

LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN!

LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN! is a call for Brethren to love ourselves as a whole person, the sum of our body, mind and spirit, as God loves us.

In Romans 12:1, the Bible states, "Therefore ... I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and spirit." Paul also speaks of the physical body as the temple of God, because, when we belong to God, He dwells within us.

The Wellness Ministry understands every human being is a unity of body, mind and spirit. As Brethren congregations, we recognize that doing things together is a cornerstone of Brethren culture. While many individuals in the Church of the Brethren have committed themselves to "Lighten Up," more and more congregations are beginning to find ways to support individuals in their commitment and raise awareness of how our lifestyles affect our health, our faith, and our communities.

TAKE THE
"LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN!"
CHALLENGE INTO YOUR
CONGREGATION

About LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN!

LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN! is a program of the Wellness Ministry of the Association of Brethren Caregivers in collaboration with Brethren Benefit Trust and the Church of the Brethren General Board.

The Wellness Ministry professes that every person is a treasure, every life a sacred gift, every human being a unity of body, mind and spirit. Its mission includes goals of:

1. Challenging members of the Church of the Brethren to adopt healthy living and behaviors (spiritual, emotional, physical) with special emphasis on metabolic syndrome.
2. Engaging in the current public debates about health care delivery, access and financing reform.
3. Educating members of the Church of the Brethren about stewardship of health-care resources.
4. Promoting simple living, because simple living is healthy, spiritually centered living.

The LIGHTEN UP, BRETHREN! program seeks to challenge members of the Church of the Brethren to adopt healthy living and behaviors for wellness in mind, body and spirit. It offers educational and spiritual nurture through meditations sent out via an electronic list serve.

Congregations are invited to sign on to the challenge of working on their physical, mental and spiritual health in the coming year.



Association of
Brethren Caregivers

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LIGHTEN UP!
BRETHREN!

A congregational
challenge for Church of
the Brethren members
to adopt healthy living and
behaviors for wellness in
body, mind and spirit.

IDEAS FOR CONGREGATIONS ON PROMOTING WELLNESS

Wellness Sunday

Celebrate and promote wellness with a special Sunday that focuses on how faith and wellness relate. Include hymns and prayers that help the congregation reflect on the unity of mind, body and spirit. Invite members of the congregation to share their own understanding of wellness. For a sample worship, visit ABC's website, www.brethren-caregivers.org. In May 2007, ABC's Health Promotion Sunday materials will focus on wellness. ABC will provide a wealth of resources to encourage this special Sunday celebration.

Lighten Up, Brethren! Listserve

Lighten Up, Brethren! e-mails are spiritual, physical, and mental encouragement for individuals to commit to lifestyle changes of increasing activity and decreasing consumption. Congregations have used the e-mail messages in church bulletins, newsletters and other publications. The messages themselves make excellent devotions, bible study, or meditations for local congregational wellness support groups. *(To sign up, send an e-mail to abc@brethren.org.)*

Support Groups

Lifestyle changes are difficult for individuals to make. In order to have a greater chance of success, support groups are essential. Groups may take on a variety of forms. Just by having a regular time together, individuals can experience support through sharing with others struggling with similar health challenges.

Activity Groups

There is always more fun when we do things together! Walking groups help individuals stay motivated and also make exercise more fun. Congregations can invite exercise classes to meet in the church building. This is also a way to invite people in the community into our congregations.

Healthy Eating

Brethren potlucks have long been known for the delicious casseroles and wonderful desserts! Why not also make your congregation's potlucks known for having healthy choices? Serve frozen yogurt in addition to ice cream. Find delicious low-calorie casseroles to share. Have a taste-testing contest to see what recipe is the congregation's best healthy choice. Promote healthy eating by having a cooking class at your church. One-time classes could focus on cooking for people with special diets (diabetes, low-salt, etc). Provide healthy snacks for children and youth activities. Cooking can be a great family activity for all ages.

Healthy Mission Activity

As congregations plan mission activities, be sure to include ideas that promote healthy living. Plan a Walk for Hunger. Not only would the congregation raise money by collecting from walk sponsors, but the congregation would also have an opportunity to meet some of its walking goals. This is also a tremendous opportunity for fellowship and educating members about ethical food choices.

Health Fairs

Health Fairs are a great way to increase awareness about health issues and also encourage people to do some simple screening for potential health risks. Invite medical providers to give medical screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure, BMI, bone density, hearing, vision, pulmonary function and dental issues. In addition, screenings can include blood glucose screenings. Parish nurses report that they often have been successful in identifying people with diabetes who were not aware that they had the disease prior to the screening.

Encourage local health organizations that provide assistance to others to exhibit. Plan mini-

cooking events that encourage healthy eating. Provide healthy eating samples. Raise awareness about health risks by passing out brochures about a variety of diseases.

Health Fairs can be advertised to the entire community. A district or a cluster of churches can work together to make this a special day-long event. Finally, encourage people to attend by providing a healthy meal to participants at no charge. One idea is to serve a potato bar with healthy toppings. Folks come out to get the free meal, which increases attendance. Everyone goes home with lots of information.

Wellness Retreat

Wellness is not just a physical issue. Wellness is emotional, mental and spiritual too. Plan a retreat which focuses on wellness. Weave together healthy eating and exercise with Bible readings and spiritual reflection. Encourage people to think about how their own lifestyle choices affect their wellness. Congregations could organize men's and women's one-day retreats with the sole purpose of relaxation and fellowship. Enjoy a healthy meal together and just spend the day relaxing. This is very good for our health!

Parish Nursing

Encourage your congregation to start a parish nursing program. Parish nursing embraces the spiritual, physical, psychological, and social dimensions of nursing practice. In essence, parish nurses care for the mind, body, and spirit. In collaboration with the faith community leaders, the parish nurse works to form partnerships with other community health resources. Parish nursing services are designed to involve individuals, families and congregations as active partners in their personal health and wellness.