Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit

A Lenten Study

December 2012

prepared by New Harmony Presbytery
Division of Worship and Spiritual Formation
A WORD OF WELCOME

Welcome to the Journey: Nourishing Mind, Body, and Spirit. The Health Awareness Committee, a subcommittee of the Division of Worship and Spiritual Formation, has developed this Lenten Journey for churches and members of New Harmony Presbytery.

There are particular Themes for each week:

Concepts of Life Choices: (this is the basis for self critique)—to remind ourselves that we have many choices throughout our day to nourish our mind, body, and spirit.

Disease Prevention: behaviors to minimize the possibility of being diagnosed with a disease.

Communal Health: the well functioning of a community as related to its ability to dialogue, to find common ground, to agree to disagree, and to be concerned for each other.

Healthy Weight: the concept that each person has an optimal range of a healthy weight as compared to imposed standards by society in general or advertisers.

Disease Management: behaviors to minimize the (harmful) effects of a disease already diagnosed (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, etc.)

Gratitude: the attitude in life of finding reasons for being thankful and expressing it and reflecting upon it.

Celebration: (this is the ultimate checkpoint in the Journey)—to lift up the positive experiences as a way of honoring God’s activity in our midst, and to be thoughtful in reviewing our movement along the Journey.

There are also certain Pillars for each day of the week beginning with Monday and continuing through Saturday. These include Scripture, Nutrition, Exercise, Mental Health, Prayer/Meditation, and Outreach. These Themes and Pillars are the focus of the daily journal writings.

There are no entries in this Study for Sunday as Sunday is a day of rest. Participants in this Journey are encouraged to worship God in their community of faith reflecting on the insights gained throughout the week and using this knowledge to enhance one’s own health both physically and spiritually.

A Celebrative Event at the end of our Journey will be held on Saturday, April 6, 2013 at the John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Florence from 10:00 am until 12:00 noon. The program will include opportunities for churches and/or church members to share their personal growth during this Lenten Journey of Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit as well as a Celebration Walk. All are asked to bring a healthy nonperishable food item for the Harvest Hope Food Bank.

The Health Awareness Committee hopes that those who participate in this Lenten Journey will gain new perspectives on healthy spiritual and physical living. Share this Journey with others and encourage them to join in healthier living.

Garland Hart
Mental Health: Cognitive Impairment

Scripture: Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble (Ps. 41:1)

Some of us have loved ones suffering from cognitive impairment of one kind or another through no fault of their own. Our own mental health sometimes seems at risk as we become caregivers. Yet, God gives us a peace that protects our hearts and minds. This peace enables our lives to be hidden in God in Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:3).

Let your mind rest, knowing we cannot be overcome by any force of this world. We have the peace of God no matter what forces of evil or rejection by mankind come upon us.

God’s grace is communicated to different people in different ways. The blind man received healing from moist clay; others by the spoken word. God knows the needs of our mentally challenged and shows us ways to reach them.

When we are discouraged, we turn to the Psalmist words in Psalm 139 and find the peace and comfort of our loving God. Verse 13 tells us that it was God who formed our inward parts and we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

We cast our burdens on the Lord and He sustains us, He will never permit the righteous to be moved (Ps. 54:22) Take heart, dear ones!

Anonymous
Cupids. Candy. Flowers. Lacy hearts. Strange, isn't it, that Saint Valentine, the best known Christian saint on the secular calendar -- a holiday devoted to romantic love -- is a martyr for the Christian faith? There are at three different Saint Valentines, all of them martyrs, mentioned in the early martyrologies for the date of February 14th. Almost nothing is known about any of these early Christian men -- except that they died for the love of Christ!

Today would be the perfect day to celebrate your relationship with Christ. Paul writes of how he replaced rule-keeping with a relationship. He wrote: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

God made us to have a relationship with Him. He knows that because of sin we can’t be the kind of people He originally made us to be, so He dealt with our sin by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. The divine judgment that would have justly fallen on us for our sin fell on Jesus. He died in our place. Now, the process of restoration can begin. Through a renewed relationship with God we can become all that He intended for us to be. We can enjoy intimacy with Him instead of fearing his righteous anger.

A strong relationship with God can help us to cope with the stress that we experience in our life and enable the impact of that stress to be less significant. Our beliefs and attitudes, determined in large degree by our faith, will play a major role in our thinking patterns. Our day to day thinking will have an impact on our emotions and feelings, and our emotions and feelings will have a major impact on our behaviors. In this regard, our thought patterns play a significant role in our emotional and physical health.

So today on Valentine’s Day, celebrate your relationship with God and cherish his gift to you of Grace and Forgiveness.

Gwen A Davis
Spiritual Health: Loving God With All Our Soul

**Scripture:** Mark 12:28-30 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, he asked Jesus “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

To define the first commandment we are to obey, Jesus bases his response on our ability to love God. All the variations of Jesus’ response in the gospels include loving God with all our soul.

But what is the soul? Scholars have long postulated what the soul is, and there are various schools of thought. Summarizing years of theory will probably not help us start very quickly on this Health Journey.

A quicker way is to consider that the soul is not the same as the other three items mentioned by Jesus. The soul is not the heart: not a circulatory organ, and not just related to our will or desire (as in the Hebraic tradition). The soul is not the mind where we rationalize or theorize about life. The soul is not even our strength (physical). It is something separate. The soul is that which we, in many ways, wrap everything up into one. The soul has spirit, life, and depth. For example, when music moves us beyond words, we often say, “that music has ‘soul.’” So it is with that which we cannot see but feel or sense.

I think of our soul as almost synonymous with our spirit. We love God with our soul by seeking to put our whole being in God’s plan in a spiritual way. And to love best in that way is to seek to have a healthy soul, nourished and cared for. Our spirits long to be made whole. Our souls clamor for communion with God.

Along this Lenten journey, as body, mind, and soul come together for health’s sake, we will seek to love God with our soul, to find spirit, life, and depth.

**Prayer:** May my life O God be to you a gift of love, to honor You with all of me, mind, body, soul; guide me by Your Spirit to true peace and goodness. Feed my soul as I seek to feed others, through Christ my Savior. Amen.

Kyle Henderson
Loving God With All Our Strength

Scripture: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ (Mar 12:30 NRS)

My father-in-law lived to be just shy of 100 years old. A gentle old soul, he was tall and thin, and he had the biggest pair of hands I’ve ever seen. As a young man he’d weathered the depression, left the family farm in Georgia to find work in the mills of Greenville, S.C., and then spent most of his years on his knees and under the chasse of broken down Fords and Chevrolets. He was an auto mechanic…a good one. And as are most centenarians, he was strong and optimistic till the very end. All of the hard knocks he experienced gave him an enviable strength. As his health declined though, he’d often apologize for his infirmities. He’d say, “You know, I can’t hear like I used to, and my eyesight isn’t as sharp as it once was, and I have trouble with my knees. But if I could hear and see and if my knees didn’t hurt, I’d be dangerous!” Some times it’s the very young and the very old who feel that they have a disadvantage when it comes to strength. We live in a culture that honors and applauds the virility and strength of youth. Everywhere we turn there are images which portray unrealistic perceptions of strength and beauty. But before you begin to measure yourself by those messages, take a moment to discover what God says about strength. Throughout scripture, we read that our strength is to be found in God, not in ourselves. It is God who gives strength to the weak and we are called upon to use this strength to love God and others.

You may not have the physical strength that you once had to serve others, but people of faith always have God’s strength. And this is a gift that can be shared with others at any age or stage in life. Yes, my father-in-law’s eyesight and hearing had diminished in his later years. And his knees were completely worn out, but it wasn’t just from working on cars. Coy was a man of prayer who used his strength to love God and others in every way he knew how. I think Coy was more dangerous than he ever realized. For his knees continued to take him to the very heart of God.

Lisa Culpepper
You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

Scripture: Romans 12: 1-2

God’s Word is helpful in guiding us to live healthy lives. Paul offers us some good advice in his Letter to the Romans in regards to making Healthy Choices which is our theme for this week.

So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us great mercy, I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him, which is the spiritual way for you to worship. Do not change yourselves to be like the people of this world, but be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Our spiritual health is vital to our physical health. Let’s begin this Lenten journey by making sure our spiritual lives are in order. Paul calls us to offer our lives to God as a living sacrifice. When we sacrifice something we give up something. Let’s give up our own desires and will and make God’s desire for us our number one priority. When we give our lives to God amazing things will happen. God can use us to help others as we give God glory in everything we do. Be open to God’s leading us throughout this journey. Read Romans 12:1-2 each day. One choice before us today is whether or not to give God our lives. I hope we all decide to give God our lives. We need this foundation in our lives as we build our lives upon it each day. Choose life with God.

Garland Hart
The newly released 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans offer a practical roadmap to help us make changes in our eating plan to improve your health. As we focus this week on Healthy Choices, we need to consider these guidelines that are proven to give our body what we need.

The Dietary Guidelines encourage Americans to eat more:

- **Whole grains**: Increase whole grains by choosing whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice and whole wheat pasta. Make at least half your grain servings whole grains.
- **Vegetables**: Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark-green, red and orange.
- **Fruits**: Add fruit to meals and snacks—fresh, frozen or canned—to get about 2 cups each day.
- **Low-fat or fat free milk, yogurt and cheese or fortified soy beverages**: Include 3 cups per day for calcium, vitamin D, protein and potassium. Lactose-free milk is also an option.
- **Vegetable oils such as canola, corn, olive, peanut and soybean**: These are high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Use in moderate amounts in place of solid fats.
- **Seafood**: Include a variety of seafood more often in place of some meat and poultry, vegetables plus beans and peas. Most adults need 2 ½ cups of vegetables per day.

Our scripture this week encourages us to make choices that are pleasing to God and to resist following the crowd—- to Hardees, Bojangles or the mega buffet each day for lunch. We all know we have choices but we need God’s help to make these healthy choices.

**Activity**: Keep a daily food diary this week of your choices and compare them to these recommendations.

Gwen A Davis
In October 1978 I was an avid runner and walker. I was teaching mathematics at a private school in Columbia. Working with the cross country team and an equestrian team, my afternoons were fulfilled. On a fateful morning that October on my way to school I was involved in a car accident. Fortunately, that accident might have saved my life. Two weeks later, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. At the age of 28, cancer was the farthest thing from my mind. Needless to say, my whole world changed that day. I wanted to crawl into a dark hole and wait for God to throw me a handful of stars.

After 2 surgeries, 5 weeks of radiation, 18 months of chemotherapy and an exploratory surgery, I was cancer free. The stars, when I could finally see them, shone brighter for me than they did before the darkness. Having this “cancer experience” made me stronger and more determined to rebuild my exercise routine in mind, body and spirit. I am always ready to get the day going. I begin the day at 5:30 with a run (3 days a week), a walk (7 days a week) and strength training (3 days a week).

In our local Relay for Life I walked 30 miles to celebrate my 30th year of being cancer free. I have participated in a marathon and a half walk (39.3 miles) for the past two years. I have completed three 5K’s to benefit charities and helped initiate and lead a walking program at Coker College for faculty and staff.

There are many opportunities available in our area to participate in a walk or a run. Do this for others, i.e., charities, etc., and especially do this for yourself. You are what you do.

Harriett Lemke
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

You Are What You Think
Advice From Paul

**Scripture:** Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8, NRSV)

We live in such a hectic, fast-paced, electronically inspired existence from day to day, constantly bombarded with bad news from all corners of the world, that our mental health and peace of mind is challenged. Let us not be discouraged, however, since with God's help and divine instruction we Christians are able to roll with life's punches and stresses and come out on top.

A simple exercise we might begin with is a personal questionnaire: Am I connecting with others positively? Am I as physically active as my health permits? Do I help others, sharing my gifts and talents? Am I getting enough rest and sleep? Do I feed my mind and body by eating wisely? Am I caring for my spirit? Am I willing to get professional help if I feel I am stuck?

God has given us a blueprint and instructional guide to mental health through the Bible. We are wise and blessed to use this valuable resource!

Anonymous
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Search me, O God, and know my heart; Test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me and Lead me in the way of everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24

In her book, Soul Feast, Marjorie Thompson says that Psalm 139 is a beautiful expression of a profound truth: God is the searcher of every human heart, the One from whom no secrets are hidden. God examines and knows every aspect of our being in more intimate detail than we ourselves can see. This may inspire more than a few beads of sweat, or it may give us great comfort. We can not escape God’s all-knowing, all-seeing eye, and if we wish to hide from the penetrating gaze of holy love, it is because we know our uneasiness is because of what is unholy and unloving inside of us. Only when we are under God’s steady gaze of love are we able to find healing and restoration that we so desperately need. When we feel searched and known by a gracious God, we are both moved and enabled to search our own hearts honestly. That process opens the door of our heart to cleansing, renewal, and peace. For that reason we have to examine ourselves. We have to examine our relationship with God and with others.

This is a time for self-examination. Certain questions have to be asked. What is feeding my soul? What is restoring my soul? Is this process working for me, or could there be another practice that might suit my life and my personality better? What habit of the heart, or spiritual discipline do I need in my life in order to live more faithfully?

There are many types of spiritual disciplines. In our tradition the three most common are prayer, study of the Word, and worship. Other disciplines include fasting, journaling, meditation, spiritual walks, even hospitality and service. On this day try something new. Using what is known as a “breath prayer”, in which you repeat a phrase or passage of scripture over and over with each breath you take, try a discipline that is new to you. Journal, sit still and meditate, or take a walk all the while breathing that phrase or passage. Suggestions for the breath prayer:

Come and fill my heart with your love. Holy Spirit fill me.
Teach me patience, gracious God. Give me strength, O Christ.
Create a clean heart in me, O God. Be still and know that I am God
Lo I am with you always. Glory to God in the highest!

Then evaluate the process. Did you feel comfortable with this exercise? Did you gain any insight? Is this something that you might try again, or could there be another discipline that you might try next time? Examine and explore on this day!

Josie Holler
God Wants You To Do For Others

Choose **not** to eat out this week.

Instead:

- Donate the amount to a local or global hunger program.
- Choose to purchase only essentials at the grocery store this week. Donate the difference in your average bill to feed the hungry.
- Cook an ethnic meal or eat out at an ethnic restaurant; read about that country and pray for the work of God in that place.
- Spend an unhurried visit or meal with someone who lives alone.
- Read about how Presbyterians are alleviating hunger.
- Make a donation to *The Global Food Crises Fund*
- Participate for a day with *Habitat for Humanity*
- Volunteer in a local school (reading, homework, mentoring)
- Visit the ladies at PADD

**Read more about what we as Presbyterians can do for others who are hungry at Presbyterians Food and Faith**


Lisa Culpepper

Tomorrow, Sunday February 24 is a day of rest. Use this day of rest to reflect on what God wants you to be. Consider your choices for physical, mental and spiritual health. Pray for God’s guidance to make these Healthy Choices.
Monday, February 25

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

This week the theme is Disease Prevention. What can we do to minimize the possibility of being diagnosed with a disease? Spiritually speaking we either deny having sin or we own up to our sin, confess it, and seek God’s forgiveness. When we deny our sin we need God to point it out to us. God does that with King David in II Samuel 12.

The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to David, he said, “There were two men in a city. One was rich, but the other was poor. The rich man had many sheep and cattle. But the poor man had nothing except one little female lamb he had bought. The poor man fed the lamb, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food and drank from his cup and slept in his arms. The lamb was like a daughter to him. Then a traveler stopped to visit the rich man. The rich man wanted to feed the traveler, but he didn’t want to take one of his own sheep or cattle. Instead, he took the lamb from the poor man and cooked it for his visitor.” David became very angry at the rich man. He said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the one who did this should die! He must pay for the lamb four times for doing such a thing. He had no mercy!” Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, ‘I appointed you King of Israel and saved you from Saul. I gave you his kingdom and his wives. And I made you King of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you even more. So why did you ignore the Lord’s command? Why did you do what he says is wrong? You killed Uriah, the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and took his wife to be your wife. Now there will always be people in your family who will die by a sword, because you did not respect me? You took the wife of Uriah the Hittite for yourself.” (II Samuel 12:1-10)

How often are we like David who needs God to point out our sin so that we, too, can own up to it, confess it, and receive forgiveness? Such cleansing is vital for us to live healthy lives.

Garland Hart
Purifying With “REAL” Foods

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:1

Every now and then I look around the grocery store and feel overwhelmed by the enormous amount of food options available for purchase. The bright red and yellow packages are strategically placed to encourage shoppers to add them in the buggies. There are thousands of new products annually, yet I do not get excited about many new products. Think about it, our basic healthy foods, including meats, vegetables, and fruits are not changing. What is changing are the chemicals that are added to keep foods fresh for months, to alter the color, and to alter nutrient content in order for companies to make a health claim on the front of their package.

February is national heart month. Its purpose is to increase awareness of heart disease, which is the number 1 killer of women in the United States. Research shows that what we eat matters when it comes to preventing heart disease. The Slow Food Movement is a movement that encourages taking the time to know the food you eat is healthy, “real” food. As we slow down and start saying no to the food manufacturer’s chemicals, our risk of heart disease will decrease. Research shows that the following nutrition changes matter to our hearts: losing excess weight, eating less salt, eating more potassium, and limiting alcohol consumption. This list may seem overwhelming, but by returning to the basics of consuming “real” food, these nutritional changes naturally fit. Instead of focusing on the do not eat list, focus on the opportunity to prevent disease, to feel energetic, to feel strong, and to serve the Lord. “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1

Anna Moorman
Get Moving: Doing What God Wants Us to Do

As we are learning this week, God expects us to own up to our sins or he will point them out to us. For many of us, lack of physical activity is a sin. Regular physical activity and healthy nutrition are the two most important things you can do to PREVENT health problems. Being physically active can help:

- Control your weight
- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease
- Reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome
- Reduce your risk of some cancers
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve your mental health and mood
- Improve your ability to do daily activities and prevent falls as an older adult
- Increase your chances of living longer

Adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week. We know 150 minutes each week sounds like a lot of time, but you don’t have to do it all at once. As long as you’re doing moderate or vigorous activity, you can break it up into at least 10 minutes segments during the day.

Here are some tips to help get you started:
1. Look for opportunities to be active not sedentary. For example, instead of watching TV, try taking a walk after dinner.
2. Schedule your physical activity to make it part of your daily or weekly routine.
3. Start with activities, locations, and times you enjoy. For example, some like to walk in the morning while others prefer an exercise class at the YMCA after work.
4. Be active with friends or family to help with motivation and encouragement.
5. Start slowly and work your way up to more physically challenging activities. For many people, walking is a particularly good place to begin.

God is with us as we struggle with “owning” the fact that we are inactive and must do more to be physically fit. Start your day with prayer—then a walk. God is there to walk with you every step!!

Gwen A Davis
Many of us are unaware that congenital brain disorders (schizophrenia, bi-polar) mask themselves to the victim. Sufferers often think that they are normal...hearing voices or experiencing alternating manic and depressive episodes. Those afflicted with a brain disorder often vehemently deny that they have anything wrong, or that they need treatment and medications to control the “condition” They just don't realize that their condition is chronic, requiring treatment and medication over a lifetime.

Similarly those closest to the mentally ill person may be in denial that their loved one has a brain disorder. They may say something like “He’s hypertensive at times” or “She’s moody” to describe their loved one’s strange behavior. Due to stigma associated with mental illness, both victims and family members may “gloss over” the reality that the victim needs treatment, therapy, and medications.

Risk factors include heredity, exposure to addictive drugs and alcohol, lack of empathetic friends and family, isolation, excessive pressure to preform, lack of available mental health personnel when a crisis occurs, and the aforementioned stigma association with brain disorders and mental illness.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness sponsors a Family-to-Family course in many communities that explains the physiological causes of brain disorders, examines various types of disorders, treatment methods, drugs used to control mental illnesses, psychosocial intervention techniques, and practical suggestions for helping your loved one who has a brain disorder. Sue and I found this course most helpful in understanding our son, Henry's, bi-polar disorder. Henry died by suicide at home on July 30, 2007, just months after we completed the NAMI course. But our last few months with him were 'better' because of our understanding of what he was going through.

While the suicide rate among persons with brain disorders is much higher than the normal population, a brain disorder need not be a death sentence. Increasingly, our society is become more accepting of those with a brain disorder, understanding that it is possible for such individuals to live in society and, in many cases, to enjoy a relatively normal, lifestyle, free of the anxiety, stress, and dysfunctional effects of a brain disorder.

Chuck Fienning
Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns
in order to look at things in a different way. Edward de Bono

Do you have a love for color? Are you a visual or kinesthetic learner, a distractible or impatient soul, or a word-weary prayer? Do you hunger for a better relationship with God, but are at a lost for how to get there? Perhaps you should try to tap into your creativity in order to help you focus on your prayer life. Creativity can help us unlock the emotions; the fears, anxieties, the anger, and the pain that we try to keep bottled up inside of us. It can help release those negative feelings, which if we harbor them too closely in our soul, can lead to serious health issues. Having a creative outlet can help us release those suppressed feelings and give them to God.

In her book, Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God, Sybil MacBeth encourages all of us to tap into our creative side. She does not claim to be an artist or even a very creative person. She says she is just a doodler who has learned how to allow her love for color and shapes to turn into a creative prayerful process that has deepened her faith.

It all started for her when she sat on her porch one morning, overwhelmed by the sick relatives and friends. She picked up a note pad and marker and began to doodle. Before she realized it she had written down the name of one of her sick friends. She kept adding dashes and dots and swirls around the name and then it struck her that each stroke of the marker was a prayer for that person. Before she realized it she had filled the page with the names of all her sick loved ones. She put the paper in her pocket and carried it with her as a visible reminder of her prayer, which helped her to continue to pray for them throughout the day.

Today try to tap into your creativity as a way to pray. Don’t worry about making a tree look like a tree or a cat look like a cat. Doodling is perfect! Allow yourself 15 to 30 minutes to sit and doodle or draw. MacBeth suggests using one of the following to help you segue into your time of prayer: read or recite a passage, sing a verse of a favorite hymn, say a prayer to gather the pieces of your mind body and soul together, sit in a chair and breathe for a minute or two, do a few minutes of exercise, stretch, reach to the sky, and touch your toes.

And…if none of those ideas appeals, just pick up your pen, your markers, your crayons and begin to pray in color. Remember, prayer is an all day event. Drawing is only half the process. Take that paper with you, or keep a visual image of your doodle in your mind so that throughout the day you can pray. The images are the visual alarm clock that reminds us to pray.

Josie Holler
SATURDAY, MARCH 2

Working Together to Do Better

- Give low salt/sugar can goods or staples to your local food bank.
- Donate your unused medicines to the nearest free medical clinic
- Donate to a need sponsored by PCUSA’s International Health Initiative
- Sponsor a Health Walk at your church
- Organize your church to attend the April 6 Celebration Walk for this Lenten Journey
- Give your strength to a senior citizen by:
  - give someone the gift of yard work or housework today;
  - volunteer your strength for an attic or garage cleanout;
  - help someone move
  - serve as a Handy “man” day in your church or
  - have a church yard work day;
- Assist with an after-school physical activity at a daycare of your community
- Learn more about our local Food Banks at

Lisa Culpepper

Tomorrow, Sunday March 3 is a day of rest. Use this day of rest to confess our sins. God will help us realize that if we choose not to confess our sin, He will point them out to us. Pray for God’s guidance to confess our sins and work to do His will.
MONDAY, MARCH 4

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

The theme this week is **Communal Health**. Acts 2 gives us a snapshot of the apostles and believers and how they spend their time together. The key word here is **together**.

The apostles were doing many miracles and signs, and everyone felt great respect for God. All the believers were together and shared everything. They would sell their land and the things they owned and divide the money and give it to anyone who needed it. The believers met together in the Temple every day. They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts. They praised God and were liked by all the people. Every day the Lord added those who were being saved to the group of believers. (Acts 2:43-47)

Luke reveals the benefits of being with other believers every day. We receive support, care, affirmation, guidance, and correction from other believers. As a result of such togetherness God blesses them with more believers being added to their number. How often do we spend our time with others? How often do we study God’s Word with another person or group? How often do we eat with other believers outside of the church setting? The more time we spend in the company of believers the healthier we will be.

Garland Hart
Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees

Let us break bread together on our knees, (on our knees)
Let us break bread together on our knees. (on our knees)
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees, (on our knees)
Let us drink wine together on our knees. (on our knees)
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees, (on our knees)
Let us praise God together on our knees. (on our knees)
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

I love singing this familiar song at communion at our church. For me, these verses remind us of the what the apostles learned as they spent time together receiving support, care, affirmation, guidance, and correction from other believers. In this fast paced society we live in, we are forgetting how to enjoy eating a meal together or spending time sitting with others on the porch enjoying nature.

Research has affirmed our need for social contact which has specific health benefits such as potentially reduced risk for heart disease, some cancers, osteoporosis, and rheumatoid arthritis, potentially reduced risk for Alzheimer's disease, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk for mental health issues such as depression. Conversely, social isolation carries real risks. Some of these risks are feeling lonely and depressed, being less physically active, having a greater risk of death as well as having high blood pressure.

Social interaction helps keep your brain from getting rusty, but it's most effective when coupled with an overall healthy lifestyle, including a nutritious diet and physical activity. So make plans to regularly break bread, drink wine and praise God together with someone you know or want to get to know. As a result of such togetherness God will bless you with care, affirmation and health.

Gwen A Davis

Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit: a Lenten Study
Walking Makes Us “Right With the World”

We all know the physical benefits of walking. Almost daily we read of or hear someone reminding us of the many ways that even a moderate amount of walking can improve our health and prevent illness. When I first started walking, this was exactly the reason that motivated me. Out of concern for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, I would reluctantly drag myself out of bed to confront the early morning and meet up with my walking partners. I am grateful for these dedicated walkers because knowing that my friends are waiting on me pushes me out of a warm and cozy bed. As you can probably tell, I am not an exercise fanatic, and my friends are very patient when they come by my house and all the lights are still out. I can imagine their shaking their heads as they walk on without me-knowing that I am “sleeping in.”

I have discovered, however, where the true rewards are to be found. Of course, the physical activity is important, but I have noticed that after walking, I often experience a feeling of well-being and peacefulness that can be quite calming. It is that feeling of “all is right with the world” which brings with it hopefulness for the future, no matter in what circumstances I may find myself. And because of this awareness of God’s grace, I am able to look around me and enjoy each and every blessing that God has given me: a family that loves one another, a supportive church family, friends who will stick by me no matter what, a world of natural beauty that God has provided to lift our spirits, music to fill the blank spaces in my soul, and many, many more. Thanks be to God!!

Anna Hill
Relationships: Benefits of The Community and Re-Assurance

Relationship is an association between two or more people. It can be fleeting to enduring. This association may be based on limerence, love, solidarity, regular business contacts, or other social commitment. Social, cultural and other influences help to determine relationships.

Membership is a social group. There are four membership groups: Family membership (immediate and extended [in-laws, grandparents, etc.]); Peer group (special interest); Organizational (a social group with collective goals) and Community (neighbors, society). There are also Intimate and Professional relationships.

Being involved with the community can help relieve feelings of low self-esteem, isolation, powerlessness, fear and anger. Connecting with others helps to confront the real-life challenges. Community involvement enables people to regain some sense of power.

The church can help to break the silence and transform meaning for those who are having challenges, whether they are emotional or physical. The church can lead the way to boost those who are the least of those.

For those who are facing some tolls from the mind, body or spirit being in disarray, telephone re-assurance can help to mend the person(s) and family. Telephone re-assurance calls are made at a predetermined time and when the person is expected to be home. It should be on a regular basis, which can be daily, weekly or some other predetermined time. It can include home visits or meeting at a chosen site other than the home. It must be a place that is chosen and agreed to by all involved persons.

Carrie Sinkler-Parker
Friday, March 8

Scripture: Ezekiel 22:30 And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

This week, we are looking at Communal Health and today, in particular, how that intersects with our prayer life. In Ezekiel’s prophecy, the Lord is looking for someone to work for his people, but he was not able to find that person. We know that ultimate person in Jesus Christ, who has come to help us understand the larger community, and he has redeemed us. But we remain sinful.

Part of our sinful nature means that we think of ourselves most of the time. For example, if somebody mentions something to us about what they are doing in their life, we will respond very quickly with what we are doing, or we will think, oh I wish I could do that. In other words, our mental processes so often center around ourselves rather than the larger community.

A way to promote a healthier inner life intersected with the community is to design our prayer life to be intentionally engaged in thinking of the needs of others, to stand in their “breach.” During a period of praying, discipline yourself to only pray prayers to help other people (and not yourself). Begin first by praying for your church community. Take the church directory or a listing of members, and pray for others one by one, or family by family. Then pray for your neighborhood, house to house, or street by street, pray for your town or city closest to you. You can also pray for our country and world. A related exercise would be to ask others to join you in a specified prayer time.

Alternatively, we can be more intentional in promoting communal health throughout the day. In the spiritual classic, The Practice of the Presence of God, a 17th century monk sought to find God during his day as he worked and worshipped in his monastic community. He continually looked for God’s presence not matter what he was doing. So, instead of a specified time to pray, we can devote ourselves to concentrate on communal health, to be attentive on ways that we can promote healthy interactions in our community, at schools, at work places, at stores, and at recreation venues.

Prayer: Almighty God, as you seek us to stand in the breaches of this fallen world, guide me to pray for others. OOPS! Here I go again, I am praying for me!! God, help me to pray for others. I lift them to you and ask for your healing mercy and grace to help them in their lives. Amen.

Kyle Henderson
Working With My community

Habitat for Humanity has had several impacts on me - direct and indirect. It impacts me directly because I do volunteer work with others to build Habitat homes. The indirect impact is through the improvements to the community around me.

I enjoy working with other volunteers and with the potential homeowners to build homes. As a team of volunteers learn building skills from each other and we have the sense of accomplishment when we step back and admire our work. Sometimes we work together with groups from other communities who come to Hartsville to labor in God’s name. Through them, we also learn new skills and we make new friends.

The impact of Habitat on the community is a long term one. In their new home, the homeowners are able to improve their lives and provide a safe, comfortable place for their children. They are able to build equity rather than renting, plus they can bolster their credit rating. Habitat can do this because Habitat requires the homeowner to perform three hundred hours of volunteer work, attend a budgeting class and qualify financially. After meeting these requirements, the homeowner buys the home using an interest free loan from Habitat. These steps serve to mold the homeowner into a member in good standing in the community. Another impact on the community is that Habitat builds stronger neighborhoods. In Hartsville, several Habitat homes have been built on lots that once were an eyesore with an abandoned home. Habitat tore down the eyesore, hauled off the trash and built a new home that will be carefully maintained. The neighborhood appearance is improved and a hazardous structure is replaced with a good neighbor. Finally Habitat brings together many different community groups. One group may build the walls while another paints and still another installed the cabinets. Each can look back on their completed task and feel that they have made a difference in the life of a family and in the community as a whole.

John R. Davis, Jr.

Tomorrow is Sunday March 10. Use this day of rest to thank God for his love, mercy, and blessings as we continue to Journey to new life.
MONDAY, MARCH 11

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

Scripture: Genesis 1: 1-2, 26-27

The Theme this week is Healthy Weight. This is the concept that each person has an optimal range of a healthy weight as compared to imposed standards by society in general or by advertisers. A proper place to begin is at the beginning. Genesis 1 reveals from where all of us originate.

In the beginning God created the sky and the earth. The earth was empty, and had no form. Darkness covered the ocean, and God’s Spirit was moving over the water . . . . . .

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the tame animals, over all the earth, and over all the small crawling animals on the earth.”

So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God He created them. He created male and female.”

(Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27)

God created each one of us in His image. God’s blueprint is upon our lives. Knowing from where we come helps us to know where we are going. God knows we have the potential to maintain a healthy weight. God wants us to be healthy and gives us the tools to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Read Genesis 1:27 each day this week and always remember God created us in his image.

Garland Hart
I am sure many of us remember this song that we learned in church. It sends a wonderful message that all of us regardless of color, race or ethnicity are loved by Jesus. Not only does Jesus love all our skin colors but he loves us all our different shapes and sizes. However, we also know that we are created in God’s image and are to treat our body as a temple that is a gift from God.

Striving to be a healthy weight is a way to treat our body as a temple. However, we know that a person with a healthy weight does NOT have to look like the models we see on TV. As we strive to treat our body as a temple and in God’s likeness, we all know how important portion control is. There are three important messages in portion control:

1- **What we eat** — We hear the educational messages about a balanced diet of carbohydrates, fats, proteins but we are blasted with the ads to eat out where the focus is on carbohydrates and fats. How often do you have a fresh vegetable or fruit when you eat out??

2- **How much we eat** - “Super-size it costs less” may be true for the wallet, but not for our health. There are many tools to use to define what is a serving size — so use them to be sure you don’t overeat.

3- **When we eat** - It is well researched that our bodies function better if we eat three meals per day. Skipping breakfast does indeed start the day off wrong and ending the day with a huge meal is asking for added pounds! Make time for your meals by planning them and enjoying them rather than rushing to finish.

God loves us and he wants us to love ourselves so that we can love and do for others. Eating healthy is one of the best ways to love ourselves!!

Gwen A Davis
Keeping Your “SIZE” Healthy with Exercise

Well, the holiday season is behind us and the summer looms over us as we wonder if we can fit in that summer outfit or swimsuit once again! Regular physical activity is important for good health, and it's especially important if you're trying to lose weight or to maintain a healthy weight. Here are some tips to remember:

- Increasing physical activity uses or "burns off" more calories. The burning of calories through physical activity plus a reduction in calories you eat, creates a "calorie deficit" that results in weight loss.
- Most weight loss occurs because of decreased caloric intake. However, evidence shows the only way to maintain weight loss is to do regular physical activity.
- Physical activity reduces risks of heart disease and diabetes beyond that produced by weight reduction alone.

It does not matter what type of physical activity you perform -- sports, planned exercise, household chores, yard work, or work-related tasks -- all are beneficial. The secret is to "JUST MOVE"! There are lots of ways to do that: take a short walk around the block, rake leaves, play actively with the kids, walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator, mow the lawn, dance to the radio or other music, take an activity break at work -- get up and stretch or walk around, or park your car farther away from your destination then walk the extra distance.

The point is not to make physical activity an unwelcome chore, but to make the most of the opportunities. Healthy weight is about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses.

Staying in control of your weight contributes to good health now and as you age. God wants us to be healthy and gives us the tools to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Let us use these tools!!

Gwen A Davis
Some Early Signs of Mental Illness

While everyone may exhibit abnormal behavior at one time or another, professional counseling may be needed if any combination of the following persist or recur:

- Prolonged or severe depression
- Frequent extreme changes in emotion
- Undue, continuing anxiety and worry
- Tension-caused physical problems
- Social withdrawal, isolation
- Obsession or compulsions
- Rage or violence
- Thoughts or talk of suicide
- Substantial, rapid changes in weight
- Dramatic negative personality changes
- Excessive feelings of persecution
- Unjustified fears
- Excessive self-centeredness
- Negative self-image and outlook
- General inability to cope with life

Janice Smith
I remember when I was in the 7th grade chorus, we sang a song that changed my views of God forever. The song was entitled, “What Color is God’s Skin?”

What color is God’s skin? What color is God’s skin?

I say it’s black, brown, it’s yellow, it is red, it is white. Everyone’s the same in the good Lord’s sight.

Until I sang that song, I had not considered that God might look any different from the paintings that hung in the Sunday school room or the pictures in my Bible. Until that point I had never considered that God might look different from the image my culture and my traditions had projected God to look like.

Take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Now, without any thought or reasoning, relying completely to your reactions, either write out, or draw your image of God. Don’t think about it. Just do it. What kind of image came to mind for you? Was God sitting on a throne? Did God have a long flowing beard? Was God a big strong man or was God more like a grandmother who smells of fresh baked cookies and gives the best hugs. Was your image of God more like the calm and collected character of Morgan Freeman in the movie “Evan Almighty”? Or was there an image that came to mind for you at all? Was there only darkness? Was there only light? Was there light coming out of darkness?

How you view God, the images that come to mind for you, say volumes about your relationship with God. If you envision God as a strong and omnipotent, then you may view God with bulky muscles. If you envision God as loving and nurturing, then you may see God as that plump, eye twinkling grandmother image. If you see God as hopeful, then perhaps the light coming out of darkness is the image that comes to mind.

Read Genesis 1:1-31. Look back over the image of God that you described or did draw. In light of vv. 26-27, do adjustments need to be made of your image? If you are created in God’s image, as are all God’s children, then what does that image say about how you should be treating your body? If you are created in God’s image and that is an image of strength or love or hope, then you need to ask yourself a few questions. To the best of my ability am I living out the image of God? Are there things that I can do differently to improve that image? Are there things that I either need to add, or eliminate from my daily living that might help improve my image of God to the world?

Holy, Loving, Mysterious God, You have created us in your image, in your likeness and being. You have poured yourself into us through the power of your Holy Spirit. Sometimes we get so distracted with the ways of the world that we forget we should be striving to nurture our bodies so that we can fully and faithfully strive to live you out in all that we do. Sometimes we get so consumed by our own wants and desires that we fail to recognize your Holy Spirit, journeying with us, ready to guide us, if only we will listen. Help us, we pray to refrain from things that are harmful to our bodies and instead fill them with that which is good and pleasing to you O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Josie Holler
Living and Doing as God Created Us In His Image

- Babysit for busy parents who are in need of recreation or rest
- Write a note or give a verbal compliment or encouragement to someone.
- Give 10% of your weight in dollars to hunger.
- Assist in developing a healthy menu for your church suppers
- Offer to bring healthy snacks to church meeting or school functions
- Develop a walking path around your church grounds
- Utilize healthy activities from Presbyterians and Lets Move
  

Lisa Culpepper

Tomorrow, Sunday March 17 is a day of rest. God created each one of us in His image. God knows we have the potential to maintain a healthy weight. God wants us to be healthy and gives us the tools to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
MONDAY, MARCH 18

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

Scripture: Psalm 103: 1-3, 11-14

The theme this week is Disease Management. This is a set of behaviors to minimize the (harmful) effects of a disease already diagnosed (such as diabetes, heart disease, etc.). Scripture offers us guidelines on managing disease. Psalm 103 directs us to a certain act that should begin every day.

My whole being, praise the Lord; all my being, praise his holy name. My whole being, praise the Lord and do not forget all his kindnesses. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. . . . As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who respect him. He has taken our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west. The Lord has mercy on those who respect him, as a father has mercy on his children. He knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:1-3, 11-14)

One act the Psalmist calls us to is to praise the Lord. This act should be done every day. As we are managing any disease, we are called to praise God. All of us have the spiritual disease of sin. We manage this disease by acknowledging our sin, confessing it to God, and seeking God’s forgiveness. God wants to forgive us. All we need to do is confess our sin and seek his forgiveness. May we praise God daily for his love, mercy, and blessings. Then we can seek to manage whatever disease we may have.

Garland Hart
“If It Tastes Good, You Can’t Eat It!”

I have heard these words spoken so many times by clients as we talk about how to manage their diabetes. I have come to realize that Eating is a religion for many of us. That chocolate cake that Aunt Mary makes or the macaroni and cheese made by Uncle Dave truly are the closest you can get to Heaven on earth!!

But if we are thinking with our heads and not our stomachs, we know that if you have a chronic condition, a carefully planned diet can make a difference. With certain diseases, what you eat may reduce symptoms. In other cases, diet can improve health. For example, eating a heart-healthy diet can help lower high blood pressure; this reduces the risk of both heart attack and stroke. Even if someone does not have high blood pressure, eating a heart-healthy diet reduces the chance of heart disease in the future. A nutrient-rich diet can help keep your immune system strong. And a strong immune system is one of your best defenses against illness. What someone eats plays a role in both managing illness and preventing it.

Here in the Pee Dee, we are national leaders in heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Many of the deaths and disabilities from these diseases come because the individual does not manage the disease. All of disease management includes what we eat. NO—this management is not easy, but with the support of your relatives, church family and healthcare team, the deaths and disabilities can be reduced.

God calls on us to praise and respect him with our whole being. This means that Eating cannot be what we worship, nor can we fail to care for our body as God’s temple. So during this Lenten season, pray and plan how you can better manage your eating day by day.

Gwen A Davis
Exercise and Managing My Type 2 Diabetes

The American Diabetes Association’s research supports that just 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week (150 minutes per week) of aerobic and strength training can improve your insulin sensitivity and drop your A1C (lab test for diabetes) by 1%. A 1% drop in A1C reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke by 15% to 20% and reduces your risk of kidney and eye damage by 25% to 40%.

My personal experience begins with a mother who died from complications created by diabetes. When my doctor told me I have Type 2 diabetes he also gave the startling statement, “You can learn to live with diabetes or you will surely die from it”. This was an eye opener because of my family history with diabetes. I also realized medicine alone was not going to control diabetes. I then began an exercise program of aerobic and strength training that I have followed for the last twelve years. My last A1C was 6.4 which has been true for the last ten years. An additional side effect of my exercising has been the lowering of my LDL (low density lipids– the bad cholesterol) to 90 (was 238) and raising my HDL (high density lipids– the good cholesterol) to 47 (was 33).

Seeing my hard work pay off, specifically, seeing my blood work results drop so much has been very exciting. You have all these people telling you for years to eat right and exercise. The benefits of doing this are no longer a myth or an 'old wives' tale' to me. Check with your doctor before you begin any exercise program if you have any chronic diseases such as diabetes. You can learn to live with diabetes or you will surely die from it.

Bert Guery
Stress And How To Cope

To live a productive and fulfilling life, it is important to have balance spiritually, physically and psychologically in our stress inducing world of today. Work, family and financial pressures can and do effect nearly all areas of our emotional and physical well-being. Fear of losing stability in your life can cause stress, anxiety and uncontrolled stressors can cause the onset of possible mental illness.

A rich spiritual life with a strong belief in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ can alleviate the stressors in your life. The scriptures are plentiful in providing relief to those in need of strength, guidance and salvation. The Rev. Susan Gregory-Schroeder at www.mentalhealthministries.net, provide resources for churches and families to cope with stress and mental illness.

Another excellent source is http://helpguide.org.mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm. This website provides a stress management tool in identifying sources of stress in your life, looking at how you currently cope with stress and four strategies to manage your stress.

Janice Smith
Psalms As Sources for Prayer

Scripture: Psalm 90:10a The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty if we are strong:

The Bible is very clear in Psalm 90 that we will not live forever here on earth. A very sobering thought is that when we are born, we approach our death every day. We will eventually die from some disease or mortal condition. We seriously fool ourselves to think otherwise. Meanwhile, we do seek to be as healthy for God desires good for us. God is a God of health and peace (shalom). When we contract a disease, we seek healing and the strength to handle the storm. We must persevere as best as we can.

Nonetheless, the difficulties mount as symptoms cluster and the disease starts taking its toll upon our bodies. And very often we can look upon our bodies in extremely negative ways, much that the Greek philosopher Plato is attributed as describing the body to be the “prison house of the soul.”

In Jane Vennard’s book, Praying with Body and Soul: A way to Intimacy with God, prayer is described more as an ongoing spiritual exercise to be in relationship with God rather than the way she was brought up to offer God a wish list of things one desires. In one chapter, “Praying when our bodies betray us,” she broaches the subject of the deterioration of our bodies and how that affects our prayer life.

I find the best prayer approach to people who are in the midst of great disease, especially with facing the limitations of the human body, is to pray all their emotions to God. Whatever they are, these emotions can be voiced to God. The book of Psalms is filled with the gamut of emotions: from gratitude to praise, from worry to fear, from sadness to anger. Calvin wrote in his preface to his Psalms commentary, “in a word, whatever may serve to encourage us when we are about to pray to God, is taught us in this book.” (p. xxxvii)

The psalms provide poignant material for prayer as we struggle with the challenges of this earthly life. Certain psalms illustrate particular struggles: Psalm 88 for those with depression, Psalm 102 for the dying and /or persecuted and Psalm 141 for one struggling with anger.

Prayer: Open Me, O God, to the wonders You have for me this day. Calm my storm, or calm me I humbly ask. As my body fails, help me put my trust in You, in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyle Henderson
Reaching Out To Others In Need

- Clean out your closet today and donate the clothes to a local second hand store.
- Give thanks for all that your children have as you sponsor a child through World Vision [www.Worldvision.org].
- Give the gift of a smile, phone call, listening, hug to someone who lives alone today.
- Give joyfully in one of the ways already mentioned
- Reconcile with an enemy
- Write a hand written letter to your missionary
- Support the Heifer Project [www.heifer.org] that assists 3rd world countries in their fight to end hunger and poverty and care for the Earth.
- Support Compassion International [www.Compassion.com] in their work that is focused on the individual child and his or her development.

Lisa Culpepper

Tomorrow is Palm Sunday and a day of rest. Use this day of rest to praise God for His love, mercy, and blessings. If we are managing a disease, we are still called to praise God especially as we remember that He came to us.
MONDAY, MARCH 25

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

Scripture: Philippians 4: 4, 6-7, 12b-13

The theme for Holy Week is Gratitude.

This is the attitude in life of finding reasons for being thankful and expressing it. Paul certainly expresses this attitude of gratitude in his Letter to the Philippians.

Be full of joy in the Lord always. I will say it again, be full of joy . . . . Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God’s peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus . . . I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens, when I have enough to eat and when I go hungry. I can do all things through Christ, because he gives me strength.

(Philippians 4:4, 6-7, 12b-13)

The attitude of gratitude is what the Lord wants us to have. Being grateful to God for all his love, mercy, and blessings prepares us for whatever lies ahead. There is comfort knowing God is always with us. Begin each day reading this passage from Philippians. May this attitude permeate our lives and be demonstrated by our actions and words.

Garland Hart
Children Can Teach Us

I am betting that your church has the same experience as my church does. The children’s sermon can offer the true meaning of the scripture even before we hear what our minister has to say!! Recently we had a wonderful children’s sermon on being grateful for our bodies and making good food choices that will help us take care of our bodies.

Susie Guery is a vibrant, enthusiastic kindergarten teacher who loves her children. Her children’s sermon was on recognizing our bodies as gifts from God and taking care of them so that we can do God’s work. Here are portions of her talk with the children….

“Good morning boys and girls. Today we are talking about the very special gift that God gave us when we were born …. Our Body!! There are so many wonderful things we can do with our bodies. I want each of you to do these actions as I talk about them. Can you clap your hands, stomp your feet, wiggle your ears?? God made our bodies so we can do so much. God wants us to use our body to help people — like when you help someone up if they fall, hug someone that is sad or do chores to help your mommy and daddy. Eating the right foods helps our body stay healthy and strong. I have some foods in my bag and I want you to give a thumbs up or down if you think the food is a good or bad food choice.”

The children were excited to give a thumbs up or down as a banana, chocolate candy bar, broccoli and an apple were pulled from the bag. These children knew how important healthy foods are in caring for our bodies to do God’s work.

It is always amazing to me that our little children know so much about healthy nutrition and can often make the tough decisions of what to eat much easier that adults can. How many times did your young child come home from school and talk about the positive behavior they learned about in school? Sometimes these messages our children bring home can challenge us to look at our daily behaviors. As we move through this Lenten study, we pray to God for guidance in our Journey and to remember that we can do all things through Christ.

Gwen A Davis
Our Body Is A Gift: Be Thankful

We all say “Thank you” after receiving a gift or favor from someone and we all know that it is a way of being thankful. Extending this thanks to all areas of our lives is one of the first steps in improving our strength physically mentally and spiritually too. What does being thankful have to do with a healthy body? Well we have all been blessed with amazing gifts that we take for granted every day. Could you have forgotten to be thankful for this amazing gift?

So if you gave a gift to someone you love, your partner, parents, children or friend and they refused to use it, threw it away, look after it properly or just gave it back, how would it make you feel? Of course it would make you feel unappreciated, almost as if you have been cheated. It might even result in wanting to take the gift back out of a complete lack of gratitude.

Our body, mind, talents and our spiritual sense are the most amazing gifts that we have been blessed with. They are gifts for us to accept and be thankful for. Are we refusing to use our gifts that have been given to us? We can be thankful for our body by strengthening it. We can fill our brain with the right knowledge. Use your spiritual gift by being thankful, generous and overlook faults in others and by loving those around you.

Please know that the same concept applies to these gifts as it does to any other physical gift. If you are not being thankful by using them they may cease to exist in your life. This universe has a way of giving us things that we are going to appreciate and taking away those things that we are ungrateful for. Being talented at something, but not using it is the same as not having the talent.

Nothing is of value until it is being used in a way pleasing to God and that includes your body. Be grateful for your body, mind and your senses.

Gwen A Davis
Do This In Remembrance Of Me

**Scripture:** Luke 22:19-20a  *Then Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper,…*

Today is Maundy Thursday when many Christians will celebrate the Lord’s supper as a way of fulfilling Jesus’ command: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Some Christian Traditions refer to the Lord’s Supper by using a modified Greek word, Eucharist. The word *eucharisto* means to give thanks. And so the main prayer preceding the breaking of the bread is “The Great Thanksgiving.” In many ways, receiving the Lord’s supper is a mental exercise in showing gratitude to God for what God has done.

The Lord’s Supper is about giving thanks to God. As well as remembering the story of Jesus at table with his disciples and his willingness to go to the cross for our sins. Settings for the Lord’s Supper often provide us great opportunities to meditate and to reflect on the depth of God’s love for us. The Lord’s Supper is a helpful way station for us on our journey as we ponder, in silence, or with soft music, or even in chaotic moments, God’s abiding love for each of us.

May that reality be yours this day…deep down in your body, and way up high in your mind, that God loves you beyond Your imagining.

Prayer:

*O Bread of Life,*

I give you thanks for the breaking of the bread;
I give you thanks before the breaking of the bread.
I give you thanks after the breaking of the bread.
Help me to share Your bread, in Christ. Amen.

Kyle Henderson
It is easy to express gratitude when someone remembers your birthday or surprises you with a gift or treats you to lunch. It is easy to express thanks when these seemingly undeserved gifts are graciously given to us, partly because of the gesture of kindness itself, partly because it was fun to experience the gift. Who doesn’t like to be remembered on their birthday? Who doesn’t like to be treated to a meal from time to time and enjoy the company of another? Gratitude is the expression of thanks for that experience.

What happens if a gift is given, a wonderful, beautiful gift, but it came at a very dear price? Could you still express the same gratitude, knowing that such a price was paid, in order for you to receive that gift?

That is where we are in this Lenten journey. It is Holy Week. It is Good Friday and we are supposed to focus on gratitude. Gratitude? How do you express gratitude when the world seems dark? How do you express thanks when are supposed to focus on sorrow of Golgotha? There is tension that exist between these two extremes: gratitude and mourning. How do we express gratitude for the wonderful, beautiful gift given to each of us and at the same time hold honor and respect for the price of that gift? But this isn’t just a question to be asked on Good Friday. This is a question that we should ask ourselves everyday because we always live in between the tension of gratitude and mourning, of sanctification and the need for repentance, or joy and sorrow, of light and darkness. How do we live between these extremes?

1 Peter 1:3-9 is a helpful passage to help us through this day and every day. In particular look at verses 6-7: “...rejoice, even if now for a little while you suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith-being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus is revealed.”

Friends, living between the two extremes on this Good Friday...and every other day in life, strive to find something to rejoice about. In closing is a prayer by a saint of the church. When she was 86 years old and her body was failing her, she shared her prayer with me. It is a prayer that she prayed each and every morning, elated that she was able to put her feet on the floor. It is a prayer of gratitude.

Dear Lord, Thank you for giving me another day that I can breathe in your goodness and beauty and do something kind in response to the grace you have given me. Amen

Simple and pure, even on this Good Friday we can find something to be grateful for. What is your prayer of gratitude today?

Josie Holler
We Are Thankful to God For All We Are

- Bring canned goods to the Celebration Walk on April 6
- Sponsor a child through Compassion International or World Vision
- Lead your church in planting a church garden
- Participating in PCUSA Lets Move initiative.
- Support global missions through the Presbyterians International Health
- [http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/give/internationalhealth/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/give/internationalhealth/)

Lisa Culpepper

Tomorrow is Easter Sunday when we celebrate Christ’s resurrection. Use this day of rest to thank God for his love, mercy, and blessings as we continue to Journey to new life.
MONDAY, APRIL 1

You Can Be Who God Wants You To Be

Scripture: Exodus 15: 1-2, 4a, 5, 13

The theme for this week is Celebration. This includes lifting up the positive experiences as a way of honoring God’s activity in our midst, and being reflective in reviewing any movement along the journey. There are many occasions in Scripture of God’s people celebrating after God has led them safely on a journey.

Exodus 15 is the song sung by Moses and the Israelites after God led them from Egypt and miraculously across the Red Sea. When Pharaoh realized that the Israelites had left, he changed his mind about letting them go. He took his army and went after them. God provided a way out for the Israelites by parting the Red Sea for them so they could cross over on dry land. When the Egyptian army pursued them across the Red Sea the waters flowed back together drowning the army.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: I will sing to the Lord, because he is worthy of great honor. He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea. The Lord gives us strength and makes me sing; he has saved me. He is my God, and I will praise him. He is the God of my fathers and I will honor him . . . . The chariots and soldiers of the King of Egypt he has thrown into the sea . . . The deep waters covered them, and they sank to the bottom like a rock . . . . You keep your loving promise and lead the people you have saved. With your strength you will guide them to your holy place.”

(Exodus 15: 1-2, 4a, 5, 13)

Celebrate the journey you are completing this week. Sing songs to God for bringing you safely through this journey. Plan to participate in the Celebration Walk on Saturday, April 6. Join with other children of God to celebrate this journey which hopefully has drawn us closer to God and His will for our lives.

Garland Hart
**TUESDAY, APRIL 2**

**Eat And Drink To The Glory Of God**

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 10:31

What comes to your mind when someone asks you to help plan a celebration? One of the first things I think of is the food, what will we serve! Celebrations including food are part of our childhood memories, birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving feasts and the list goes on and on. My guess is often these foods that remind us of these special events with those dearest to us are not our lightest or healthiest options, but they are rich in tradition. As we approach the close of the season of Lent we have learned a great deal about treating our bodies as a temple.

This begs the question, do we abandon tradition and munch on carrot sticks, do we indulge because this is how we have always celebrated, or do we even want to acknowledge that God cares about what we eat? I believe God cares about how we treat our bodies and how we fuel them. Galatians 5:22-23 says “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” While self-control is described as a piece of fruit grown from the tree of the Holy Spirit, it is a piece of fruit that is difficult to grasp and fully digest. This is evident by the billion dollar weight loss industry in the United States. We are blessed, we have an awesome God who loves us and guides us even when our nutrition habits show no self-control. When we seek God in ALL THAT WE DO, we find peace that can never be filled with cake and holiday feasts.

So what should you prepare for the feast? We should give thanks, we should slow down when we eat, we should focus on the pleasure of the company of friends and family, we should find excitement in trying a new recipe. Pray. Nothing is too big or too small for our God. He has a plan for us, but our daily decisions impact our health. “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Anna Moorman
Preparing for our Journey Celebration Walk

Our 40 day Journey for Lent is nearing a close. We have celebrated Easter this week and we look forward to our Celebration Walk on April 6 at John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Florence. This morning program (10-12) will include stories of celebration from this journey and a Celebration Walk. Registration will begin at 9:30 am.

We hope you have gained insights about Nourishing your Mind, Body and Spirit during this Lenten Journey. We would like to have churches or individuals share their stories of what they have learned or experienced with this Journey at the Celebration program. So, come prepared to talk about your journey!!!

The Celebration Walk will include routes of distances from 1/2 mile to 3K (1.86 miles). Each walker can set their own pace and enjoy the beauty of spring and fellowship of friends, old and new. So come prepared in your sneakers!

Please bring a canned good (no glass containers) to be donated to the Harvest Hope Food Bank. Harvest Hope Food Bank began in 1981 to provide for the needs of hungry people by gathering and sharing quality food with dignity, compassion and education. It currently serves people in 20 counties in the Midlands, Pee Dee and Greater Greenville regions of South Carolina.

Health Committee
Five Ways To Improve Self-Awareness

The term most people use to describe a person with a realistic view of him/her as well as how others perceive you is called self-awareness. In reality, few people have this ability. Most of us spend our lives giving society messages with mixed meanings with our actions and behaviors. For example telling us that if we live in a certain neighborhood, drive a particular car, we begin to assume we are these people-rich, successful, kind and generally, ok. This is the darkest and most dangerous form of deception - self-deception. Our personal self-deception makes it difficult to be self-aware.

Here are some suggestions that can help you become more self-aware.

1. Always listen to what people say to and about you. This is especially true for your loved ones. A lot of messages may be embedded in the “junk,” however, there’s always some truth hidden in the junk. You can learn some invaluable lessons in your journey for self-awareness.

2. Pay attention to how people act around you. This is a sure indication of how they perceive you.

3. Do not walk blindly through this life. Albert Einstein talked about the “other.” He emphasized that you must be willing to pay attention to others around you and then to your own needs and welfare. By doing this, you will determine the not so nice things about your own personality.

4. Do not compare yourself with others. You cannot be self aware when trying to act like someone else. Soon you will become aware of the not so nice things about your own personality. Stay true to your personality. This will give you a better chance of discovering who you really are.

5. Be at peace with yourself. We all have emotional turmoil. Stillness within tends to help neutralize the turmoil. This state will give you a different perspective about you and who and what you are.

Shakespeare said “To thy own self be true.” How others see you is really who you are.

Carrie Sinkler-Parker

Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit: a Lenten Study
Celebrate The Journey

The journey is nearing the end. You have offered many prayers to God. You have sought to love God with all your soul through prayer.

You have been asked to try different spiritual practices in your prayer life like:

- Using crayons
- Doodling, using a healthy imaging technique
- Intentionally praying for others and only others.
- Reading the psalms

Take some time today, and consider in what ways has your prayer life changed?

In what ways has prayer gotten better for you?

In what ways have you struggled more with prayer?

What will help your soul to be nourished in the future through prayer?

What prayer practices can you eliminate?

What are your personal thoughts about prayer? . . . .

Prayer:  O God of Life and Love, I thank you for listening to me and for speaking to me. Help me and others to practice ways to further our relationships with You in prayer and meditation, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyle Henderson
Saturday April 6
Journey Celebration and Walk
John Calvin Presbyterian Church, Florence SC

Bring a canned good for Harvest Hope
Registration at 9:30 am
Program begins at 10 am

Health Committee Members

Dr. Eugen (Buddy) Bach                 Mrs. Barbara Dickson
Kentye Presbyterian Church, Hamer SC    First Presbyterian Church
Latta Presbyterian Church, Latta SC     Cheraw, SC

Mrs. Fredrica Brailsford               The Rev. Garland Hart
Goodwill Presbyterian Church           Summerton Presbyterian Church
Mayesville, SC                         Summerton, SC

The Rev. Judith Cettei                 The Rev. Kyle Henderson
Lake City Presbyterian Church         First Presbyterian Church
Lake City, SC                         Cheraw, SC

Mrs. Lola Faye Craig                  The Rev. Josie Holler
John Calvin Presbyterian Church       Wedgefield, SC
Florence, S C

Mrs. Gwen Davis                       Mrs. Carrie Sinkler Parker
First Presbyterian Church             Westminster Presbyterian Church
Hartsville, SC                         Alcolu, SC

Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit: a Lenten Study