

“Well-Being In All Areas of Our Lives”

Date: July 12, 2015

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Isaiah 40:28-32; Luke 24:1-49

Theme: Health, Wellness

Occasion: Kick-off the “The Road to Emmaus” walking program

The passage we just read (Luke 24) is the biblical foundation of a new ministry that we’re beginning today here at Lakewood. A group of people have been meeting for the past couple of months and today launches their first program.

The Lakewood Health Ministry Team would like to invite you to join them in an 8-week adventure. The Walk to Emmaus is a walking program, but it’s more than just that. It’s a journey that explores health and wellness, in all aspects of our lives.

Too often when we think of a health program, we immediately think of a weight-loss program. And that is not what this is. If you lose weight and you wanted to, great. But that is not what the emphasis is. This is a way of looking at ourselves holistically. (slide please)

The story of the Road to Emmaus is filled with examples of physical wellness. The two disciples walked seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They broke bread with Jesus. They invited Jesus to stay with them and rest.

When we care for our bodies, we become energized and equipped to serve God as faithful disciples. We’re better equipped to nurture our relationships with family, with friends, with our congregation and with our community.

So, we’re inviting people to get up and move. Choose a walking distance that is comfortable for you. Maybe you’ll start off walking around the block, or maybe you’ll start off walking a few miles.

Each person is different, and their bodies are able to handle more or less distance. We invite you to gradually increase the amount of time and distance you walk, each week.

Walking alone gives us time to think, to meditate and to mull over the readings for that week. It gives us a chance to pray and to reflect on how God is continually working in our lives. Spend some time with Jesus on your walk, just as the two disciples did in Luke 24.

Did I mention that there is a guide for you to use; it's available on the table out in the narthex. In that guide are scripture verses to read. There are questions for you to think about, to help you evaluate and make new decisions about personal life-style choices.

The Road to Emmaus Guide also introduces us to several spiritual disciplines that go along with that week's emphasis. And, it gives us some ideas on changes we might make, so that we can become more healthy in that area.

Week One emphasizes *physical health*. It brings to our awareness not only exercise, but also diet and rest. We are reminded to honor the Sabbath, for it provides the weekly renewal that our spiritual well-being requires.

Week Two takes a look at *emotional well-being*. The two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus felt a number of emotions: grief, depression, anger and stress. We too face multiple emotions in our lives, and they're not all positive.

How we navigate difficult times can make a significant difference in our lives. The two disciples found support in one another, and trusted each other to share their feelings. Do you have a

trusted person in your life with whom you can share? Perhaps you'd like to find a prayer partner to join you on your daily walks.

Week Three examines our *intellectual well-being*. As Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he interpreted the scriptures for them and helped them to understand why the Messiah had to suffer and die. The disciples were struggling with their faith.

We all do, from time to time. Faith in search of understanding will send us back into the Scriptures, as well as to other authors. What practices do you do, to help to stimulate your mind to new ways of thinking?

As well as stimulating our minds, we also need to take time to rest our minds as well. Getting a good night's sleep is not only good for the body, it's good for the mind as well. What bedtime rituals do you practice to help signal your mind and body that it's time to slow down and rest?

Week four focuses on our *social well-being*. Along the road to Emmaus, the two disciples shared communication as they walked and talked together. Community was created as they gathered around the table.

Social well-being is about relationships, and finding time to interact and play. In community we are able to share, be supported, and exchange expressions of love and kindness. Do you have any close friends? Where do you find a sense of belonging?

Week Five focuses on our *spiritual well-being*. When they arrived at Emmaus, Jesus broke bread with the disciples and revealed himself to them. In Communion, we too receive Christ's healing love into our hearts.

When did your heart last “burn” within you? When did you last feel the Holy Spirit alive in you? When do you feel most connected to God? The guide offers us several suggestions on ways to nurture our relationship with God, some familiar and some new ways too.

Week Six examines our *vocational well-being*. In the passage about the road to Emmaus, Christ empowered the disciples to be witnesses and to receive the Holy Spirit. We each receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the waters of baptism.

We celebrate today the baptism of not only infants but also of two adults making their first profession of faith. Now you may think that only ministers have a vocation, a calling from God to serve in a particular way. But at baptism, we are all given the Holy Spirit and God gifts each of us uniquely to serve in the world.

Vocation includes not only one’s occupation, but also the roles we might be called to play, such as husband or wife, parent, child or sibling. Vocation is not just our work from 9 to 5; it’s about how God lives in and through us in every aspect of our lives.

It’s how we make faith-filled, ethical decisions, lifestyle choices, serving others and living a Christ-centered life. We are all called by God, and our vocation will evolve as we grow through life experiences, challenges and events.

The Seventh Week looks at our *financial well-being*. In the episode on the road to Emmaus, Jesus did not impose upon the two men, but he did accept their generous offer and stayed with them. He was supported by their generosity. Generosity is a sign of financial health, an open-ness to the needs of others because your own well-being is sufficiently managed.

How has your financial well-being affected your generosity? How does the way you live your financial life reflect your deepest values? What kind of financial example do you give to others?

During week eight, we are invited to think about all of the different areas we have been looking at so far. How do they relate to each other? In which area of your life are you strong and healthy? Where do you need to pay more attention?

What one thing could you begin to change, that would add more health to your over-all well-being? Create a SMART goal, to help yourself get started on your wellness journey. Having a goal also helps to keep you accountable to it.

But we need to remember to be gentle on ourselves and not be overly critical. Celebrate your progress. Forgive yourself when you fall short, and then begin again.

I've got my guide in one hand, and my walking shoes in the other. How about you? Are you ready to join the Road to Emmaus Walking and Wellness program? Let's learn to live well, centered as a new creation in Christ. Amen? Amen!