

Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit News



Health-e-AME
Physical-e-Fit

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Reflections on Health in the AME Church From the Right Rev. Preston W. Williams, II

One of my greatest interests has always been the relationship between psychological and spiritual components with health and sickness. I believe that spiritual and psychological factors can bring about a physical sickness in many cases, something that I have spoken about in workshops for a number of years. Many have gotten sick after their spiritual life has been altered, resulting in mood swings and other responses. When the spiritual, physical and psychological comes together in balance, the body benefits.

The environment that one lives in impacts the psychological, spiritual and physical life of a person. We need to look at the environment; air, water and ground. I refer to them as the ABC's of life. There needs to be wholeness.

It is our goal to address health in the 7th Episcopal District and to work toward a healthier district using the Health Commission and other components of the Episcopal district working together. *We want to decrease diabetes, hypertension, stroke, cancer and other health disparities by at least 30% in the next 4 years in our congregations and communities.*

Prayer and believing will put one in a more spiritual realm. Where there is greater spirituality, there are less physical and psychological problems. We have begun some workshops to address depression and will continue to offer workshops across the state.

Our goal is to raise the level of spirituality in four years, as we feel it will lessen the degree of sickness. I believe that when the spiritual man is whole, there will be less sickness. God has fully prepared



Rt. Rev. P.W. Williams II
& Mrs. Williams

humans with a care package from heaven known as the Holy Spirit. The spirit of God was given to the church, not unto the world, but unto the church. Jesus said, to His disciples, I go to my Father and pray unto Him that He will give unto you a comforter. It is within that realm, that all power emanates from the Father through the Holy Ghost to the church of our Lord and Savior. The church is scattered throughout the world. The AME Church is just one

group of flock that is part of a greater one.

We hope to spend our efforts to address a number of issues. We will focus on childhood obesity through the Health Commission and the YPD. Also, we will look at providing an assisted living facility. The Son's of Allen will work with the Health Commission to provide resources and education for men's health statewide. The AME Church must address the poverty areas to have an impact on the health of our people. These components will work together to help make a change in the health outcomes of our people in SC.

I encourage and support the work of the Health Commission team. The Health-e-AME Program has been doing an excellent job statewide and we want to expand that work. The Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit Program has been attending all annual conferences across the state to encourage healthy lifestyle changes and to recruit churches to be trained to implement physical activity programs in their churches to help congregations live healthier lives. I participate in physical activity regularly by walking and by using my stationary bicycle.

I want to thank everyone for their time and commitment to this work.

Special points of interest:

- *October is Breast Cancer Awareness month.* Learn about how healthy lifestyles affect your chances of developing cancer
- *October is Family Health month.* Include family members of all ages in regular physical activity to promote health and well-being.
- *November is Diabetes Awareness month:* promote physical activity in your church as a way for diabetic AME members to help control the progression of their disease.
- December 2-4: Annual post conference, Allen University

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Taking Steps to Conquer Diabetes

Diabetes touches the lives of many African Americans; some have a family member with diabetes, know a friend who has been dealing with the disease or have the disease themselves. African Americans are 1.6 times more likely to develop diabetes than most other ethnic groups, and 2.7 million African Americans in the US have diabetes, many of them do not know they have it. Diabetes can cause many health problems and increases the chance of developing heart disease and high blood pressure.

Physical activity plays two roles in the fight against diabetes: it can help prevent the onset of diabetes and can help those already affected by the disease to control it. Some individuals with diabetes who are regularly active and eat a sensible diet are able to control their

disease without medications!

November is Diabetes Awareness month, and the focus of the campaign this month is the link between diabetes and heart disease. You can find out more from the American Diabetes Association. There are offices in Greenville and Columbia, or call 1-888-DIABETES, or visit their website at www.diabetes.org for more information about Diabetes Awareness month. Visit www.health-e-ame.com to find other diabetes resources.

To celebrate Diabetes Awareness month, promote awareness and get information to your congregation about diabetes and physical activity. Try including Diabetes facts in the Sunday bulletin, create a bulletin board about

the benefits of physical activity for preventing and managing diabetes, hold a health fair to screen for diabetes and physical inactivity, or visit organizations within your congregation to talk about the role of physical activity with diabetes. Consider gathering a team from your church to participate in the Walk for Diabetes to raise money for diabetes research and treatments. Contact the American Diabetes Association for more details and event dates in your area.



Make Physical Activity a Family Affair!

Like it or not, we are all role models for the rest of our family. If we spend most of our time watching TV, eating poorly, and rarely exercising, we can expect our family members to do the same. So this fall, be a positive role model and turn off the TV, grab your family members, and head outdoors for some physical activity.

By making physical activities a family affair, you not only encourage your

“By being a positive role model, you not only improve your health, but the health of your loved ones.”

loved ones to adopt healthy habits, but you can enjoy each other's company and support. Some fun family activities include evening walks around the block, and bicycling through a nearby park. For more fun, plan a picnic at a

park once a month and invite other families to join you.

Encourage family members to play group games, such as hopscotch, jump rope, kick-ball, and even flag football. And don't forget that variety keeps exercise interesting, so challenge your family to pick a new activity each week. By being a positive role model, you not only improve your health, but the health of your loved ones. Start today!

Physical-e-Fit at the Annual Conference Meetings

Autumn is upon us, and as we enjoy the cooler weather and the changing leaves, the 6 conferences of the 7th Episcopal district are conducting their annual meetings, and the Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit team has been a part of the festivities.

The Palmetto conference meeting at Bethel AME in Georgetown included a mini-training workshop where 11 new churches were trained and 23 previously trained churches were refreshed

in the Physical-e-Fit program. The Northeast conference meeting at Ebenezer AME in Mullins was filled with excitement as 59 churches attended a workshop about the program. Reid Chapel were gracious hosts for the Columbia conference, where 30



Physical-e-Fit at the Columbia conference meeting

churches attended a Physical-e-Fit workshop.

We are looking forward to including the program at the rest of the annual meetings and bringing the program to churches statewide.

Spotlight church: Bethel AME, Georgetown

Bethel AME in Georgetown played the gracious host to the annual Palmetto conference meeting in August. Members were excited to share their stories from the Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit program with the program staff. Rev. Jonathon Baker takes an active role in leading his congregation towards a healthier lifestyle. Latanya Tillman heads up the health ministry at Bethel, with the Physical-e-Fit program and other health programs, to address the health concerns of the members of the congregation.

The day starts bright and early as a crowd of devoted and energetic indi-

viduals attend a group exercise class at 6:30 am three days a week. Another class is held later in the day, at 5:30pm, to reach working members of the congregation. Members of the surrounding community are also invited to attend the exercise classes. Participants restore their energy with fruit and water after working up an appetite during exercise class.

Ms. Tillman has also offered the 8 Steps to Fitness program and chair aerobics to the congregation.

We all know that many hands make light work, and by partnering with other churches in the community, Be-

thel AMEC can offer a wide variety of programs to promote the health and well-being of its members.



Rev. & Mrs. Baker from Bethel AME

Congratulations to Rev. Baker, Ms. Tillman and the congregation of Bethel AME for taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle!

A Word from Presiding Elder Willie Nelson

We have some encouraging words from Elder Willie J. Nelson, sharing his thoughts and reflections about the Physical-e-Fit program and his personal experience with physical activity.

Elder Nelson keeps active by taking walks and doing his yard work each day. Both Elder and Mrs. Carrie R. Nelson wear pedometers to keep track of their steps, and they tell us that they always try to get in 12,000 steps each day before going to bed. The Nelsons feel that it is important that the AME church focuses on physical activity because it leads to better health. A sedentary lifestyle is not a healthy lifestyle, and the people are perishing because of health disparities.

Elder Nelson thinks that an important link between spirituality and health is found in *1 Timothy 4:7-10*. "Our physical health is susceptible to disease and injury, but faith can sustain us through these tragedies". Elder Nelson feels that we must develop a spiritual muscle by exercising our faith in God and develop a physical activity program to avoid becoming sedentary. We should be kind to our bodies and spiritual well-being by exercising them both. *I too pray that we all enjoy good health and our soul get along well.* We must be kind to one another and to ourselves.

Elder and Mrs. Nelson feel that the Physical-e-Fit program is wonderful way to encourage AME members to become physically fit and to maintain an active lifestyle. The program reinforces what research is finding about African American health disparities. He feels that the Physical-e-Fit program empowers the AME church to

"The Apostle Paul likened the Christian life to a race - lets run the race right!"

reduce the disparities by providing useful tools, such as the *8 Steps to Fitness* program and information about proper nutrition.

Elder Nelson expressed that the Presiding Elders and the Pastors should take a leading role with the program to lay the foundation of spirituality and physical activity for the congregations of the AME Church. Church leaders should get involved with physical activity with perseverance because they have such a great clout of witnesses in each congregation. God gave us a spirit of power in physical activity when he gave the spirit of self-discipline. Elder Nelson says we can all become physically active if we put our minds to it,

and he mentioned that Elders and Pastors play an important role in this program. Elder Nelson would love to see the USC, MUSC, & AMEC partnership continue further, and focus on empowering AME members to take control of their health, and keep family as a motivating force behind healthy lifestyles.

Elder Nelson reminds us that everyone can benefit from consistent physical activity and healthy eating habits. "The Apostle Paul likened the Christian life to a race - lets run the race right!"



Presiding Elder Willie J. Nelson & Mrs. Carrie R. Nelson



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**Learn about upcoming
program events at
www.health-e-ame.com**

*Take action and take care of your temple!
Get 30+ minutes of physical activity a day.
Eat 5+ fruits and vegetables a day.*



This project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The project is a collaboration between the AME Church, the Medical University of South Carolina and The University of South Carolina. © 2003 Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit.

Meet our Program Assistant: Octavia Gethers

Greetings in the Awesome name of Jesus Christ! I am Octavia M. Gethers, a member of Mt. Carmel AME Church, Moncks Corner, SC, Reverend Remus Harper Jr., Pastor. My career in the health care field has included medical technology and health administration. My involvement in health ministry began in 1998 with my role as the Mt. Pleasant District Daughters of Sarah Coordinator as we partnered with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environment Control (SC DHEC) in an Influenza and Pneumonia Immunization Campaign. Later, I was appointed to the Mt. Pleasant District Health Cabinet.

In 2000, as Health Director, I organized a health ministry in my former church, Greater Mt. Zion AME Church, McClellanville, SC. Through this ministry, there were many suc-

cess stories. Members were empowered with the knowledge, learned through workshops, monthly health meetings, and other health activities to take charge of their health by making lifestyle changes. By seeing the positive difference the health ministry made in the members' lives, I was motivated to continue to help others learn how to take action to better care for their temples.

I have been blessed in being a member of the Physical-e-Fit team as the Program Assistant, assisting Ms. Lottie McClorin, the project director, in areas of registration, training, and data collection. I am now more physically active since becoming involved in this project. Previously, I hated to exercise, but now, I am practicing what we are teaching, and I am improving my health. My favorite component of the project is the

Walking Program. Walking is easy to do and not only does it benefit you physically, but also spiritually and mentally. Using the pedometer also has made walking more exciting because I set goals and reward myself when attaining my goal.

It is my hope and prayer that each of you will join me in being more physically active and eating healthier. One step at a time, one goal at a time, we can become healthier to serve God better.



Health-e-AME Physical-e-Fit
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Octavia Gethers