. Even if you wanted to know how truly to serve as one should in politics, then call on a Christian to show you. If we are called to be light and examples to persons who have no faith in God, and they are struggling with their health, should we not be the ones who can show them how to become healthier?

² Albert L. Winseman, *Growing an Engaged Church* (Gallop Press, 2006) 7.

³ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelsons Bible) John 10:10

I accepted that there were many things to take into consideration, and that it was not as cut and dry as it would seem. History, tradition, experience, and even spiritual maturity all had to be brought to the table for examination. I was truly caught off guard when I began to pose questions to members of my church. I found that there was ignorance, complacency, and even outright denial of the problem of health in the black church. All that ran through my mind was, “How can one be effective in doing the work that God is calling them to without striving to be as healthy as possible?”

Even though I truly came to believe that things should be different regarding the care of one’s health for persons who were true followers of Christ, it did not take long for the reality of the situation to smack me in the face. This was an area that was making it very difficult for the church to be the church. God allowed me to understand that this charge that I was receiving was going to be very difficult, but God let me know that no matter how difficult, I was called to do my best. Difficulty did not negate the call. For more than two decades, I have been determined to promote and encourage steps toward improved health in every station of Zion that God has placed me.

And Two Shall Be One

After learning that my ex-husband had requested that the separation be a divorce instead, I relinquished and decided not to fight it. I still hoped that his being on his own would force him to become and stay clean. After three years went by, I determined that it did not seem likely that this was going to happen. He was not a part of his sons’ lives, and after about four years, I decided that I would begin to date.

A couple of years later, a quiet and handsome preacher named Dennis Leach joined Friendship Baptist Church. I had never initiated the pursuit of a man, but I was drawn to him and wanted to know more about who he was. I actually invited him out to dinner for his

birthday, which was in November. He was originally from Philadelphia, had retired from the Army, and was a student at the Interdenominational Center of Morehouse School of Religion working on a Master of Divinity degree. We dated for a few months, and really got along well, but allowed others to drive us apart, but we managed to remain friends. He graduated from ITC in May, and I graduated from Georgia State University in August. I knew that he wanted to be a senior pastor and was sending resumes to Baptist churches that had vacant pulpits.

One day in December, a few years after we had met, I got a call from him and he could not contain his excitement on the phone. He had a job, not pastoring, but was going to be on staff as an assistant to the pastor at a large ministry, Lewis Chapel Baptist Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. His U-Haul was loaded, and he was headed north immediately after we finished talking. Deep down inside, I had hoped that we could have worked things out and gotten back together, but with this news, it now seemed very unlikely. Nevertheless, I was ecstatic for him because he seemed so happy about this new opportunity that God had opened up for him.

I may have talked with him once during the month of January, and he seemed to be settling in very well. I received a call from him in February, and he told me that he would be coming back to Atlanta and asked if he could see me. My future husband was a romantic at heart and sent a beautiful bouquet of flowers to my job. We had a wonderful time while he was in Atlanta, and when he headed back to North Carolina, I was pretty sure that he was going to be my husband. In March of that year, I visited him in Raleigh as he preached for a colleague, and he came to see me on my birthday in April. We went to dinner at the famous Abbey Restaurant, and he proposed. To this day, if he is asked why we ended up getting back together after he moved away, he will answer that when he reflected on the time that we spent together that I was easy to be with.

I, of course, said yes to his proposal, and the next five months were a whirlwind. When you consider the major events that can impact someone's life positively or negatively, I experienced many of them in this short period of time. My oldest son graduated from high school, and I put my house up for sale in May. I got married in July and sold my house toward the end of August, along with taking my oldest son to college at Georgia Southern University. Because it was going to take me a few weeks to pack and move, my new husband came to get his youngest stepson to take him to Fayetteville to begin the eighth grade on time. At the beginning of September, I resigned from my job, and by mid-September, I made it to Fayetteville to join my son and new husband as we began our new life. To say that I was tired and weary is definitely an understatement. Tired and weary, but ecstatic for what God was doing.

Dennis and I had a small ceremony with about thirty family and friends at the chapel on the campus of ITC. One of his professors from ITC counselled us, along with my youngest son and my soon-to-be stepson, and she along with Dennis's pastor from Fayetteville performed the ceremony. His oldest brother came from Philadelphia to be his best man, and my sister came from home to be my maid of honor. We wore African garb and jumped the broom. It was a beautiful and special occasion.

I had many conversations with my cousin while all of this was transpiring and she of course was concerned that everything was happening too fast. Was I sure? Did it make sense that I would leave a community that I had lived in for twenty years, along with a job to which I had devoted so many hours of hard work, leave my home that I had lived in for more than ten years, and leave my church that I loved and had been a part of for seventeen years, to go to a place that I had no idea what to expect with a man whom I did not know very well? Of course, I was not 100% sure, but I was sure enough to take this drastic step. What my husband often attests is true: "I left a well-paying job and a life that was completely stable to follow a poor

broke preacher to North Carolina.” Even to this day, when I look back, I know that it was God who brought Dennis and me together. What God did to ensure that I did not back out was to supply me total peace throughout those months. There were, of course, many hurdles to overcome, but God gave me a remarkable peace that I realize could only come from God. Marrying Dennis was part of God’s plan as God moved me more toward what I was called to do and what God had planned for my life. God did not provide me with a perfect man, but a wonderful man of God with whom I could connect and grow in marriage and in life. God ensured that we could help each other to grow in God’s grace individually and collectively.

CHAPTER 5: GOD CONTINUES TO EQUIP

Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church

To say that Fayetteville, North Carolina was different from East Point and Atlanta, Georgia is an understatement. As I began to learn of my new community, I knew that it would be smaller than the community that I was used to, but I also realized that it was not as rural as I had expected. I did not expect it to be so different, but it was because of the community's military presence. One other surprise for me was the number of non-Caucasian people I saw. Growing up in Pennsylvania, I had become accustomed to being a minority. All during school, there may have been one or two blacks in my classes, but once I moved to the Atlanta area and while living in College Park and East Point, I became accustomed to being in a community that was made up of many persons who looked like me. Going to Fayetteville made me feel that I had gone back in time.

The first order of business, of course, was to become acclimated to the church. Lewis Chapel Baptist Church was the church that Dennis was working for. It was a beautiful sanctuary with many classrooms and many ministries. I remember my first Sunday in attendance. Of course, I had met the pastor, Dr. John Fuller, Sr., for he had come to Atlanta to assist with the ceremony when we married. The church at that time had a membership of about three-thousand, which was definitely the most members of any church that I had been involved in. The sanctuary was large and looked as if it could hold at least eight hundred people between the main floor and the balcony. As with most churches, there were musicians on staff, but their staff also included the janitor, the Director of Christian Education, the Youth Minister, and several others who assisted the pastor. Dennis was the assistant to the Pastor for Pastoral Care and Counseling. As I attended that first worship service, I was understandably a little apprehensive, as I took a seat near the front while Dennis sat in the pulpit assisting with the service. I was one of the first to be

seated. I paid attention to the service, which was very organized and did not seem would be very long. I enjoyed the choir, which was spirited but also showed evidence of thorough rehearsal. After being in the community for a few days and seeing mostly Caucasian faces, I wondered what the congregation of this large church would be like. This question was answered for me during the offering. We were instructed by the ushers to bring our offering to the front, so we walked. As I looked back, I saw that without my realizing it, the church had filled up, not just on the floor, but in the balcony. It took a good fifteen minutes for the offering to be collected and I remember asking myself, “Where did all of these black folks come from?”

The other aspect that was noteworthy about the church was the array of ministries that it offered. I remember looking at the bulletin, which had at least five inserts detailing announcements of upcoming opportunities for worship and service. Hurricane Floyd had recently hit, so on a green sheet you could know what to bring to donate and the days that you could come to help sort and pack the boxes to be shipped. This was the first outreach that I participated in with the church. Another insert detailed the upcoming Bible Study topics, and another one let the congregation know about the upcoming youth activities through Saturday Academy. There was much that the church needed to be informed about so that its members could govern themselves appropriately.

Believers Striving for Health and Body & Soul

Of course my mind moved quickly to see what the church was doing to promote health. To my surprise, as I observed the church activities over the next month or so, I did not see anything relating to promoting health. Because my husband was on staff, I quickly got to know the other persons working for the church, especially the person who was the Director of Christian Education. I realized that if I wanted to establish a formal ministry to encourage and promote health that I would have to receive her approval for it would fall under Christian Education.

I spoke about our need to care for our health and to motivate others with every opportunity that I was afforded. It did not take long for me to realize that there was a core group of women who would like to come together to exercise. With permission from the church to move forward, I developed what I called gospel aerobics, which was low to moderate impact exercise movements to upbeat gospel music. The session would last about thirty minutes and would generally include seven to nine songs. The routine would begin with a warm up song to get our blood flowing, followed by four to five faster beat songs to get us to a nice sweat; next would come a slower song to focus on muscle conditioning, and we would end with a song that allowed for a good stretch. It did not take long for us to have regular sessions twice a week. Lewis Chapel's property included a Christian Education building on the same side of the street as the church, with two parking lots in between the buildings. Walking the length of the property was about a quarter of a mile, so we sometimes walked rather than go inside for exercise.

After a few months of exercise, the group of about ten dedicated women determined that they would like to begin to meet to discuss specific topics concerning our health, with one of the first discussions centering on nutrition. This is when we became a full-fledged ministry of the church. After meeting a few times, we decided on a ministry name and officially became the "Believers Striving for Health." We exercised twice a week and meet for discussion once a month.

We were very effective in our health promotion, and I remember the impact that the group had on one particular member. She was from a family of persons who had diabetes, including her mom and all of her siblings. She understood that there was a deadly fate awaiting her. Rather than acquiesce to what seemed to be her pending fate, she decided that she would fight against it with the resources she had access to. She used prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, the knowledge that she gained from her doctor, and the encouragement that she could

count on from the Believers Striving for Health and with every checkup, she received a great report and was told to continue to do what she was doing. This member warded off diabetes, while several others lost weight and learned how better to control their blood pressure and cholesterol.

We began to connect with community agencies that provided us with health-related information that we would pass on to the congregation. One of our primary and most successful encounters was with the American Heart Association and the Body and Soul project. We were blessed to be a part of this pilot research program of fifteen churches in 2001 called Body & Soul – A Celebration of Healthy Eating & Living. Other churches were from Delaware, South Carolina, California, Georgia, and Virginia. The results of the research study were published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in April of 2004.¹ The Objectives, Methods, Results, and Conclusions are listed below.

Objectives: Body and Soul was a collaborative effort among two research universities, a national voluntary agency (American Cancer Society), and the National Institutes of Health to disseminate and evaluate under real-world conditions the impact of previously developed dietary interventions for African-Americans.

Methods: Body and Soul was constructed from two successful research-based interventions conducted in African-American churches. Components deemed essential from the prior interventions were combined and then tested in a cluster randomized–effectiveness trial. The primary outcome was fruit and vegetable intake measured with two types of food frequency questionnaires at baseline and 6-month follow-up.

Results: At the 6-month follow-up, intervention participants showed significantly greater fruit and vegetable (F&V) intake relative to controls. Post-test differences were 0.7 and 1.4 servings for the 2-item and 17-item F&V frequency measures, respectively. Statistically significant positive changes in fat intake, motivation to eat F&V, social support, and efficacy to eat F&V were also observed.

¹ Resnicow, Ken, et al. *Body and Soul*. (*American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, pp. 97–105., doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2004.04.009), 97.

Conclusions: The results suggest that research-based interventions, delivered collaboratively by community volunteers and a health-related voluntary agency, can be effectively implemented under real-world conditions.²

“This project is one of the first effectiveness trials of a dietary intervention, and also one of the first such studies to be conducted in African American churches and with volunteer counselors”³ is stated in the introduction. Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church was placed in the Eat for Life program element, and I was identified as the volunteer liaison for the church. One essential part of our program was Motivational Interviewing. Eleven members of the church volunteered as lay church members of the program, and the American Cancer Society funded our two-day trip to Atlanta for a day and a half of training. We were so excited to attend this training and to be a part of the project. Our training was scheduled for mid-October in 2001. After the events of 9/11, we thought that the trip might be cancelled, but we were still able to attend, of course with the heightened security of air travel. Once we returned, we recruited church members to work with to help them to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Each person was assigned five persons to work with. We provided them preliminary information and then were required to call them twice using the Motivational Interviewing techniques that we learned. We were also required to plan at least three events in a six-month period to provide information and recipes using fruits and vegetables for the entire church. Each of the sixty participants was given an Eat for Life Cookbook and educational pamphlets. The six-month timeframe of this project was a very exciting time for us while I was at Lewis Chapel and there was steady participation in Believers Striving for Health.

² Ibid., 97.

³ Ibid., 98.

General Baptist State Convention (GBSC) and the Baptist Informer

Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church had a deep connection to the General Baptist State Convention, which was the largest black convention in the state. The reason for their connection and support of this entity was because Dr. John Fuller, Sr., our pastor was the president of the Convention at that time. What I learned was that the state of North Carolina was made up of about sixty associations which were led by moderators. The association that Lewis Chapel was affiliated with was Union Association, and it was comprised of about forty-five churches. These sixty associations covered the whole state of North Carolina, and during Dr. Fuller's four years as president of GBSC, he was responsible for leading and supporting about two-thousand five-hundred churches and about a half a million parishioners.

About six months after our moving to Fayetteville, Dr. Fuller asked Dennis to take on the role of the Assistant to the Executive Secretary/Treasurer of GBSC. This role called on Dennis to travel the length and breadth of the state of North Carolina. He preached, provided workshops, and brought greetings on behalf of the Convention.

This was a very busy; but exciting time in the life of our ministry. I was sometimes able to go with him to support him. *The Baptist Informer* was the monthly magazine of the work and ministry of the Convention. Because Dennis was so involved with the convention, he was asked to provide articles on various topics for the magazine. As the passion that I had for health promotion became known, I was asked to provide a monthly article with regard to improving health. For about a year, I encouraged more physical activity, improved nutrition, and giving up tobacco products. I asked Christians to use the power that we receive from the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us to make better decisions for our health individually and for the health of our families and friends. Having this opportunity to write and reach so many who had access to *The Baptist Informer* was a true blessing.

I also was called on to provide or assist with workshops to encourage health for different churches or associations. One person with whom I worked was Dr. Anita Holmes, who led the Center for Health and Healing for the General Baptist State Convention. I truly enjoyed and appreciated the opportunities to promote health, and this work further confirmed what God had called me to. It also helped me to realize that I needed to continue on this path all for the Glory of God.

God Instructs Me to Preach

My journey to accepting my call to preach was a gradual one. I would not say that I ran from God, but I allowed the process to mature in my mind and heart until I was truly sure. I can say that it began with my mentor Mrs. Cora Brown at Friendship Baptist Church. When I or anyone joined the church, Mother Brown, as she is called by many, welcomed you with open arms. She let it be known the second that you arrived that you were not called to come to sit. She was the president of the Amiable Usher Ministry, so of course this was the first ministry that I became a part of. She was also the president of the Leah Missionary Cell, so what did I join next? The Leah Missionary Cell. I was a member at Friendship for eighteen years, and I remained faithful to these two ministries for all of those years. Mother Cora saw something in me and after a few years encouraged me to hold offices for the Amiable Ushers. I eventually was elected president, and I recall the fear that I felt as I led those first couple of meetings for the Amiable Ushers, which was of course the largest usher ministry with up to seventy members. But who was there right beside me to help me to make it through? Yes, Mother Brown. She would also take the time to give me constructive criticism of how I did. One thing that I learned and still adhere to this day are her thoughts on punctuality. If you are calling and running a meeting, you must get there at least ten minutes early, and you must start on time no matter who

is or is not there. She showed that people who are chronically late would learn to do better, especially when it came to attending her meetings.

The Leah Missionary Cell met for monthly teaching and training in mission work. We also adopted a ward at Grady Hospital and made monthly visits to the patients in the gynecological ward. We visited, offered prayer, and brought small items that we knew they would need. Being a part of these ministries truly provided me an opportunity to grow in God's grace.

Of course, since I was raising my two sons, I had an active role in the youth ministries of the church. I helped with Vacation Bible School, youth lock-ins, which allowed for fun activities all night at the local YMCA, and other special youth events. About half-way through my time at Friendship, I was nominated to be the president of the Children's Ministry, which was a true honor. My main duties were to be the youth voice for Sunday school and other ministries involving children and also to plan youth trips. One memorable trip was to the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina.

It was such a blessing to be a part of ministry work and to be used by God. It was during this time that prayer became an integral part of my life. I found myself becoming more and more comfortable with calling on God in an open setting. Often, praying was easier than speaking, and I still feel this way today. One privilege that I was given that really turned my mind and heart toward preaching was when I was asked to be the Women's Day speaker at Friendship in 1995. Oh what an honor! I do not remember what I said, but to be the center attraction to speak on God's behalf was just remarkable.

God, of course, used my marriage to a preacher to help me to continue on the journey of accepting my call. Once Dennis and I got married and I moved to North Carolina, my eyes were truly opened to this possibility. Even though Dennis was not yet a senior pastor, he had pastored

while in the Army in Germany for two and a half years. His desire was to be the pastor of his own church. But the duties that he had at Lewis Chapel and as the Assistant to the Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina provided him with opportunities to preach and teach all across the state. While guiding my youngest son through high school, I quickly fell into ministry mode. And then, after being at Lewis Chapel for about a year, Dr. Fuller, the pastor of Lewis Chapel offered me the position of Assistant to the Director of Christian Education. This allowed Dennis and me both to be on staff, and I thoroughly loved my job. I assisted with planning all of the teaching of the church and was provided many opportunities to lead the teaching. This included Wednesday Bible Study and planning and distributing Sunday school curriculum. Lewis Chapel was very forward-thinking, and when it came time for Vacation Bible School, the twenty mission cells were charged with providing VBS all over the city based on where the deacons of each cell lived. The weeks leading up to VBS, and the actual week of VBS, were very busy, as we planned for all curriculum, supplies, food, and volunteers needed. Each site received visits from my boss, the person on staff who led the Youth Ministry, or me. My position also included running the Lewis Chapel Bookstore. I learned to order books and materials, to keep up with inventory, and to handle the day-to-day operation of the bookstore, which was open every day for four hours. One other responsibility that I had was to transport seniors to the Wednesday noon-day prayer and Bible study. About three hours of my day on Wednesday allowed me to travel around Fayetteville picking up, up to ten seniors to bring them to the church and to return them home. It was a true joy to spend time with these seniors, who exemplified so much faith and joy.

I had mentioned to Dennis the possibility of me announcing my call, and he asked me to continue to be prayerful, but also to follow God's lead. He gave me his full support. A couple of years later, I was once again given the honor to be the Women's Day speaker at Lewis Chapel.

After this experience, I felt certain (of my call) and went to have a conversation with our pastor, Dr. Fuller. He accepted my assertion and asked me when I wanted to make my announcement to the congregation. On the following Sunday, I made the announcement and then was enrolled in licensing classes, which took about six months. I provided my initial sermon and was licensed by Lewis Chapel Baptist Church. I knew that this was just a beginning step, and even today, I still strive to live up to my call. I know that I have progressed, but preaching and teaching, just like everything else in life, is a life-long journey.

First Missionary Baptist Church – War and Peace

About a year after receiving my license to preach, Dennis received what he was hoping and praying for. He was called as senior pastor to First Baptist Church in High Point, North Carolina. It was an historic church, having been the first African-American Baptist church established in High Point in 1871 by former slaves. When he received the call to go there, the building that housed the charge was beautiful and historic, and was almost a century old, having been built in 1907. The call for him as pastor started with a six-month trial period, and after those six months, he was accepted as the senior pastor. He gave up his position at Lewis Chapel and commuted from Fayetteville to High Point, a four-hour round-trip drive for a year. I accompanied him as much as possible during that year while still continuing to work in the Christian Education department at Lewis Chapel. After that year, we finally sold our house in Fayetteville, put a contract on a house in High Point, and left Lewis Chapel Baptist Church. This year was another one filled with change. Along with selling our house and moving to live in an extended stay hotel for six weeks while waiting for our new home to be completed, my youngest son graduated from high school and moved to Washington, D.C. to live with his brother, who was now in the Air Force. It was also three days before my son's graduation that my mother passed away, not surviving the surgery to repair an aneurysm.

In addition to handling all of this change and pain, we were also striving to get accustomed to First Baptist Church. The honeymoon for my husband did not last long, if there was one at all. Once we were in place on a regular basis, it did not take long to learn of the serious struggles of the church. There were many.

The previous pastor had been at the church for thirty-four years, and we learned that he did not have a reputable character. He was a womanizer and cheated on his wife. Additionally, after he passed away and parishioners went to help with clearing out his belongings, in closets, and drawers, empty liquor bottles were found. He was also diabetic and had his leg amputated. But even with his issues, physical and moral, he remained the pastor until his death.

A few years, prior to his death, there was a group within the church that was trying to get rid of him. He found out and moved faster than they did. He garnered enough support to get rid of his opposition first, which included deacons and other leaders. This eventually led to a split of a church that was at one time the most influential African-American Baptist church in the city. What we learned was that when this church split happened a couple of decades earlier, it was the educators, the doctors, and the lawyers (the upper echelon of the congregation) that left. Those who stayed did their best to carry on with a pastor who was disintegrating in every sense, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

A couple of years after the pastor's death, Dennis was called as pastor. This was the history that we stepped into with no knowledge, but it is probably what happened during those two years that was the most detrimental. Of course the membership had declined, but the church still had two deacons who were genuine in their love for Christ and for the church, and they determined that they needed some help. They needed more leadership and more deacons. The issue was the strategy that they used to get additional deacons. They sent letters to members, both current and former, and asked for men who would be willing to step into the role of deacon.

Maybe they disregarded the pattern used in the Book of Acts, which instructs to “Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business,”⁴ because of desperation or the belief that this would not work. But they ended up with a few deacons who left a whole lot to be desired, and it did not take long for Dennis to feel their wrath. There ended up being about twelve members of the church who came against Dennis so strongly that it was pure hell.

Dennis was threatened with bodily harm, and it was made clear by this group and their supporters that they did not want Dennis to lead or to preach. They would come and sit in the pews and turn sideways and scowl. Dennis mentions that one of the deacons who openly and easily opposed him would show up on first Sunday clad with white gloves to serve communion reeking of liquor. After serving parishioners, he would then refuse to accept communion from Dennis. On the next first Sunday, Dennis made a change, and the associate ministers were put in charge of serving communion. This group tried on several occasions to have a meeting to vote Dennis out, but it never worked. This was such a stark contrast to our time at Lewis Chapel, and I found myself wishing that we had never left. Dennis was making half the money that he was making at Lewis Chapel, and I had given up a job that I loved. But this is where God had assigned us to be, so we knew that God called us to be faithful and to give it our all.

Even in the midst of the fire, we did just that, gave it our all. About a year after moving to High Point, I was ordained as a preacher by the Rowan Baptist Association. Remarkably, this was the same association that had ordained Dennis while he was in the military. We taught and preached, and I, of course, started a Health Promotion Ministry. We organized classes to encourage improved nutrition, and I led gospel aerobics twice a week. About two years after being there, we began taking steps to start a non-profit, which we called Spirit, Body & Soul,

⁴ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelsons Bible) Acts 6: 3

Inc. (SB&S). The motto of our non-profit is “Building Healthy Communities One Person at a Time.” We received grants from the City of High Point for two years and developed a tutoring program for two days at the neighborhood elementary school and for two days at the church. During those two years, we worked with about thirty students. Several members of First Baptist provided the tutoring, but we also obtained college students from High Point University to help us, and we provided them with a stipend of ten dollars an hour. During one summer, we also planned and executed a Summer Enrichment Program for girls aged twelve to eighteen. The five-week program focused on lessons of etiquette, proper dress, health, and education, and we ended the program with visit to a local art gallery. While dealing with conflict, God blessed our efforts to impact the community. One note-worthy accomplishment was to place First Baptist Church on the North Carolina National Register of Historic Places. At the time, this beautiful and historic building, which was built in 1907, was very worthy of receiving this distinction.

The time that God kept Dennis at First Baptist Church as pastor lasted for six and a half years. God seemed to divide the time almost equally between war and peace. The opposing crowd’s plan to get rid of Dennis truly backfired. They wrote a letter to the moderator of the Rowan Baptist Association, which was the association that we supported. This letter was signed by about a dozen people including deacons, trustees, and the church clerk who had been in place for several decades. Dennis had been ordained by this association, prior to accepting his first pastorate in Germany, and I had been ordained by them a couple years after coming to High Point.

The opposing group wrote the moderator a letter with a list of charges that they brought against Dennis and in the letter asked that he or a representative would come to straighten things out, namely straighten Dennis out. When the moderator received the letter, he faxed a copy of it to Dennis and asked him what he would like him to do stating that they would not come unless

they received a personal invitation from the pastor. Dennis in turn informed the entire congregation about the letter, the essence of its contents, and asked the congregation if they would like for representatives of Rowan to come to attempt to address the concerns of the letter, which basically accused Dennis of being a dictator when it came to how he was leading the church. One specific complaint was taking away the duty of the deacons to serve communion. The church agreed to a Saturday meeting, with the hope of settling the issues coming from the opposing group once and for all.

The representative who was to come from the Rowan Baptist Association contacted Dennis to determine what would happen at the meeting. After their conversation, the stately pastor who had at that time been pastoring for some forty years, suggested that there needed to be a vote to determine if persons who were on the letter would remain in their perspective offices. Dennis agreed, because it seemed that this was the hope of most of the congregation. Most of the members were truly fed up with this group but wanted the opportunity to vote with a ballot and not with a show of hands or an “aye.” Dennis suggested that he also be placed on the ballot to be voted out as pastor. The representative asked if anyone had mentioned that this take place, and no one had, so he suggested that the ballot only include those who had signed the letter.

For this special meeting, safeguards were put into place to ensure that only members were in attendance. At the time, there were about seventy-five members, and just about every member who could made a point to be there. The Rowan representative opened up with a devotional period and words about the importance of the church and the role of the pastor and the people. He then introduced the ballot and passed it out. The twelve names were listed with the question, “Is this person to remain in their perspective office of the church?” To our amazement, over ninety percent of the vote unanimously voted that each of the persons be

removed from their leadership positions. Quite possibly, these twelve persons were more astonished than we were, because it was their letter of complaint that got the ball rolling.

The by-laws of the church had recently been updated to state that if you did not support the church in attendance or financially for more than ninety days, that the church had the right to drop your name from membership. After not seeing any of these former leaders for ninety days and not receiving any financial support from them, Dennis quickly sent them a letter informing them that they were no longer members of First Baptist Church. He also let them know that if at any time in the future they determined that they would like to restore their membership that he would be happy to sit down and have a personal conversation with them, as the pastor.

After this group left, the decrease in attendance was noticeable, but the peace that replaced the tension was well worth it. People began to fellowship with one another, and it was easy to find camaraderie and commiserating for thirty minutes, even after the benediction was given after Sunday services. We basked in the Lord's goodness and the tranquility that was provided. It was greatly appreciated simply because it was so unusual.

But of course, with about sixty members, though dedicated, it was hard to keep the church going. I had become the church secretary and was handling the finances of the church. As the secretary, the church contracted with me to pay me \$10.00 per hour for twenty hours of work per week. The church was heated by its original boiler system, and the monthly heating bill in the winter could easily be fifteen hundred dollars. There were many times that I gave the money that I earned back, simply to be able to ensure that the financial obligations of the church were met. Dennis was also making a very limited salary. It became clear that our time at the church would soon be winding up. Looking back, I cannot say that I would not have changed this experience or avoided it, if it were left to me, but I do know that God used our experience at First Baptist Church to help Dennis and I grow closer together as a couple and closer to God,

individually and collectively. Watching God handle conflict and coming in to clear out what hindered God's plan is something remarkable to see. Through it all, I gained a better understanding and appreciation of what is recorded in the 55th chapter of the Book of Isaiah: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than you thoughts."⁵

⁵ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelsons Bible) Isaiah 55: 8-9

CHAPTER 6: PROMOTING HEALTH: FULL OF COMPLEXITIES

Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church – Move On and Forward

We enjoyed peace at First Baptist Church for about three years, but also began to realize that our assignment there was winding up. We knew it, and the congregation knew it. We had accomplished what God sent us there to do. About a year and a half prior to our departure, Dennis had sent his information to apply to become the pastor of the vacant pulpit at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem. I remember us going to Winston-Salem and driving to the church to take a look at it. At this point, Dennis had started actively sending his résumé to vacant pulpits. He truly forgot about Morning Star, and a year later, about three to four visitors showed up on a Sunday. Because of the small membership, it was easy to spot visitors. A few weeks later, another small group showed up. Members asked Dennis if he had any idea who these persons were, and Dennis responded that they most likely were members of one of the search committees where he had applied to be pastor and that they were coming to hear him preach. The congregation knew and accepted what was about to happen.

Finally, he got the call from Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church asking if he was still interested in the pastorate. This started a process that took about six months of him going to preach, to teach, and to interview. The candidates were finally narrowed down to him and another pastor from Lexington, North Carolina. The congregation of the pastor in Lexington did not know that their pastor was looking to move to another church and was not happy when they found out. This led him to withdrawal himself from consideration and allowed Dennis to be called as the pastor.

Morning Star is a well-established family church, and the number of members went from about sixty at First Baptist to about two-hundred and fifty at Morning Star. I remember feeling that the sanctuary was somewhat small but was beautiful and had been recently renovated. It

also had a large and lovely Fellowship Hall. An elevator had been installed, along with new classrooms added as part of the renovation.

Thus, it was time to learn new people and to determine how to get to know and engage in ministry. Trying to infuse oneself into an established ministry at a new church is not necessarily easy. I had a background in Christian Education, having been the assistant to the Director at a 3,000-member church, but I did not feel that this was where I belonged. I had a background in handling secretarial work and had learned how to handle finances at First Baptist, but there was no need for me in any of these facets of ministry. My husband did ask me to redesign and implement a course for new members, which was one of my first tasks and which I still handle today. I began to attend Sunday school and ended up teaching the Senior Women's class. I also began to attend the Women's Ministry, which was and is well established by the Director of the Women's Ministry, who was the interim pastor for eighteen months before Dennis was called.

So what do you do if it is hard to insert yourself into the ministry work that is already in place? You call on your go-to passion and see if anyone is addressing the issue of improving health. There was not any sort of ongoing health promotion taking place, so two months after arriving, I started to offer gospel aerobics two days a week. After recruiting a few persons who had an interest and passion to promote health, mostly nurses and retired nurses, about eighteen months after arriving, we officially started the Health Promotion Ministry. Following is our current logo, our theme scripture, and our mission statement:



Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thess. 5: 23

With guidance from the Spirit of God, the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church Health Promotion Ministry will promote healthy lifestyles for members of the church and the community. We will seek to offer guidance for improved spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health through education and encouragement. We will strive to meet the health needs of all ages by partnering with ministries within the church, with community agencies and by becoming involved in the health needs of the community.

Following is a synopsis of the activities and partnerships developed and implemented through the Morning Star Baptist Church Health Promotion Ministry.

- **Gospel Aerobics** – Offering 30 minutes of brisk aerobics two days a week
- **Community Health Day** (with Outreach Ministry) at Forest Park Elementary School
Glucose and blood pressure screenings were provided to parents and staff, along with health-related pamphlets
- **LADIES** – with Gramercy Research Group
 - “Learning and Developing Individual Exercise Skills”
 - 13 women were a part of this 12-week research study
 - Received 24 faith-based lessons to teach and encourage consistent physical activity
- **Health Promotion Moments**
 - Provided each 4th Sunday
 - Provides information to encourage health improvement based on monthly National Health Observances
- **“It’s All About Healthy Living”**
 - A day of promoting improved spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental health

- Usually held on the 4th Saturday of April
- **Partners in Health and Wholeness** (North Carolina Council of Churches)
 - Received \$500.00 for health promotion when bronze level was reached, received \$750.00 when silver level was reached, and received \$1000.00 when gold level was reached; after reaching the gold level, can continue to receive the \$1,000.00 each year
 - Strive to Revive – received an automatic external defibrillator (AED), training for Emergency Response Team, and established Standards of Procedures for its use
- **LADIES Extension Monthly Meetings**
 - Monthly meetings were held to continue the work of the LADIES research study by encouraging steps toward improved health by using spiritual strength
- **Cancer Services**
 - Offers services to congregations through “Body & Soul” program
 - Offered “Cooking Matters,” a six-week free cooking class to learn how to cook healthy on a budget
- **FaithHealth NC** – Congregational Caregivers Training
 - Training focused on four key principles for providing care to church and community members: Right Door, Right Time, Ready to be Treated, and Not Alone
 - 18 persons successfully completed the training
- **Morning Star Community Garden**
 - Has been in existence for 3 years
 - Planting happens in the fall and in the spring
 - Produce is weighed, cleaned, packaged, and provided to the church members and to the community
 - Partner with the Health Department to provide healthy options in the neighborhood community store
- **Diabetes Research Project**
 - Provided 5 participants for Program in partnership with Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center
- **Winston Salem State University – Hosea Project**
 - The goal of this 12-week intervention of encouraging regular exercise and improved nutrition is to reverse pre-diabetes. 15 persons from the church and community participated.
- **Novant Health – Project C.A.R.E. (Congregational Approach to Risk reduction and Empowerment)**
 - The goal of this 12-week program was to reduce the incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular disease through comprehensive wellness services and lifestyle modifications. Twenty persons participated as a part of Morning Star Baptist Church.

What God has allowed the Health Promotion Ministry to accomplish has been amazing. I have led the ministry throughout most of its existence, and my motto has been that once you start a component, you do what you can to keep it going so that the ministry is constantly being added to. We have seen weight lost and cholesterol levels and blood pressures lowered.

As much as we are proud of the success that God has allowed, we have struggled with developing change that would be beneficial regarding the nutritional value of the food served. With children now being diagnosed with Type II diabetes, it is crucial to work to put them on the right track regarding physical activity and improved nutrition. We have made suggestions to our kitchen committee and even provided a pamphlet that detailed suggested changes to improve the nutrition of the food served, but we have had little impact on how food is cooked and what food is served. When events occur, whether it is a funeral, pastor's anniversary, Hallelujah Night, or the cookout for the Easter Celebration, the same menu is used, and for the most part the same high fat, high sugar, and high salt food is purchased. We struggle to get the committee away from the tea and other drinks that are high in calories. We listen for suggestions from others when we attend seminars that promote health and then simply determine that we must bide our time for there are some battles that seem not to be worth fighting.

Here, I mention some of the complexities of encouraging health within the church, but let me now move outside the church and the need for the message of improved health being extended to others. Allow me to go back just for a moment to God's initial charge for me to strive for my own health, and then to preach this message to others who are willing to listen. It stems originally from watching uncles and aunts who suffered long but died early from chronic diseases that are normal for those who are brown like me. It comes from seeing my mother who fought hard to raise four children as her health deteriorated and as I witnessed her struggle with heart disease, strokes, arthritis, gout, and alcoholism. It comes from my realization of God's

grace to give my mother seventy-one years, what seems to be a long time compared to her other siblings, but that is not a long time compared to the normal life expectancy of this country's citizens. It continues when I come to grips with the fact that the average Christian does not have improvement of health on his or her radar, so where does that leave persons who do not confess Christ, especially the poor, the downtrodden, and the average person who is just trying to make it day by day?

Wake Forest School of Divinity: God's Amazing Grace

About the time that God called my husband and me to go to Morning Star, I felt a need to return to school. While knowing that God's charge to me was to make a difference in encouraging improved health, I had come to understand and accept the complexity of this charge. I also wanted to learn as much as I could in order to be as effective as possible as a preacher and teacher of God's remarkable word. I truly believed that God desired to use me but also wanted to equip myself for the assignment that God continues to give to me.

I applied to and was accepted at Wake Forest University – School of Divinity, and by God's grace, I completed the three-year program in two and a half years. My time there was a whirlwind, but it afforded me the opportunity to meet some amazing people. Because it is a welcoming and inclusive community, I was able to meet people who were very different from me whom I would not have met otherwise. I dialogued with persons who were white and Hispanic, many of whom were much younger and some who were older. I planned worship services and worshipped with persons who were gay and transgendered. My fellow students also included persons from various Christian denominations including Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Catholic, along with fellow Baptist sisters and brothers. The amazing part of the time spent with my classmates and professors is that it opened up the opportunity for stories to

be shared. God used my time spent at Wake Divinity School to help me grow more in God's grace. This happened by helping me to come to several revelations.

First, I realized how diverse worship can be. Because Wake Divinity School invites and brings people together from a variety of backgrounds, it also welcomes persons to come bringing their own modes and styles of worship. I have been a part of a black Baptist congregation since I was a child, so I have come to understand and accept how black Baptists worship. I know the beliefs and polity of the black Baptist church. Worship and prayer as planned by my fellow students often were nothing that I was accustomed to. But because I had the opportunity to hear the stories of my classmates, context and culture added to the mix and helped to bring me to an understanding of who they were and what worship meant to them. It helped me to get a glimpse of their God, who I realized was the same God to whom I looked and upon whom I called.

Hearing the stories of my classmates also helped me to become more accepting of who they were, and I realized that many of them were working to become, just as I am. Many of them shared that they were wrestling with life, life issues, who God was, and what God intended for their lives, just like me. I came to understand that they had a sincere love for God, and even as different as we were, we had so many similarities. I also had wonderful professors who not only taught grace, but also lived grace before us. I can truly say that God used this time to help me better to live up to the command of Jesus in Matthew's gospel when He says, "Judge not, that you be not judged."¹

My time at Wake Divinity School ended up helping me to realize the greatness and vastness of our God. Throughout time, God has shown up whenever and however God determined that God would. God is not and cannot be confined. God cannot be placed in a denominational box, or any religious box for that matter. God cannot be confined to sixty-six

¹ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelsons Bible) Matthew 7:1

books. Our mighty and majestic God transcends time and space. After studying at Wake Forest School of Divinity, I can accept others' thoughts of God, as I would hope that others will accept mine. God has a work for each of us, and God expects me to determine who I am to intersect with in the work that God has called me to do.

Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center: The Grim Reality of Chronic Illness

God gave me one additional assignment to remind me of what I am called to do. This particular assignment also continued to point to the complexity of encouraging and promoting health. During one of the summers while at Wake Forest School of Divinity, I went to Alamance Hospital in Burlington, North Carolina to be a chaplain intern in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program. This gave me a preliminary introduction to providing spiritual help to patients admitted to the hospital, while requiring self-reflection and analysis of myself.

After finishing at Wake Forest School of Divinity, I had the privilege to work at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center as a chaplain for two years. These two years were very demanding but were also very rewarding. When first starting in the chaplaincy program, you are asked what type of patients you would like to minister to. Because of the history of heart issues in my family, I chose a cardiology floor and also was assigned the nephrology floor, which had persons suffering from diabetes and many who were on dialysis. Being on-call and having to stay at the hospital overnight was a big part of the ministry work that we were assigned.

One common part of chaplaincy work was being there for families at the time of the death of a loved one. This was definitely the part of the work that took getting used to, but because it happened so frequently, it did not take long. The most traumatic deaths involved children or deaths that occurred because of a tragic event like a car accident or a house fire. While these tragedies caused severe stress to the families and required me to step in to provide needed support, it was the support for patients and their families who suffered with long-term

chronic illnesses that demanded the most attention. It was while ministering to and supporting these patients and their families that I realized the need for families to be educated and encouraged to improve their health to avoid the issues that come with having a loved one with a chronic illness.

One of the most devastating chronic illnesses is diabetes and the complications that it brings. During my two years at the medical center, I witnessed persons who lost their sight, who lost kidney function and had to go on dialysis, and who slowly but surely dealt with amputations beginning with fingers and toes and then moving up to feet and legs. Many of these persons were in denial and could not come to terms with the part that they played in the plight of their illness. Of course, family members struggled with accepting all that their loved one was going through, but in many instances it was easy to see the cycle continuing as many of the youth within these families had already been diagnosed as pre-diabetic. The cycle would continue, if something was not done. Indeed, it was wonderful to be there to give support to patients and families while in the midst of their health crises, but I know that God's charge to me is to educate and encourage steps toward improved health such that by the grace of God, some of the crises could be averted.

FaithHealth: Zip Code Matters

While in my last semester at Wake Forest School of Divinity, I took a class on the Gospel of John, which just happens to be one of my favorite books of the Bible. It was being taught by the new dean, Dr. Gail O'Day. She struck up a conversation with me one day before class got started to inform me of a new executive who was soon coming to the school and to the medical center. She told me of Dr. Gary Gunderson who was coming from Memphis to head up a new division at the hospital that would focus on bringing faith and health together. She knew the

passion that I had for promoting health and felt that I would definitely be interested in the work of this new initiative.

By the time I started my first year of chaplaincy, this new division was in place, and the name of it was FaithHealth. During the early years of the division and its work, Dr. Gunderson was interviewed by Dr. John McConnell, who was then the CEO of Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. One of the key questions that he was asked was why FaithHealth is all one word and the “and” was omitted. Dr. Gunderson responded that English is one language that allows the separation of these two words, but while in Lesotho, South Africa, he learned that words including faith, health, spirit, mind, and body are all encompassed in a singular word, “bophelo.”² Thus, one cannot reference faith without alluding to health. This explanation resonates with me, especially as I link health to followers of Christ individually, and to places of worship collectively. With the two words backed up against each other, a true understanding of FaithHealth can be grasped. What can be read in one of the FaithHealth pamphlets is that FaithHealthNC combines the caring strengths of faith communities with the clinical competencies of health providers to improve health. The movement uplifts people and communities with love and support.³

At this point, let me introduce a philosophy that originates with my husband, but which I have adopted, and which influences me in moving forward to do God’s will. Where people worship and live has changed over time, and in 2017, it is easy not to have many members of a church who actually live within the vicinity or community of the church. Thus is the case with Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church. I would estimate that of our two- hundred and fifty members, probably about ten actually live within walking distance of the church. The majority

² www.wakehealth.edu/Faith-and-Health-Ministries/

³ www.FaithHealthNC.org

of the members drive into the neighborhood for worship and other activities and then drive out of the neighborhood to live the remainder of their lives. My husband's stance is that even though most of our neighbors do not belong to Morning Star, Morning Star belongs to the community. This makes perfect sense to me, if we are serious about the mandate from Jesus to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."⁴ As a faith community, we are called to care about each person, the whole person, and every aspect that constitutes one's health including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

The rise of the FaithHealth movement in Winston-Salem and across North Carolina was perfect timing for me to strive to live up to this command from Jesus. Because the focus of the movement is on the outside as well as the inside of the hospital, I was permitted to use part of my time during my second year as a chaplain to begin work in the community surrounding Morning Star Baptist Church.

The area that surrounds our church is called Columbia Heights, and it is Block Group 2 of census tract 8.01 according to United Census data from 2010.⁵ This data reported 929 residents with the breakdown as follows: 458 or 49.30% Black, 395 or 42.52% Hispanic or Latino, 46 or 4.95% White, and 30 or 3.23% Other Races. The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently published data for a federal program that lists the percentage of the population in CT 8.01 BG2 who had low and moderate income as 90.96%.

The area is about a quarter mile radius and encompasses about five main streets. Morning Star sits in the middle of the area, and one of the main components of the area is Skyline Village Apartments which are fifty buildings of low-income one-level dwellings and

⁴ *The Holy Bible*, (Nelsons Bible) Matthew 5: 16

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php>

is only a block from the church. In the eight years that my husband and I have served at Morning Star, we have seen this complex deteriorate more and more. The residents, which include several who are members or friends of Morning Star, complain of mold, problems with heat and air conditioning, rodents, roaches, trash, and other issues that might deem that the apartments should be condemned. This is the plight of our neighbors, who live in zip code 27107 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. As we attempt to encourage health for ourselves and for our community, we are called to address the plight of the residents of this apartment complex and the entire neighborhood surrounding our church.

Reenacting Spirit, Body & Soul, Inc. (SB&S)

In order to connect with other organizations and agencies interested in attempting to improve the lives of those who live in poor communities, my husband and I decided to restart the use of Spirit, Body & Soul a couple of years ago. As such, we have enacted several initiatives.

We have initiated volunteering in the “Bookworms” program at Forest Park Elementary School, which is the school for our neighborhood. We meet and read with kindergarten and first grade students striving to help them to read at grade level.

We have connected with the Center of Excellence for the Elimination of Health Disparities at Winston Salem State University. They provided us a student intern who helped us to do an assessment of the community by interviewing some of the neighbors.

This student intern provided a presentation to the Forsyth County Department of Public Health and paved the way for SB&S to begin a relationship with them. I introduced our contact from the Health Department to the owner of the neighborhood store in Skyline Village Apartments, and it has now been labeled a Healthy Corner Store. The Health Department is working with them to ensure that healthy food options are available. We

have also gotten to know some of our neighbors by providing them produce from the Morning Star Community Garden. We had a mini-outreach near the store, which consisted of the Health Department; the Rams Know How van from WSSU, which provides health screenings; and the Posey van, which provides screenings for HIV and STDs.

In recent months, we have connected with Rev. David Parsons and his wife Kathy, who are with the North American Mission Board. They provide food, clothes, fellowship, and spiritual support to Skyline Village residents two days a week and have a Skyline apartment that they work from. We give support to their efforts, and they joined in with us in our second mini-outreach. My hope is that we will be in the community supporting our neighbors at least once a quarter, doing something to let them know that we care.

One desire that we have is to offer a Parent Support Group to the community. Within our church and the community are many single mothers who are giving their all to raise their children and grandchildren as best they can. My thought is to bring these mothers together to allow them to determine avenues to offer support to one another. This support group could fall into the category of "Life Groups," according to Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer in their book *Transformational Church*. Life groups are small groups and the primary way people connect within the community.⁶ We understand fully the complicated issues that these women bring to the table. We do not have specialized training that many might think would assist in helping, but we can bring what Stetzer and Rainer deem to be crucial to make a difference. They suggest, and I concur, that small group facilitators need love for the people. They need communication, resources, and

⁶ Ed Stetzer & Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church*. (B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 174.

encouragement. But they must, above all else, love God and God's work in people.⁷ I have a belief within me that God can and will show up to make the positive difference for these mothers, and with God's help, this support group will start soon and will be effective in helping those who are in need.

Since all of the Board Members of Spirit, Body & Soul, Inc. are members of Morning Star Baptist Church, we represent both entities to the community. As we consider helping with the needs of the community, we cannot forget the continued needs within the congregation. What Carlyle Stewart III shares in his book *African American Church Growth* is beneficial to aid in keeping this thought before us. The church engages in the development of programs to meet the needs of both the outer and the inner community. The way the people in one realm are loved, ministered to, and nurtured will influence persons in the other area.⁸ Care and encouragement is needed for all whom we come in contact with, and fostering improved health is necessary for all.

It was over two decades ago that God first spoke to me concerning promoting health. It began with the prophecy to keep on running, which I believed at the time was a message for me and my own health. After all of this time, I have come to understand that God's message ultimately may seem to be about you, but usually it is not. Yes, God calls me to care for my own health, but it is so that I can call others to do the same, so that all can be invited to the party. But it truly does not stop there. It continues on to create opportunities to lift up Jesus, while encouraging improved health for everyone, especially those who society have given up on and

⁷ Ibid., 181

⁸ Carlyle Fielding Stewart III, *African American Church Growth*. (Abingdon Press, 1994) 119.

for many who have, unfortunately, given up on themselves. This charge calls me to encourage the community surrounding Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church.

When God first called me to this work, I believed that with education and encouragement, people would get it. They would easily come to understand that exercise, though not easy, is worth it in the long run. They would hear that it is important to eat more fruits and vegetables, and they would just catch on and do it. They would accept that they and their children would live better lives, if they worked and ensured getting the proper amount of sleep.

But God has provided a serious reality check. The residents of the community surrounding Morning Star are not thinking about exercise, for no one feels safe in a community that is filled with crime. Who wants to walk around a neighborhood that is not only unsafe, but has dogs who are unleashed and is filled with unsightly trash? Even if the residents understand the importance of exercise, they cannot afford to purchase a membership at the local YWCA, and if they could afford it, they do not have the transportation to get there. They stretch their SNAP or food stamp dollars as best they can by purchasing the unhealthy but cheap options, not realizing that they should pay now to eat healthier food for themselves and their families, or pay later with medical costs and suffering and pain. As I have gotten to know many of our neighbors and have heard many of their stories, I have come to realize that their lives are filled with so much drama that they do not understand the concept of restful sleep. This type of life, filled with stress, is unfortunately passed down to the children, which is why the message is so critical.

CHAPTER 7: ENCOURAGING PASTORS AND LEADERS

Drew University

What is the answer? God calls us to make a difference. God calls us to give a voice to the voiceless. God calls us to let the most devastated in life know that they are not alone and that we walk with them. I believe that the answer is always the church. It is not the government, even though it should assist. The answer that God provided is the church.

My husband completed his doctoral work at Drew University at the same time that I completed the work for my Master of Divinity at Wake Forest School of Divinity. I began to believe that my continued learning could be beneficial to the work that I was doing. I was thrilled to read of the emphasis of the Doctor of Ministry program at Drew. It was Congregational Growth and Development with Church Growth Shaped by Community Outreach and Mission. Even with the intensity of continuing my education, my hope was that the rigor would push me with intentionality toward my passion of promoting improved overall health, even with the complexity of the call. Since the answer is the church, what could I do to educate and encourage the church?

Not Easy? But Not a Legitimate Excuse to Remain Unhealthy

Now that God had called me to a true wake-up call, my prayer was, and still is, simply, “what would you have me to do, Lord?” The answer has come in two parts. First, continue to care for my own health and continue to connect with the community to educate, encourage, and impact as much as possible with an underlying message to improve health. Second, share information with church leaders, namely pastors, to ensure that they know and understand the importance of focusing on and promoting health. Most pastors have a passion to help to meet the needs of those who live in our communities, especially the poor. It is a daunting and complex task, but God has reminded me many times that big and overwhelming is not an excuse to do

nothing. We may have to uncover the root causes of where people are, but with no excuses, this is what we need to do. We may have to spend our time, energy, and finances to walk with people, but we move forward to do this. We may have to look past where people are and imagine where they could be, for this is what God allowed others to do for us. There is no excuse to remain unhealthy for us individually or for those whom God calls us to interact with and minister to.

What God Expects of Pastors and Church Leaders

Being married to a pastor and being involved with ministry work, I believe that most pastors truly have an understanding of what God has called them to do, and they take their call very seriously. The message of the gospel is simply good news. Good news that one's belief in Jesus Christ can enhance and bring light to one's life. Pastors and church leaders are called to preach and teach a message of the difference that God can make in one's life if one would simply learn to put his or her trust in God. This difference is all about health and wholeness. Those who God would send us to minister to need to understand how their lives can become healthier and more whole. Once there is an understanding of this possibility, concrete steps of how to make it happen should be developed.

First and foremost, God calls pastors and church leaders to be examples of what they preach. Since working to be healthy is such a crucial part of life and especially the life of a follower of Christ, pastors and church leaders must be seen taking steps to care for their own individual health. I agree whole heartedly with the assertion of Dr. Gwen Halaas when she states that "Healthy leaders and healthy congregations are the sign of a vital and meaningful church in the world."¹ Even with their awareness of this fact, the reality is that the leaders of churches tend

¹ Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, *The Right Road Life Choices for Clergy* (Augsburg Press, 2004) ix.

to lean toward being just as unhealthy as or even unhealthier than the general population. Consider the following report by Paul Vitello in August of 2010 in the *New York Times*. He states, “The findings have surfaced with ominous regularity over the last few years, and with little notice: Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could.”²

We can also invite G. Lloyd Rediger to weigh in as we consider his challenge in his book *Fit to be a Pastor*. He poses the question: “What would happen if all, or nearly all, clergy in a congregation, community, denomination, nation, world, became wholly fit in body, mind, and spirit? Clergy are becoming conscious of health and fitness issues, but many are unfit. The popular expectation concerning clergy is that we will be advocates and models for the good and healthy things in life. Therefore we now have a choice: Will we help lead the fitness movement in the USA or will we be followers—or worse simply observers?”³

Of course, these findings and statements are specific to all clergy. If the pool is limited to African-Americans, the results are even bleaker, simply because the health of blacks in general is worse than their counterparts. African-Americans continue to suffer disproportionately from health disparities when compared to other ethnicities, according to a 2007 report from the Centers for Disease Control.⁴ Also, according to 2010 census data, African-Americans, the second-largest minority group in the United States, suffer disproportionately from several diseases and cancers each year.⁵ Lastly, morbidity rates for African-Americans were higher than

² Paul Vitello, *Taking a Break from the Lord’s Work* (New York Times) 1.

³ G. Lloyd Rediger, *Fit to be a Pastor* (Westminster John Knox Press) 167.

⁴ Crystal Lumpkins, *Promoting Healthy Behavior from the Pulpit: Clergy Share Their Perspectives on Effective Health Communication in the African American Church* (Journal of religion and health 52.4, 2013), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

Caucasians for strokes, colon cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer, also reported by the CDC in 2007.⁶

These statistics call African-American clergy and leaders to a fight for themselves and for those to whom God calls them to minister with regard to health. If health is not promoted and sought, the people who make up congregations will not be proactive in God's call to seek and save souls and fighting injustice because they will be reactive as they deal with the health issues that they will be confronted with. A first step will be to educate and encourage pastors to learn about what should happen for them to care for their own health.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

CHAPTER 8: THE PROJECT: PASTORS' RETREAT

Purpose

My thought process told me that if pastor's could be influenced to take some time from their busy schedules that maybe they could be convinced of the need to care for their health and also learn what steps would be beneficial for them individually. A few months after finishing my second year as a resident chaplain, I began to do contract work with FaithHealth as a connector. In this role, I attempt to help people in their health journeys by ensuring that they have what they need. I had been in conversation with Dr. Teresa Cutts, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Sciences & Health Policy for Wake Forest School of Medicine and a supporter of the work of FaithHealth. She had worked with Dr. Gunderson in Memphis, and they were now bringing the expertise of their work to Winston-Salem. She related that they had developed and used a program in Memphis to encourage improved health for clergy that might give the foundation for what I wanted to do.

The Life of Leaders: An Intensive Health Program for Clergy

The name of the program was "Life of Leaders: An Intensive Health Program for Clergy." This was a clergy health intervention for United Methodist clergy, and it was directed by Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare Center of Excellence in Faith and Health.¹

In the introduction of this article, it is reported that clergy show worse mortality rates than non-clergy due to chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, which are on the rise in the United States. A survey of all United Methodist clergy in North Carolina found alarmingly high rates of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and arthritis, when compared to their North Carolina counterparts. But even with these statistics, it was suggested that clergy will be

¹ Teresa Cutts, *The Life of Leaders: An Intensive Health Program For Clergy* (Journal of religion and health, 2011), 1.

difficult to convince to participate in health programming. This is due to the fact that despite these high rates of disease, clergy perceive better physical health functioning than non-clergy. This makes careful consideration of clergy programming very important.² This leads me to wonder if clergy may believe that they have a certain immunity to disease because of the call that God has placed on their lives. Might they believe and expect divine intervention from God because God knows how committed and passionate they are about doing God's will and work? This thinking, along with time constraints and the difficulty of taking steps toward real change, does point to the need for creative and resourceful intervention for pastors and church leaders to truly improve their health.

In addition to what clergy may erroneously perceive concerning their health, the Life of Leaders article also stresses four categories of stressors that clergy must contend with that are unique to their vocation: vocational stressors (inadequate pay, low work satisfaction, unrealistic time demands, relocation); intrapersonal stressors (emotional exhaustion, burnout, low personal satisfaction, sense of failure); family stressors (low family satisfaction, lack of family time, lack of privacy); and social stressors (high expectations regarding behavior, criticism, intrusiveness, lack of social support).³ The good news is that while clergy cope with a lot of stress, they also experience high levels of vocational satisfaction, fulfillment, and joy.⁴ If clergy can experience fulfillment while serving in the midst of dealing with health issues, just imagine the ecstasy that one could have when they work toward being as healthy as possible. As much as improving health begins with one taking time to do an individual evaluation, there is much more to consider, especially for clergy.

² Ibid., 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The actual program centered on a two-day executive physical and leadership development retreat and began with pre-retreat work and ended with post-retreat check-ins. A cohort of 10 to 12 clergy who shared a commonality began by completing assessment materials that provided not only needed health information, but also information on their spiritual and other strengths. They completed Your Health Journey Narrative, the Values in Action Strengths Survey, the short version of the Myers-Briggs, and a survey and health risk appraisal, which included information on spiritual strengths. They also received consent to receive primary care medical records dating back five years. Participants were asked to choose up to three “Concierge Services” in advance, and they could report any specific dietary needs and if they had a preference for a male or female physician.⁵

A multi-disciplinary Life Practitioner Team was assembled prior to the retreat. This team was made up of physicians, health coaches, dietitians, exercise physiologists, acupuncturists, massage therapists, and Pilates and yoga instructors. Each person on the team had an understanding of ministry life.⁶ As clergy prepared for this two-day retreat, they were encouraged to gain advance support for participating in the Life of Leaders from their supervisors and congregations.⁷ It could be of great benefit if the entire congregation was informed of the plans of their pastor and if they could, more importantly, see the value in what the program would offer to their pastor and ultimately to them.

The retreat for the Life of Leaders Program was set up for the participants to fly to Memphis, with a Director of Hospitality who met them at the airport. The focus of day 1 of the retreat was assessment. Phlebotomists came to the participants’ hotel rooms to draw blood after they had fasted the night before. They received a thorough physical exam, with at least an hour

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

of face time with their physician. They received a full optometry examination, gross hearing screening, spirometry, chest x-ray, full chemical panel of bloodwork, and EKG.⁸

Each participant also underwent a 30-minute exercise and movement assessment to evaluate functional muscle strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and range of motion. They spent 45 minutes with a registered dietician, who reviewed bloodwork findings, dietary data, chronic conditions, and family history and helped with developing an individualized eating plan. On day 1, each clergy also spent 90 minutes with a health coach who added spiritual and assets-based dimensions. These dimensions focused on the positive aspects of the assessment. Day 1 ended with a communal meal and an interactive concert.⁹

The focus of day 2 was health discernment and enjoyment. The results of the assessment of day 1 were shared with the participants by their physician and health coach. Each participant received hard copies of the findings and recommendations for enhancing health. There was plenty of time allowed for participants to ask questions and engage in interactive learning. The participants then engaged in their selected concierge services, which could include acupuncture and/or complementary medicine consult, behavioral sleep consult, financial counseling, holistic pain management, massage, extended nutritional consultation, personal training for exercise, Pilates, preventive cardiology, therapeutic pool time, and yoga. A staff member with dual “faith-health identity” offered a ten-minute meditation on faith and health. Clergy also participated in an interaction class on meditative prayer, learning to combine relaxing and meditative postures with prayer and scripture. The day ended with debriefing that challenged participants to think of ways they could share their personal learning when they returned to their respective work, congregations, or ministries.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Life Practitioner Coaches checked-in with their participants once a quarter for a year after the retreat. A gift was provided mid-year with the hope of reminding the participants to stay the course. The participants were also encouraged to reach out to their Life Practitioner Coach at any time.¹¹

There were four Guiding Principles of the Life of Leaders Program. All aspects of the Life of Leaders is undergirded by the Leading Causes of Life framework, which includes five leading causes of life: 1) Connection, or how you are in relationship to others within webs of trust; 2) Coherence, or how you define the meaning of your life and tell your story; 3) Agency, or the ability to do; 4) Blessing, and intergenerational foci on how you are in relationship with our ancestors and future generations; and 5) Hope.¹² Rather than focus on what is negative and leading to destruction and death, the emphasis of these five leading causes of life is to target what is positive and leads persons to strive to live.

The second guiding principle is Holistic Health with individualization. While examining physical activity, nutrition, and spiritual well-being, the team was led by the participant. The participant “partnered” with the healthcare team, which embodies a holistic approach to enhancing quality of life for body, mind, and spirit.¹³

Church Health Center (CHC) in Memphis is a comprehensive ministry for the under-served that seeks to reclaim the Church’s commitment to care for our bodies and spirits. It offers four ministries: a primary care clinic, a health plan for the under-served, outreach to the faith communities, and a wellness center. The third of the guiding principles is the use of these

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Ibid.

ministries for Life of Leaders program and offering care to the participants in the context of ministry for the poor.¹⁴

The fourth guiding principle was Clergy Leadership. Even though the participants were receiving care, the focus is on their primary role as leader, and not as patient. When the focus is on the principle of Clergy Leadership, those who are administering the program understood that the true task asked of clergy is transforming not just one's own health or even that of one's congregation, but rather of the community.¹⁵ This thought truly resonates with my belief in the transformation that is possible when a pastor or church leader takes control of his or her own health and also begins to advocate for the health of others, whatever that may look like.

This report indicates that rather than assuming that the health of clergy is determined solely by acts of individual clergy, the researchers propose multiple levels of influence, as defined by the Socioecological Framework (SEF): Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Congregational, denomination-specific Institutional, and Civic Community.¹⁶ The Life of Leaders intervention intersects with this framework. The Intrapersonal level consists of an individual's beliefs and characteristics. The Interpersonal level consists of relationships between the individual and key persons and small social networks, such as one's spouse, family, and close friends. The Community of Congregational level consists of shared identities, experiences, and resources for health. The Institutional level consists of rules, regulations, policies, and ethos that may promote or endanger health.¹⁷ When all of these personal and communal influences are considered and brought to bear, it is easy to understand the complexity of encouraging improved health for church pastors and leaders. Even with the complexity, the Life of Leaders Health Program

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

offered a framework for tackling this much needed issue. The abstract of the article suggests that persons wishing to improve the health of clergy may wish to implement Life of Leaders or borrow from its guiding principles.¹⁸ I determined that I would use the framework of the Life of Leaders program to plan, establish, and implement a retreat for pastors in the area surrounding Winston-Salem, North Carolina as my project.

I am very involved with two ministries. One is the Rowan Baptist Association, the association that ordained me after being at First Baptist Church for a couple of years. I love the work of this association and have served as the Dean and the President of the Congress of Christian Education. The other organization is the Ministers' Conference of Winston Salem & Vicinity (MCWS&V). My time with them is not as long, but this organization has a history of tackling the issues that allow injustice to perpetuate. Both organizations gives me access to many pastors and congregations. I determined that I would invite persons from these two organizations to assist me in planning and implementing my project.

Lay Advisory Council (LAC)

I realized the importance of developing a strong lay Advisory Council for my project. Savage and Presnell suggest that a requirement of the postmodern approach is working with a select laity team who will help identify the focus of research; help plan, execute, and evaluate it; and remain in reflective theological dialogue with the leader or researcher. They also add that the team should be persons of maturity, faith, and sound judgment and should consist of persons with whom the leader or researcher can work effectively, productively, and joyfully.¹⁹ God blessed in providing persons who met all of the aforementioned requirements and more.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁹ Carl Savage & William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry*. (Oates Institute, 2008), 77.

I was able to secure two persons with exemplary qualifications to serve as co-leaders of the Lay Advisory Council. Since the plan was to use the Life of Leaders program as a foundation of my project, it only made sense to ask Dr. Teresa Cutts to be a part of my Lay Advisory Council. Knowing how busy Dr. Cutts is, I was pleasantly surprised when she said yes to my request. In addition, while finishing my second year resident chaplaincy program, I was in conversation with Jeremy Moseley, who was working with community outreach for FaithHealth. He mentioned that Dr. Anita Holmes was coming to talk with Dr. Gary Gunderson, and that she might be considering coming to work with FaithHealth. I told him that I knew Dr. Holmes and had worked with her over a decade ago, while living in Fayetteville through the General Baptist State Convention. He assured me that it was the same person, and that he had worked for her in the past. It was wonderful to reconnect her with her in the new FaithHealth movement. As her work with FaithHealth evolved, she began to work closely with Dr. Cutts. I was very pleased when Dr. Cutts and Dr. Holmes agreed to co-lead my Lay Advisory Council. It was a blessing to have two such remarkable, dedicated, and humble researchers to lead the team to plan and implement my project.

I distributed an invitation to Rowan and MCWS&V leaders to invite additional persons to be a part of my Local Advisory Council (See Appendix A). One LAC member was Rev. Dee McCollough, who is a friend and colleague; an Associate Minister of First Baptist Church in Winston Salem; and a member of MCWS&V. Dr. Althea Taylor-Jones contributed to the LAC and also played a part on the interdisciplinary team for the project. She is a retired professor and Gerontology Program Coordinator from Winston Salem State University. Another friend, Rev. C. Anthony Jones, was a part of the LAC. He is the pastor of United Cornerstone Baptist Church in Winston Salem, is a member of the MCWS&V, and is also my classmate in the Doctor of Ministry program. His church is also a part the Rowan Baptist Association. The last member of

the LAC was Rev. Jerry Arnette. He is a friend and colleague and is also an associate minister of Morning Star Baptist Church.

Recruitment of Pastors

I also invited pastors to participate in the project through the Rowan Baptist Association and the MCWS&V by distributing a flyer (See Appendix B). As I initially spoke with my LAC co-leaders, we at first wanted to plan for two teams of four pastors. Recruiting was not as easy as I thought it would be. With only a couple of weeks before the implementation of the project, we finally settled on having two teams of three pastors, with a total of six participants. I secured two pastors from Rowan, and one of these pastors was a graduate of the Doctor of Ministry program at Drew. One pastor stepped up who was involved with Rowan and the MCWS&V. There were two additional pastors who were a part of the MCWS&V, and one of these pastors was also a Drew Doctor of Ministry graduate. The last participant heard of my need for help with the project and decided to volunteer his time. All of the participants were African-American. Two were female, and four were male pastors. The age range of the pastors was from about thirty-five to around seventy.

Health Provider Teams

A team of Health Providers worked with each of the pastors. The Health Provider Team consisted of a medical practitioner, a life practitioner, an exercise specialist, and a dietitian. Dr. Teresa Cutts and Dr. Althea Taylor-Jones, who were part of the Local Advisory Council, took on the role of life practitioner. The medical practitioners and dieticians were from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and our neighbor hospital, Novant, and they graciously gave of their time. We had three students majoring in exercise science from Winston Salem State University who worked around each other's schedules to provide the exercise piece for the pastors.

Leaders' Life Program

Dr. Cutts had permission to use the Life of Leaders program as a framework when she left Memphis, but in order to distinguish our program, we changed the title to Leaders' Life. In addition, our program was scaled down in order to fit within our project scope and budget.

Each pastor was provided a twenty-five page document. The first four pages are included as Appendixes C through F. Appendix C is the introductory and thank you letter to the pastor. Appendix D provides a checklist to make it easy for the pastor to ensure completion of all pre-retreat items. Pastors could choose their first, second, and third choices of concierge services for the second day of the retreat by completing Appendix E. A description of each concierge service is detailed in Appendix F.

This document included four additional questionnaires that provided personal information for each pastor. The first questionnaire is the Leaders' Life Health Risk Appraisal and consisted of twenty-five questions. Requested information included date of birth, weight, blood pressure, and A1C. There were questions about tobacco and seat belt use. The amount and frequency of physical activity were captured, along with information concerning eating habits. The amount of water and salt consumed were requested, along with explaining one's stress and anxiety level. The last two questions focused on one's level of religion or spirituality and how helpful one's faith was while suffering from an illness.

The short form of the Leading Causes of Life Survey consisted of fifteen questions to be answered with a range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Connection, coherence, agency, blessing, and hope were evaluated with fifteen questions. Following are some examples of the questions asked. "On most days I experience meaningful connection to a loved one." "I am able to talk to my loved ones about things that really matter." "I think in some way that my life is making the world a better place for the next generation."

There were also fifteen questions to answer in Your Health Journey Narrative. The participants were allowed to answer these questions in their own words. A sampling of these questions included: “When you think about your health at this stage of your life and ministry, what is on your mind the most?” “What is your major health concern?” “What are you passionate about in your life?” “What drains your spirit?” “What are your challenges to engaging in healthy behaviors?”

The last questionnaire of this twenty-five page pre-package was the Personality Profile Questionnaire. There were four categories that asked the participant to provide answers on individual topics. Two categories provided information by answering what stimulates you and what is significant to you. The other two categories gave insight as to how the participants made decisions and how they handled life. Each category had eleven pairs of words or phrases. The participants were instructed to choose one or the other and were to go with their initial response and not to spend time reflecting on their response. Options within “What stimulates you” were “Being in the spotlight” or “Being in the background.” Choices under the category of “What is significant to you” were “Want details” or “Want the big picture.” Within “How you make decisions,” one could choose “Head” or “Heart,” and two options within “The way you handle life,” were “Firm” or “Flexible.”

The last page of this pre-package document told the pastors what to expect from Leaders’ Life and is included as Appendix G. There was also one questionnaire that was emailed separately. This was the Values in Action Survey. While answering the forty-eight questions of this survey, the participants were asked to choose on a scale of “Very much like me” to “Very much unlike me.” Some of the statements that the participants had to respond to were: “I am thrilled when I learn something new is.” “I tend to make snap judgements is.” “No matter what

the social situation, I am able to fit in is.” “Pain and disappointment often gets the better of me is.” “I always look at the bright side is.”

The information from the pre-package document was requested to be returned about two weeks before the retreat. You will notice that there was a wide range of information requested from the pastors. This allowed the life coaches really to get to know the pastors ahead of time and gave them insight into how to engage and advise them during the retreat.

Highlights of Each Day of the Retreat

It was wonderful to see how the pastors showed up ready to participate fully in the activities of the retreat. The Schedule of Activities is shown in Appendix H. As we began Day 1, we asked the pastors to complete the Pre-Retreat Survey, and at the end of Day 2, they completed the Post-Retreat Survey. These are shown as Appendix I and J. I will explain the details of these two Appendices later in the Feedback and Findings Section. As we began, each pastor also completed the Consent Form, which is Appendix K. God truly blessed our time together. During the welcome and purpose, Dr. Cutts and Dr. Gunderson laid the foundation of the overall purpose of the Leaders’ Life program. As Dr. Gunderson shared his thoughts of the need to focus on the Leading Causes of Life, questions that are posed in his book of the same title ring true. The following question is posed. “What adult with children and a family, living in a neighborhood, participating in a worshipping community, trying to do useful, lasting work, would not want to understand the causes of life?”²⁰ Pastors might be asked, “What pastor with a congregation to serve, with a community that needs hope and assurance, serving a gracious and loving God, would not do all that they can to take steps to live and to encourage life for everyone whom they encounter?”

²⁰ Gary Gunderson & Larry Pray, *Leading Causes of Life*. (Gary Gunderson, 2009), 12.

All of the Health Providers and all of the pastors showed up, and from what I could see they truly connected with one another. All pastors were provided their own individualized itinerary, and they each followed it willingly. There were a couple of times that conversation between pastor and provider ran over the allotted time and had to be interrupted to keep on schedule. They were so engaged in discussion that they lost track of time. It did not seem that a lot of down time was built into the schedule, but the library quickly became the place to congregate and connect. During the day, as many as three to five pastors were in the library waiting for their next meeting. Laughter and joy were heard, which showed quickly that they appreciated the time away from their hectic schedules. On Day 1, each pastor kept his or her schedules and met with the four Health Providers.

The morning of Day 2 allowed pastors to meet with their Medical and Life Practitioners for an hour to receive their results and recommendations via the Health Summary report. Appendix L provides a generic example of the information that was included in this report. This time provided the participants the opportunity to receive an understanding of all of the pre-retreat surveys and questionnaires. The details of each category were highlighted, and the Section on “Recommendations for the Future” gave the pastors specific suggestions for health improvement based on the overall report. The dietician and the exercise coaches provided input for this section, even though they did not meet with the pastors on the second day. These recommendations were provided by their Medical and Life Practitioners.

The pastors also had the opportunity to take part in their choice of concierge services on Day 2. One thing that we did not expect, but had to accept, is that one pastor did not choose any of the services. I initially thought that he had skipped the selections by mistake, but when I contacted him to ask, he pointed out that the instructions indicated that participating was optional. We had not considered what a participant who opted out would do with his or her time.

It worked out for this pastor in that he did not have to arrive on Day 2 until 11:00 a.m... All of the other pastors chose three of the services. The highlight of the services was definitely the massage therapy. The young lady who came to provide this service brought her portable table, and each pastor raved about this service. Even after finishing their twenty-minute treatment, they were trying to bribe those who were waiting to give up their spot. One of the female pastors said that it took her all of two minutes to fall asleep. It was wonderful to afford these dedicated pastors the opportunity time truly to relax and unwind. Two pastors chose “broga” (yoga for brothers) as an option. The young man who led them was grateful for an opportunity to introduce yoga to two African-American pastors. He stated that it is hard to get black men to try any new exercise, especially yoga. I had the opportunity to join them for half of the session and quickly realized that yoga is quite intense and calls on the use of muscles not used in running. I did not mind when I realized that I needed to go to check to ensure that everyone was keeping up with their schedules. When I came back about fifteen minutes later, I had to encourage them to stop in order to be ready for lunch. I had two participants sign up for gospel aerobics, and they enjoyed the upbeat music and kept up quite well.

I had secured Rev. Valerie Hicks, who is an associate minister at Morning Star, to provide a healthy lunch for the second day. She had recently finished her culinary training at Second Harvest Food Bank. I asked that she incorporate an educational component into the meal. “Food for Body & Spirit” provided so much more than I expected, and the décor provided the ambience of a five-star restaurant. The menu consisted of cashew-crusting lemon-thyme spiced tilapia, parmesan-crusting parsley-herbed chicken, fresh turnip greens, roasted turnips, golden potatoes, seasoned multi-grain rice medley, whole wheat rolls, whole wheat lemon pound cake with chantilly cream and fresh strawberries, fresh squeezed raspberry lemonade, and strawberry-lime-, and basil-fused water. The food was fresh, nutritious, and delicious, and Rev.

Hicks took the time to cover and provide several handouts which included “Foods to include in your diet and to avoid during the Daniel Fast,” “10 herbs that heal,” “Health Benefits of Nuts,” “Health Benefits of your Favorite Fruits,” “7 Greens You’re Probably Not Eating (but should be),” and “What is Salt and How does it Affect Health.” Thus, the end of the retreat armed the participants with plenty of information to use to improve their diets after a wonderful dining experience.

Findings and Feedback

I have inserted the ratings of the pastors in Appendix I and J for the Pre-Retreat and Post-Retreat Surveys. When looking at the numbers circled in the Pre-Retreat Survey, most answers fell between five and six, indicating that the pastors were not necessarily consistent or intentional in taking steps to care for their health at the beginning of the retreat. Of the six pastors, there was one who circled ten for each pre-retreat question, but the remainder of the pastors chose numbers as low as two and three for some of the questions. The one question that received the lowest overall score was number five, which stated, “I have developed a method to handle stress and use it on a consistent basis.” The mediocre responses to this question point to an area of health that pastors and church leaders tend to neglect. Dr. Halaas stresses the importance of appropriately handling stress in her book, *The Right Road, Life Choices for Clergy*. She states that though stress is inevitable, coping well (with stress) means anticipating what you can and planning for the time and support needed to deal with things effectively. It is attending to self-care to maximize your health and wellness and having and using a support network of individuals to give physical and emotional support and advice.²¹ The exciting results are seen in the Post-Retreat Survey, as all nines and tens were chosen. All pastors indicated that they had a

²¹ Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, *The Right Road Life Choices for Clergy*. (Augsburg, 2004), 29.

better understanding and had picked up some ideas that they could use to improve their health. This included them being more aware of the stress in their lives and doing what they could to recognize and diminish it.

Toward the end of our delicious meal, Dr. Gunderson led a discussion on final thoughts and impressions from the participants. Dr. Anita Holmes graciously captured the comments made during the debriefing. They are included in Appendix M. Overall, the feedback was positive regarding what the pastors felt concerning the retreat experience, but there was one area that provided room for improvement if additional retreats are planned. The comments made included, “Little disappointed in the exercise part” and “Have a little more on the assessment and exercise piece—attainable, demonstrate.” Dr. Teresa Cutts expounded that the exercise assessment was not as thorough as it could have been, in terms of measuring strength, range of motion, pulmonary function capacity, etc. Normally, these data offer very concrete individual data to the participants that could be used as benchmarks to work against and be re-assessed in the future, showing their progress in those areas.

There were comments that pointed to the need for other pastors to be exposed to this type of experience. These included: “Need to expose other pastors to the experience,” “Provides ‘wake-up’ call,” and “Whole concept is to change the mindset of clergy.” These statements show that these six pastors not only accepted their need for education and encouragement to improve health for themselves, but saw how beneficial this would be for their colleagues who labor in the vineyard.

The dialogue from the group highlighted a sensitivity to and consideration for female pastors when moving forward with other cohorts. It was stated that a female cohort piece would be beneficial. The fact that pastors often have concerns and feel there is nowhere to go is

compounded for females. If women pastors and leaders are targeted, specialized sessions and offerings could be planned to address their needs.

As Day 2 came to a close, it showed that these pastors left armed with information and encouragement to take steps toward better health. They all seemed to be excited and a little more relaxed as they left to return to their God-given assignments.

Site Visit

In April, my Advisor, Dr. Donna Ciangio, came to Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church for my Site Visit. Both of the co-leaders of my Lay Advisory Council were there, with a couple of other members, along with my husband. We shared information of how the project went and the impact that it had on the participants. All who were there shared the effectiveness of the retreat. Appendix N shows the agenda for that day.

CHAPTER 9: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

As I continue on this journey to promote and encourage health, my hope is to carry on in several ways. First, my desire is that this foundational Leaders' Life program will proceed such that other pastors will be granted the opportunity to receive similar vital information to assist them with being as healthy as possible. There are so many avenues that can be pursued. Since I am involved with two ministry bodies, the pastors within the Rowan Baptist Association and the pastors of the Minister's Conference of Winston-Salem & Vicinity can be solicited. The timeframe might be shortened to a single day or lengthened to a whole weekend, but the categories of health to include exercise, nutrition, and stress management must be emphasized. The program could be adjusted to target a specific audience, such as women, as was the suggestions from the debriefing session. Pastors and their spouses could be a target group, and the move could be away from just pastors to overall church leaders. Regardless of what a retreat for future leaders might look like, my hope and prayer is that these retreats happen.

My journey to promote health to those whom God places in my path will continue. Because of the time needed to complete the Doctor of Ministry degree, I stepped aside from leading the Health Promotion Ministry at Morning Star for the last two years, even though I remained a member. With graduation approaching, I will step back in as president hopefully to continue with what we already do and to add some new programming. I also suspended providing gospel aerobics for about a year, but my hope is to get that started back within the next few months. To move in this direction, the Health Promotion Ministry is currently planning an Exercise Extravaganza to highlight and encourage various ways of exercise to include yoga, praise craze, gospel aerobics, sittersize, walking and running.

God has placed a few women in my life with the charge to encourage them specifically. Each of them has a love for ministry work, but they also tend to neglect the care that they need to

demand for themselves to ensure that they will be able to carry out the assignments that God gives to them. I encourage them when they least expect it by gently but intentionally reminding them to watch what they eat and to exercise. They must take the time to care for themselves.

Our work in the community will of course always have an underlying message of health improvement, but we realize that getting to the point of delivering that message is a process. It's most likened to an onion where layers have to be peeled off before you get to what is really important. The layers of some of the people to whom God provides for us to minister and help may include mistrust, guilt, shame, apathy, denial, and pain. I now have come to understand and accept with the complexity of people's lives each connection that we make moves us toward removing those layers and is essentially promoting health. As these layers are peeled back, health improvement will become more apparent and also easier.

This points to a journey that does not end. Just as my personal health journey is ongoing, my journey to encourage and educate others toward improved health is ongoing. It is complicated and difficult, but it is what God has called me to. With and by God's grace, the journey continues!

PASTORS:



BE AN EXAMPLE IN CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH

You are Invited to be a part of my:

LAY ADVISORY COUNCIL (LAC)

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

For Rev. Charolette Leach

- I will need your help with the planning and implementation of my project encouraging improved pastor health
- I will try to limit your time commitment for planning to no more than 6 hours, with no more than 3 meetings and only 1 meeting in person
- The first meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2016 at 6:00 PM at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in Winston Salem
- The actual project will require up to 1.5 days and will take place in late January or early February 2017

Please send email to chleach@northstate.net or
Call 336-885-7620 if you would like to help or need more info

Appendix A

PASTORS:



BE AN EXAMPLE IN CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH

ROWAN PASTORS ARE INVITED

TO PARTICIPATE IN:

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

For Rev. Charolette Leach

- You will provide needed input for the completion of my project
- About 1.5 days of your time will be needed in late January or early February, 2017
- ***The Life of Leaders: An Intensive Health Program for Clergy*** will lay the foundation for this project
- You will share your stories of caring for your health and will receive beneficial information to use going forward

Please send email to chleach@northstate.net or
Call 336-885-7620 if you would like to help or need more info

FaithHealthNC

Dear Dr. XXX:

We are so excited that you are joining us for our day and a half retreat to encourage pastors to care for their health. The time that you will give will also help Rev. Charolette Leach to fulfill the requirements for her Doctor of Ministry project. It will truly be a win/win for everyone. The foundation of our time together will be based on the Leaders' Life process.

The retreat will take place on February 6 and 7, 2017 at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church at 1400 Fitch Street in Winston Salem, North Carolina. Please plan to arrive on Monday, February 6 at 8:45 AM.

You will find enclosed a number of materials for pre-work completion prior to your event. There is also a final checklist to aid you and/or your administrative assistant in completing the process. Your completion of the pre-work documents in a timely fashion is greatly appreciated.

We also need to have a copy of your most recent lab work and wellness exam findings. As you will note on the release form, medical information will go directly to Dr. Rachel Zimmer, NP-C. Please refer to the checklist for instructions on relaying that information.

Rev. Charolette Leach will be following up with gentle nudging via phone calls and e-mails to you and your staff, to aid you in completion of pre-work materials and getting your records to us. This will enable us to provide the most tailored and professional experience for you during the retreat.

Please don't hesitate to contact Rev. Charolette Leach at (336-885-7620, home or 336-689-5162, cell or e-mail chleach@northstate.net) if you have any concerns or questions. We look forward to your time with us Feb. 6-7, 2017 in Winston Salem.

With Hope for Healing,

Gary Gunderson, M.Div, D.Min, D.Th (Hon)

Teresa Cutts, Ph.D.

Anita Holmes, J.D., M.P.H.

Appendix C

FaithHealthNC

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL TASKS LISTED IN THE CHECKLIST BELOW and CONTACT REV. CHAROLETTE LEACH IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS: phone (336) 689-5162 or e-mail, CHLEACH@NORTHSTATE.NET. For completing electronically, please drag entire file to desktop, complete with underlined responses, save, then attach separately to e-mail (chleach@northstate.net). Or, if you prefer, print hard copy of word documents, complete (make a copy for your files) and mail to 1600 Staley Road High Point, NC 27265

_____ Complete the **Your Preferences Sheet**

_____ Complete **Your Leaders' Life Health Risk Appraisal or HRA**

_____ Complete your **Leading Causes of Life Survey – Short Form (SF)**

_____ Complete the **Your Health Journey Narrative**

_____ Complete the **Personality Profile Questionnaire.**

_____ Complete the **Values in Action Strength Survey (separate attachment).**

_____ Give the **Release of Information (separate attachment)** to your primary care provider and ask for the last two years' of records/summary to be sent to Dr. Rachel Zimmer, NP-C, Wake Forest Baptist Health Medical Center Boulevard Winston Salem, NC 27157 or faxed to (336) 713-8252. If you have copies of your records, you may send these directly to Dr. Zimmer at the address above.

_____ **Note dress suggestions.**

PLEASE RETURN THIS CHECKLIST WITH YOUR OTHER MATERIALS. MANY THANKS!

Appendix D

CONCIERGE SERVICES: Your Preferences:

Please skim the list below of concierge services which will be available to you during the Leaders’ Life experience. See attached description sheet (next page) for more information about these services. Then pick your top 3 choices (if any) or write in any special requests or interests you have for your experience here with us.

Rank: 1, 2 & 3 choice

- Behavioral Sleep Consult** _____
- Facial** _____
- Broga (Yoga for Brothers)/Yoga** _____
- Aromatherapy/Hand Care** _____
- Massage Therapy** _____
- Gospel Aerobics** _____

Please let us know if you have any other special requests or interests to explore while going through the Leaders’ Life process.

Dress for the Leaders’ Life process:

Please dress casually and comfortably and come prepared for movement (sweatsuit and tennis shoes are ideal).

Preparation:

Complete all the tasks on your checklist sheet and return to Rev. Leach by January 23, 2017. Many Thanks!

CHOOSE YOUR CONCIERGE ACTIVITIES

Activity Description

Behavioral Sleep Consult: In small group sessions, evaluate basic factors that can impact your sleep cycle and learn basic principles of sleep practice that promote regular, adequate, quality sleep, even when traveling or facing lifestyle or hormonal changes. (appr. 60 minutes)

Facials: Dead cells of the face can clog pores and give the skin an aged look. In this session, participants will learn a five step process to care for and rejuvenate the face. (appr. 30 minutes)

Broga (Yoga for Brothers)/Yoga: Yoga is a practice that can bring us closer to a healthier lifestyle in mind, body, and spirit. This workshop will take you through a beginning level yoga practice, including exercises to improve your strength, flexibility, balance, and focus. The male instructor will demonstrate that yoga is beneficial for all. (appr. 45 minutes)

Aromatherapy/Hand Care: This session will use plant materials and aromatic plant oils, including essential oils, and other aroma compounds to alter one's mood, cognitive, psychological or physical well-being. The session will also include a demonstration of hand care that includes exfoliation and smoothing. (appr. 45 minutes)

Massage Therapy: Research has confirmed that massage is an effective treatment for reducing pain, muscle tension and stress, Enjoy a massage to relieve stress, relax the body, reduce pain, or simply for pleasure. (appr. 30 minutes)

Gospel Aerobics: Aerobic exercise is beneficial for getting the blood flowing, the heart pumping, and helping the body to become fit. This session will use upbeat gospel music to feed the spirit while working out the body. (appr. 30 minutes)

What Should I Expect from Leaders' Life?

Monday Morning and Afternoon:

Opening Session – (8:45 – 9:55)

- Continental Breakfast
- Overview about Leading Causes of Life and Leaders' Life from Rev. Dr. Gary Gunderson
- Run Through of Retreat Schedule

Lunch (45 minutes, between 11:30 and 12:30)

Assessments, Staggered by Four Pods: (10:00 – 5:00)

- Medical Practitioner Consult (1 hour)
- Life Coach Consult (stress management, resilience, life coaching) (1 hour)
- Nutrition assessment (45 minutes)
- Exercise and Movement assessment (45 minutes)

Tuesday Morning and Early Afternoon:

Interpretation of Findings (8:00 – 12:00)

- Meeting with Medical Practitioner and Life Coach
- Findings given to you, hard copy
- Alternates with Concierge Services of your Choice (behavioral sleep consult, facials, broga/yoga, aromatherapy/hand care, massage therapy, gospel aerobics)

Lunch-Food for Body and Spirit (12:00-1:00)

Continued Sessions and Concierge Services 1:00 – 2:00)

Debriefing and Impressions, led and framed by Rev. Dr. Gary Gunderson

(2:00 – 2:30)

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!

Follow up phone calls/e-mails from Rev. Leach and/or Life Coach, as desired and/or needed.

**LEADERS' LIFE
Pastor's Retreat
SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

Monday, Feb. 6, 2017

8:45 am	Arrival and Opening Prayer – Dr. Anita Holmes
8:45 am – 9:15 am	Continental Breakfast – Complete Pre-Retreat Survey and Consent Form
9:15 am – 9:45am 9:45 am 10:00 am	Welcome & Purpose – Rev. Dr. Gary Gunderson & Dr. Teresa Cutts Overview of Retreat Schedule - Rev. Charolette Leach
10:00 am – 12:000 am	AM - Participants meet with Providers
12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Participants meet with Providers, lunch available in library
1:30 pm- 3:30 pm	PM - Participants meet with Providers
3:15 – 4:15 pm	Day ends (Varies for Participants)

Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017

8:00am – 12:00 am	Participants Receive Recommendations <i>(Meet with Medical Practitioner and Life Practitioner)</i> Concierge Offerings
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch – Food for Body & Spirit – Fellowship Hall <i>(Rev. Valerie Hicks)</i>
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Final Thoughts and Impressions – Rev. Dr. Gary Gunderson Complete Post-Retreat Survey

Appendix H

**LEADERS' LIFE - Pastor's Retreat
February 6 & 7, 2017**

Survey Statements for pastors: Pre-Retreat

On a scale of 1 to 10, (1 being, not at all and 10 definitely) evaluate the following areas of health:

Circle your answer:

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1) I exercise consistently each week to keep my body healthy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | (1) | | | (1) | | | (2) | | (2) |
| 2) I am intentional in trying to consume a healthy diet. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | (1) | | (1) | (1) | | | (1) | (2) |
| 3) I drink the appropriate amount of water on a daily basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | | | (3) | | | | | (3) |
| 4) I get the proper amount of sleep per night on a consistent basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | | | (2) | (2) | | | | (2) |
| 5) I have developed a method to handle stress and use it on a consistent basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | (1) | | (2) | (1) | (1) | | | (1) |

Appendix I

LEADERS' LIFE - Pastor's Retreat

PASTORS: BE AN EXAMPLE IN CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH **CONSENT FORM**

1. INTRODUCTION

You are invited to be a participant in a research study about educating and encouraging pastors to take steps to care for their health. **You were selected as a possible participant because** you are a part of the Rowan Baptist Association or the Minister's Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity. **We ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. The study is being conducted by** Rev. Charolette Leach, a student of the Theological School of Drew University, Doctor of Ministry program.

2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study is to assess the difference that can be made in the lives of pastors who will participate in a day and a half retreat that focuses on ways that they can care for their health. Will education and encouragement in physical activity, nutrition, and handling stress help pastors to plan to incorporate suggested steps to improve their health into their busy lives? Clergy's practice of putting others first can be detrimental to their own health, say researchers at Duke University. Research by the Duke Clergy Health Initiative has found that compared to other North Carolinians, United Methodist clergy have higher-than-average rates of obesity (40 percent versus 29 percent), as well as higher rates of diabetes, asthma, arthritis and hypertension. They also exhibit symptoms of depression at nearly double the national average: 10.5 percent vs. 5.5 percent. Yet, despite reporting higher rates of chronic disease, these clergy were more likely to say their health did not affect their ability to do their work.

3. DURATION

The length of time you will be involved with this study is a day and a half.

4. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things: Complete preliminary health related surveys and provide medical records for the last two years. You have the option of not answering questions and of not providing medical records. You will meet with a Health Retreat team which will consist of a medical practitioner, a life practitioner, an exercise specialist, and a dietitian. The exercise specialist will assess your fitness in four categories to include cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, muscular endurance, and body composition. Based on assessments by the team members and discussions with you, suggestions to improve health will be provided. You are also offered an opportunity to participate in concierge services on day two of the retreat. A healthy lunch will be provided on day two with suggestions for shopping, cooking, and eating healthier. You as a willing participant can refuse to participate in any or all parts of the activities and may end your participation at any time without consequence or penalty.

Appendix K (1)

5. RISKS/BENEFITS

This study has the following risks: Pastors will have minimal risk related to an exercise fitness assessment. This test will be administered by qualified exercise specialists who will conduct all evaluations, and deal with routine, minimal risks in their daily professions. The risk in this study will be minimal and will be no greater than routine daily life, such as exercising, making a wellness doctor visit, and learning information about one's health status.

The benefits of participation are: The potential benefit will be that the pastor's quality of life improves as they make caring for their own health a priority. They will be more effective in their ministry work.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

All persons on the teams are health professionals and understand the need to keep oral and written information confidential. Only the Medical Practitioners and the Life Practitioners will read and use the confidential information of the pastors. HIPPA guidelines will be followed. Individual classrooms are available at the church and doors will be closed during sessions to insure that conversations are not overheard and confidentiality is maintained. Information from the pastors and information created for the pastors will be stored securely and will only be accessible by Dr. Teresa Cutts, one of the Life Practitioners. General information from the results will be reported. No information published will be done so in such a way to identify participants.

7. VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY

Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will not affect your current or future relations with Drew University. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting those relationships and without penalty.

8. CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

Participant debriefing will not take place.

The researcher(s) conducting this study is Rev. Charolette Leach. You may ask any questions you have right now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at cleach1@drew.edu or chleach@northstate.net and/or (336) 885-7620.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to speak with someone other than the researcher(s), you may contact Kate Ott at kott@drew.edu or (973) 408-3298.

Appendix K (2)

9. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The procedures of this study have been explained to me and my questions have been addressed. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. If I have any concerns about my experience in this study (e.g., that I was treated unfairly or felt unnecessarily threatened), I may contact the Chair of the Drew Institutional Review Board regarding my concerns.

Participant signature_____ Date_____

XX/XX/XXXX HEALTH SUMMARY: PASTOR X
LEADERS' LIFE - PASTOR RETREAT

YOUR HEALTH STORY HIGHLIGHTS (SELF-REPORT)

Health Concerns: You have concerns about managing your back pain and other pains of "aging" as well as a skin discoloration. Prostate cancer runs in your family, as well as hypertension.

Stressors: Your spirit is drained by conflict in the world in general and churches, in particular. You are challenged by difficulty sticking to a regular exercise schedule and eating, as well as too much work and too little play. You believe you lack "balance."

Passions/Motivators: You are passionate about your family and ministry. You are trying to establish a yoga regimen. You are motivated by the knowledge that you are not productive or at peace and by knowing that your life expectancy can be reduced if you don't manage your health better.

LABORATORY RESULTS

Bloodwork done on X/XX/XXXX from PCP NAME Office

Your total cholesterol was 179, which is excellent and your good (HDL) cholesterol was 54 and bad (LDL) cholesterol was 94. Your triglycerides were 68, which is good. Your blood glucose was 90, which is good. Your urinalysis was normal, as was your PSA.

On examination at MLH on 7/26/12, your weight was 208 pounds and height was 6 feet, 4 inches, at a BMI of 25.4 (slightly overweight range).

MEDICATIONS

None

EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT

Your body mass index or BMI Score is 25.4, which places you in the slightly overweight range. Your body fat percentage is 27.5 %, which falls in the mildly obese range. Your Cardiovascular endurance score (the ability of the heart to provide oxygen to muscles during physical activity for a prolonged period of time) after a three minute step test was 102, which is above average. Your Functional Movement Screen or FMS is a ranking and grading system that documents movement patterns that are key to normal function. Your FMS is 5.5 out of 12, which falls in the average range. Your muscular endurance falls in the average range.

Based on these tests overall you are at an Average to below average level of fitness. You could lose a few pounds but your heart, lungs and muscles seem to be functioning pretty well.

NUTRITION

You could benefit from basic changes in your diet, to peel off a few pounds. Currently, you are on the lower edge of overweight, as your BMI is 25.4, which could put you at risk for heart disease or diabetes in the future (even though your labs are great right now). Increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables and limiting processed snacks, fast foods, fats and sweets will probably push your weight down a few pounds and prevent you from developing the cardiovascular, cancer and diabetic problems that are part of your family medical history. Drinking more water will also help, as well as developing a more routine exercise plan and sticking with it.

SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Your Health Risk Appraisal score is 79 without strengths and 99 with strengths. Congratulations on your health journey over the years!

Goals: 1) Better manage your back pain 2) find more balance in work and play 3) eating in a more healthy manner and 4) improve your sleep patterns.

Strongest Leading Causes of Life: Connection and Coherence

Spiritual Strengths: Love of Learning, Judgment, Appreciation of Beauty, Gratitude, Humor, Ingenuity, Spirituality, Hope, Fairness, Forgiveness, Perspective, Integrity, Zest

ISTJ (Introvert, Sensor, Thinker, Judger)

You are precise, accurate & meticulous. You have a great memory for details. You tend to be task oriented with great powers of concentration. Usually a strong executor, you are organized, practical, & efficient. You are highly responsible with an exceptionally strong work ethic. You are also adept at establishing & following procedures. Others see you as dependable and serious about commitments & deadlines.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. For your age, you are doing great health wise and your blood work looks good at this point. However, think of keeping yourself healthy going forward and adjusting your diet and exercise patterns. Unhealthy habits will ultimately manifest themselves in chronic disease as you age.
2. Continue your yoga regimen as an excellent way to self-manage back pain. Try some of the suggestions for stretching that Dr. XXX offered to you.
3. Dr. XXX recommends a complete 30 minute, 3 times a week regimen of core strength and flexibility exercises, particularly given your height. Watch twisting and bending movements, as your low back is most susceptible to problems in that arena. Don't forget his counsel on the proper manner to enter and leave a bed: face down.
4. Try some of the suggestions offered in the handout from Dr. XXX and call if you have questions. Establishing a regular sleep and wake time and clearing your mind before bedtime can greatly improve sleep consistency and quality. Trying some of the yoga poses (stretches like the cat and baby's sleep pose) before bedtime will help with helping you fall asleep initially as well.
5. Adding regular strength and cardiovascular routines 3 times a week would quickly help you lose 5-10 pounds, as well as build muscle/lose fat. Also, weight training will also help with decreasing your body fat percentage.
6. Use your spiritual strengths like connection and coherence to motivate your health efforts: you want to be around to see your youngest graduate from medical school and play with future grandchildren.
7. Given your personality, you need to see concrete, objective measurable results from any routine. Consider coming back in six months for another exercise assessment, to mark your progress and inspire your efforts going forward.
8. To achieve life balance, schedule in exercise and "play" like you do other events in your life. Given your love of organization and routine, suggest that you schedule those efforts into your life and begin to see them as "sacred" time, or part of your personal Sabbath. Practice taking mini-retreats at lunchtime or a day or two off during the week, until that becomes more natural to you.

Your Physician is XXXXXXXX (XXX) XXX-XXXX or email xxxxxx@xxxx.xxx. Your Life Coach is XXXXXXXX at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or e-xxxxxxx@xxxxxx. Your dietician is XXXXXXXXX, RD at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or e-mail xxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx. Your Exercise coach is XXXXXXXX, MS at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or e-mail xxxxxx@xxxx.xxx.

February 6-7, 2017 Leaders' Life Participant Debriefing Comments

Below are some of the comments provided by participants in response to the questions in italics. Information in brackets is to help with clarity. Some very minor editing has also been including.

- *How can we provide the Leaders' Life experience at scale?*
- *How can you help us discern so this experience is improved by your feedback?*
- *What worked?*
- *What was lacking?*
- *What needs improving?*

Comments:

- Experience has been marvelous, on "time" [relevant]
- Presenters were prepared
- Need to expose other pastors to the experience
- Many times pastors are not focused on their own health
- Provides "wake-up" call
- Whole concept is to change the mindset of clergy...
- This was excellent. Didn't come in saying you need this test. This added to what's already there with primary doctor. It complements. Takes fear out of "here is something else" [in relation to identification of another health issue]
- May get clergy in to see a doctor
- Participating here makes sure it gets the info here
- Day and a half was sufficient
- Amount of time for each session was fine
- Liked being heard, not judged
- If going to do preventive measures, start with younger clergy or include younger clergy in the process
- Possibly offer to associate clergy
- Has been refreshing and a friendly reminder of what I need to do before get too far gone. Small tweaks are more sustainable
- Let it be a bigger event and "away". Take spouse and be a mini-retreat for the family. After finish with lunch, can enjoy the rest of the site

What's the "sale" to get people?

- Talk to President or leader of the group. There are individuals that can influence others, Individualize the conversation
- Now [that this session is completed] also have testimonials. Have six clergy that can share
- "Don't preach to empty pews, preach to full ones". Provide those that didn't come missed it message

Should next cohort be in Rowan?

How wide a net do you want to cast?

- Like the female cohort piece
- In relation to pastors having concerns they can't go to someone with, it is compounded for females
- Women need to be targeted
- Could have specialized sessions/offerings for females
- It is about relationships. Will have key players. [Referencing early recruitment question]
- Could use facilities of different venues that people haven't been to
- Little disappointed in the exercise part
- Have a little more on the assessment and exercise piece—attainable, demonstrate
- Was a felt need and/or a relationship
- "God comes through"

Drew University - Doctor of Ministry Project
Rev. Charolette H. Leach

Leaders Life – Pastor’s Retreat
Pastors: Be an Example in Caring for Your Health



Site Visit by Dr. Donna L. Ciangio (Project Advisor)
April 27, 2017

<i>Opening Prayer/Grace</i>	<i>Dr. Dennis Leach</i>
<i>Introductions</i>	<i>All</i>
<i>Project Overview</i>	<i>Rev. Charolette Leach</i>
<i>Conversation</i>	<i>Led by Dr. Ciangio</i>
<i>Closing Prayer</i>	<i>Rev. Charolette Leach</i>



Appendix N

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