

For the **Life of the World**

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

July 2007, Volume Eleven, Number Three



Kneeling in the Mud

Dr. Daniel Gard

Chaplaincy in Action

Lt. Richard Malmstrom

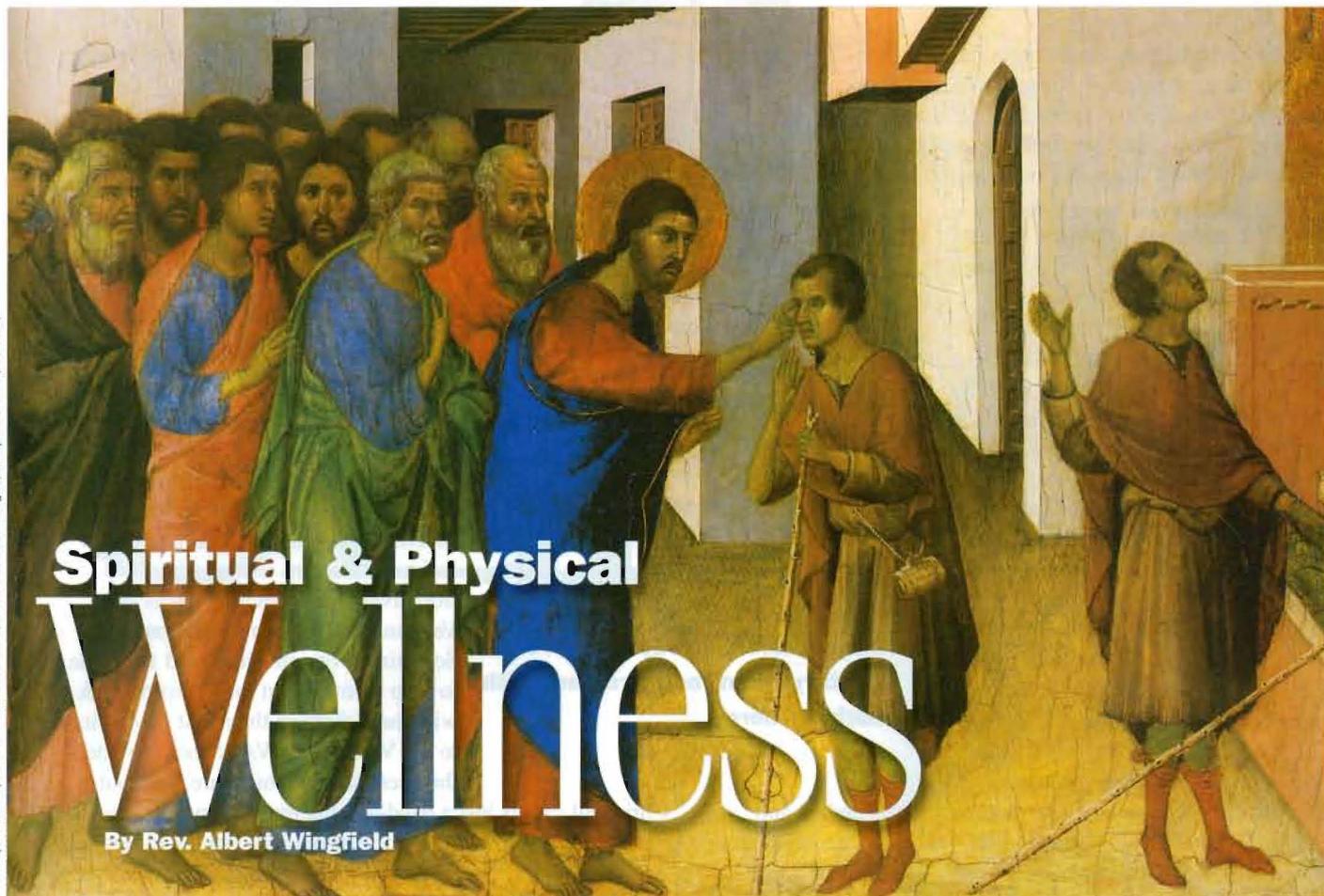
Spiritual & Physical Wellness

Rev. Albert Wingfield

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY LIBRARY

JUL 20 2007

FT. WAYNE, IN



Spiritual & Physical Wellness

By Rev. Albert Wingfield

As a long time church worker and one who has for many years been concerned about wellness for our church workers, their families, our church and its members, I want to share some challenges for our readers. One might wonder why this article about wellness at this time. Why all the hype about wellness and what, if anything, should we do about it?

Wellness involves our entire life in Christ and who we are in Him. Who we are in Him determines how we live in relation to others and how we serve God and our neighbor. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19).

I have the privilege of serving on the staff of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. One of my responsibilities is the wellness program at our Seminary. Our goal is to provide a

wellness program for our Seminary families as they prepare to serve our church as pastors, vicars, and deaconesses. To do this effectively there are some specific things we all should know and do. We need to give some serious thought to what wellness means to God's crown of creation – every man, woman, child – and how we respond to our spiritual and physical wellness as Children of the Heavenly Father.

Wellness involves our entire life in Christ and who we are in Him. Who we are in Him determines how we live in relation to others and how we serve God and our neighbor. Our bodies are temples

of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). These bodies are vessels or tools that God uses so that we may serve Him. The choices we make with our bodies and minds and our lifestyle choices may positively or negatively affect our ability to serve Him. Lifestyle choices begin at birth and stay with us until death. It is a proven fact that when we make the proper lifestyle choices, they affect our quality of health and life.

Listen to the radio or the television, read any newspaper or magazine, and before long wellness and the family will be discussed. What kind of program is needed to get Americans into a wellness lifestyle? This is equally true for the church worker, his family, and his church. Statistics point to the fact that 61% of Americans are overweight, and this leads to many other health issues.

Health insurance costs continue to escalate putting many employers in a position where they are no longer able to provide a health plan they can afford.

Some churches today can only cover the worker and not the family. This creates a real hardship for the worker and stress on the family. What can our church do to alleviate this problem that is and can become extremely harmful to our church and its mission?

We know that our workers, their families, and our church members live in a high tech, high stress world; a world where jobs, school sports, and social demands are impacting our children, youth, married couples, families, and our senior citizens.

God has placed the church and its workers here at this particular time in its history to serve Him. This means we must be spiritually and physically well if we are to use the gifts that God has given us as we share the Gospel message that God was in Christ reconciling Himself to the world and not counting our sins against us (II Corinthians 5:19).

The real problem is that God's crown of creation lost paradise - Spiritual Wellness - when our first parents sinned and thus were exiled from the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:15-17 tells us, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it and the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" They lost their privilege of walking and talking with God, and they lost their privilege of being one with all of nature. Having destroyed their perfect spiritual relationship with God, they also experienced the physical effects of the fall.

In Genesis 3:23 we read, "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken." Adam and Eve's perfect health and diet were lost and death and dying became a part of the human experience.

God still loved His separated children and promised a way back to a right relationship with their Heavenly Father. Isaiah 53:1-3 tells us the way back: "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering." Verses 5 and 6, "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The meaning of the second article in Luther's Small Catechism gives us the simple good news of getting our spiritual wellness back. "I believe that Jesus Christ, True God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. Who has

God has placed the church and its workers here at this particular time in its history to serve Him. This means we must be spiritually and physically well if we are to use the gifts that God has given us as we share the Gospel message that God was in Christ reconciling Himself to the world and not counting our sins against us (II Corinthians 5:19).

redeemed me, a lost and condemned person purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

This is God's plan for complete spiritual wellness. His Son, the God man Christ Jesus, would make us spiritually well. Galatians 4:4-5 tells us, "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

We receive these full rights through

holy baptism, which God Himself instituted. We read in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Through baptism we were brought back into a proper relationship with God our Heavenly Father. What benefit does baptism give to the person receiving it? It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this as the words and promises of God declared to us in Holy Scripture.

What about the Lord's Supper? Luther tells us on page 31 of the Small Catechism what the benefits are of this drinking of these words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Holy Scripture shows us that in the Sacrament of Holy Communion there is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. A professor once told me that people could be around the Word all of their lives and still be lost. I was startled at the time but the point he was making is that we can become so busy with important and good things that we neglect the one thing needful. Remember Martha in Luke 10:41-42, "'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.'" The point is that God wants His children - pastors, teachers, mothers, fathers, children, and all adults - to be good stewards of their time as Children of the Heavenly Father.

I recently asked a wellness class that I teach to outline a plan for spiritual wellness. Every student's shared concern was not having enough time during the day to take care of themselves spiritually. If we are not spiritually fed in the proper way, it affects the body as an individual and each family member in some way. Are we so busy that we do not have time for family devotions, Sunday School, Adult Bible Class, and worship?

A pastor tells this account of his lifestyle. "I thought I had to do everything, lead all the meetings in our church, teach all of the classes, etc. I was

afraid to delegate any responsibility. My elders were wallflowers, and I expected the church council to give me a rubber stamp. I had little or no time for hospital calls and home visits. The rest of my time was spent on my computer. My church missed me and my family missed me.” The pastor went on to say it took him and his elders a year to get him and the congregation functioning in Word and Sacrament ministry.

Because of this congregations may want to assess spiritual wellness in their congregation in the following way:

1. Is every member in Adult Bible Class? If not, why not? What do we need to do to get every member in Bible study?
2. What are we doing about our members who attend church and the Lord’s Supper infrequently? What do we mean by infrequently?
3. Do we have an active evangelism team? How active?
4. Is there scope and sequence in our Sunday School curriculum and does the pastor go over the lessons with our teachers every month?
5. How does each group in our church tie into Word and Sacrament ministry?
6. Is your group a part of Word and Sacrament ministry? How?
7. Are your seniors a part of Word and Sacrament ministry? If so, define how.
8. Do you have a wellness committee and how does it function?
9. Do you have an elementary school and/or high school, how does the school fit into Word and Sacrament ministry?
10. Have you as a congregation identified what Word and Sacrament means to you as individuals, families, and as God’s church?

A health care physician recently pointed out that we all know very well the importance of wellness for our church workers and individual family members. We know that living a healthy lifestyle is important at every age in our lives. We

are told that obesity is a national epidemic at all levels in our society. For the first time in a decade, life expectancy has declined rather than increased. The culprit is unhealthy lifestyles.

The Federal Government has finalized rules that govern the way companies can encourage employees to develop healthier lifestyles. Why? Because it is widely recognized that there is a serious health problem in America. The question is, where does wellness and healthy lifestyles rank with us, our families, our church and its workers? Most congregations have no plan or valuable tools other than the parish nurse program. Those congregations that have a parish nurse are very blessed. These angels of health and wellness are doing an outstanding job. However, they have limited resources and most are volunteers. They need more resources and tools to work with their congregations.

As a synod our districts and local congregations need to identify the issues in our lifestyles that are causing the challenge and then address them.

I want again to point briefly to the two areas of our wellness challenge. First, the spiritual health means what my relationship with God is as I relate to Him through Jesus Christ my Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit, working first through baptism, water and the Word, and then through the Word and Holy Communion. In other words, spiritual wellness comes to God’s children, and being God’s children makes us members of His divine family. Family devotions, attendance at Sunday School, Bible Class, and Christian Day school are the tools God provides for our spiritual wellness.

Our Heavenly Father also wants us to take care of our physical wellness, and there are some tools we need to use. Health care workers tell us there are some things we inherit in our genes. A disposition to high blood pressure or high cholesterol may come from grandfathers and grandmothers. The first good lifestyle choice is a yearly physical, and that means knowing your doctor and how to talk to your doctor. After the physical,

what is the next step toward a healthy lifestyle? There are six areas that an individual can and should control.

1. Blood pressure – It can be controlled. It must be controlled. Ideal blood pressure should be below 120/80.
2. Cholesterol – It can be controlled. It must be controlled. Ideal cholesterol counts are:
Total – Below 200
LDL – Below 100
HDL – Above 40
3. Smoking – NO exception, NO excuse, STOP NOW.
4. Diet – Portion control is the key. Use a 6” plate. portions need to be the size of a deck of cards. Vegetable servings should be ½ cup.
5. Exercise – The American Heart Association says we need to exercise one hour per day seven days a week.
6. Body Mass Index – Normal BMI is 18.5-24. We are overweight when our number is 25 and over.

These are six areas that are excellent ways to take care of the temple (our body).

If the reader would like to know more, the Seminary would like to bring a team to your church, school, or community and conduct a complete wellness seminar. We would like to train people, along with your parish nurse or designated wellness person, to have an on-going wellness program in your area.

Please contact me by email at al@alwingfield.com or by mail at Rev. Al Wingfield, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46825. For a set of wellness materials, e-mail or write for them available through CTS Family Press via the above e-mail address or mail address. 📧

Rev. Albert Wingfield is Vice President of Business Affairs at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

