



Ministry Modules are intended for use with the Leader's Guide. Appendices and Resources referenced in modules can be found within the Guide.

# ***Wellness Advocacy Ministry***



This Mission Module is provided through a Partnership with Association of Brethren Caregivers, of the Church of the Brethren, and Caregiving Ministries, a division of FamilyCare America, Inc.



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## Purpose

The mission of the Wellness Ministry is to continue Jesus' mission of love and healing today. This ministry is an enduring sign of the belief that every person is a treasure, every life a sacred gift, every human being a unity of body, mind, and spirit.

The Wellness Ministry works to bring alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace. It seeks to answer God's call to foster healing, act with compassion, and promote wellness for all persons and communities, with special attention to those who are poor, underserved and most vulnerable. This Ministry strives to transform hurt into hope.

## Goals and Objectives

- To encourage members to adopt healthy living and behaviors.
- To Promote simple living, because simple living is healthy, spiritually centered living. This Ministry will raise awareness of the connection between physical, mental, spiritual, social and emotional aspects of life. "What does simple living look like today?"
- To educate members of the Church about the stewardship of healthcare resources (health care costs, complimentary and alternative medicine, pharmaceutical dependence reduction, and the allocation of healthcare resources (especially at end of life). "How should members use their health care dollars?"
- To engage in the current public debates about health care delivery, access, and financing reform.

## Parameters and Limitations

This ministry **does not**:

- Suggest specific policy/ position advocacy for health care related issues from the National Caregivers Library or Caregiving Ministries.

This ministry **does**:

- Suggest methods for congregations to encourage participation advocating public health policy that is in alignment with your congregational beliefs and paradigms.



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### **Suggested Process for this Ministry:**

The Wellness Advocacy Ministry could include professionals in health, legal, counseling, social service, and educational fields to address opportunity identification of health needs within a congregation and community.

1. Educate the church as to what current health policies are and how they are lacking, need development, are correct, or are wrong. Use guidance from church leaders to interpret policy within the context of Scripture, etc. Invite a Parish Nurse to speak and/ or show a video.
2. Inform the congregation what can and cannot be expected from the Wellness Advocacy Ministry.
3. Survey the church for people who are willing and able to work in this ministry (see Appendix A).
4. If the church is small, determine if other churches in the community are interested in combining to form a Wellness Advocacy Ministry.
5. Create a "Health Cabinet" to oversee the program. The cabinet consists of health care, legal, educational and other professionals within the local church (or churches, if this ministry is combined).
6. Provide training to volunteers, informing them of the process of this ministry.
7. Implement the program by a coordinator.
8. Solicit outside resources for health education.
9. Develop a listserve to notify congregants who opt-in to learn of updates of new legislation or local issues, and your church's position and suggestions for action (if any).
10. Develop a web site to have current information and educational resources for congregants. This information ought to educate members on current health information as well as the spiritual nature of such issues.
11. Encourage congregants to celebrate awareness days or months, such as National HIV/AIDS day or Breast Cancer Awareness Week. Encourage church sponsored activities to promote education, awareness and action that is in alignment with Church ideology.
12. Schedule regular meetings for volunteers to increase knowledge of health issues through in-service training and to discuss and work out problems with the Wellness Advocacy Ministry Team.
13. Periodically evaluate the ministry. (See Evaluation Tool, p. 19, Administrative Guide.)



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## RESOURCES

- National Institute of Health,
- World Health Organization
- Community health professionals
- Church members who are health professionals
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- Local hospital: their teaching program and library
- Free medical clinic and their teaching capabilities
- Health Department
- Area Agency on Aging
- AARP
- Community library
- Local Congressional Representatives
- Local long term care Ombudsman program



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## Sample Wellness Advocacy Programs:

The following examples of advocacy policies are not the express opinion of advocacy by The National Caregivers Library or Caregiving Ministries. They are examples of policies of current national concern suggested as a starting point for discussion within Advocacy Ministries:

- Uninsured Americans and Medicare/ CHIP expansion
- Low cost/ free influenza immunization
- Patient rights in long term care facilities (Contact local Ombudsman)
- Disabilities (are your congregations accessible?)
- Older Adults
- End of Life
- Funding Cuts to the Poor

The Association of Brethren Caregivers has an advocacy policy for Uninsured coverage campaign. The following is an excerpt from their Call to Care for their Cover the Uninsured Policy:

### A Call to Care For People Without Health Insurance

#### Who Needs Care?

Today, nearly 46 million Americans have no health insurance, including more than 8 million children; *America's uninsured need care.*

Most of the uninsured -- eight out of 10 -- either work or are in working families; *America's uninsured workers and their families need care.*

The health, jobs, families and lives of the uninsured are in constant jeopardy. These children, women and men live sicker and die younger simply because they do not have health insurance; *those at risk, sick and dying need care.*

Individuals and families without health coverage are more than twice as likely to have had problems paying medical bills in the past year as those who have coverage; *those with financial problems need care.*

*Yet it doesn't have to be this way. So today we proclaim the call to care in the name of our nation's nearly 45 million uninsured people.*

#### Why Do Our Faith Communities Proclaim the Call to Care?

Because faith communities have a long tradition of caring for people who suffer in mind, body and spirit, *today we proclaim the call to care for our nation's nearly 45 million uninsured people.*

Because faith communities have prayed for the sick, visited the hospitalized, comforted the dying and their loved ones, and founded hospitals, *today we proclaim today a call to care for our nation's nearly 45 million uninsured people.*

Because faith communities have led the way in seeking just and compassionate public policies, *today we proclaim the call to care for our nation's 45 million uninsured people.*

Because Jewish teaching holds that "if you save one life it is as if you have saved the world;" because Muslim teaching instructs us to "help one another in righteousness and piety;" because in Christian teaching we read, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me," *today we proclaim the call to care for our nation's 45 million uninsured people.*

Because all of our faith traditions, despite encompassing a wide spectrum of beliefs, hold central a conviction that life is a gift from God to be cherished and that God's people are called to care for one another, provide healing and prevent suffering with compassion and a commitment to justice, *today we proclaim the call to care for our nation's 45 million uninsured people.*



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**The following is an example of a directive to encourage congregants to take action to advocate for health:**

From: <http://www.brethren.org/abc/advocacy/kids%20family.html>

**Congregations Encouraged to Support SCHIP Reauthorization by Contacting Legislators**

The Association of Brethren Caregivers encourages congregations and Church of the Brethren members to support the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) by contacting their congressional representatives and asking them to reauthorize the program.

In 1997, Congress created SCHIP to provide insurance for children whose parents work but can't afford health insurance of their own. Today, 46 million people live in the United States without adequate health insurance and 9 million of those are children. SCHIP is before Congress now for reauthorization to continue. Many legislators and organizations are calling for the program to expand and include more recipients, which means increasing its funding. This week, the House and Senate both passed bipartisan bills with differing funding levels in support of SCHIP. In May, President Bush indicated he would veto any bill that expands the program. A new update from the Children's Defense Fund highlights some differences in the bills while encouraging those in support of SCHIP to contact their representatives. "As you can see, the fight's not over," states the Children's Defense Fund update. "Your elected officials will still need to hear from you along every step of the process moving forward to be reminded that their constituents support comprehensive health coverage for all children in America." With congressional members readying to take an August break, legislators should be contacted at their home offices.

Several organizations provide programs and resources that congregations can use to talk about the importance of continuing and expanding the SCHIP program in newsletters, bulletins and community forums. Below is a list of resources:

- The Church of the Brethren Washington Office's July 20 Washington Action Alert describes the importance of SCHIP and cites a 1989 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Statement affirming the right to healthcare for all.
- "Cover the Uninsured" offers a fact sheet about SCHIP, a map of events to support SCHIP that are being planned around the United States, and a compilation of news articles about the reauthorization of SCHIP, both pro and con, to inform the public.
- The Children's Defense Fund has a Faith Community Action Kit and flier to help congregations get the word out about SCHIP. The organization also offers a 39-page "Toolkit for Faith Communities" as a downloadable PDF file.
- The Association of Brethren Caregivers' announcement from May offers reasons why people of faith should support the legislation and describes the need for a program to offer health care for children and working families who are unable to afford health care insurance.

The initiative to support the need for better health care for the uninsured is not a new effort for the Church of the Brethren. In April, both the Association of Brethren Caregivers and the Church of the Brethren General Board signed up to support the All Healthy Children Act with the Children's Defense Fund. For the last four years, ABC has been a partnering organization to promote Cover the Uninsured and "Covering Kids & Families." These programs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation call attention to the need for health care insurance in America and seek to register children and family for low-cost or free health insurance.

To make your voice heard in support of the SCHIP program, contact your Senators and Representative by calling (888) 226-0627 or contacting their home offices during Congress' August break. Cover the Uninsured and the Children's Defense Fund both offer statements that individuals can use when contacting their legislators.



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**The following is an example of a directive to encourage congregants to take part in an Awareness Day:**

*From: <http://www.brethren.org/abc/advocacy/hiv aids.html>*

## World AIDS Day

Both nationwide and worldwide HIV/AIDS has fallen off our radar screens. Ten or 15 years ago, people probably knew someone who was HIV positive or who had AIDS. Today they might not, even though more persons are living with HIV than ever before, an estimated 38 million worldwide, 900,000 of them in the United States.

Although governments — local, regional and national — have put more money into HIV/AIDS education, prevention, treatment and care, funding has not been adequate to stop the pandemic. UNAIDS says \$12 billion needs to be invested in each of the next 10 years to stop HIV, but less than half has been committed for 2005. In the past, individuals knew they could contract HIV/AIDS and took precautions not to. Today they take less care, even though it is estimated that half of the people living with HIV in the United States do not know they are infected. The highest rates of infection are among women, young people ages 15-25, and people of color.

*-Rev. W. Evan Golder, editor/writer for a special United Church News insert on HIV/AIDS, October 2004*

The Association of Brethren Caregivers encourages congregations to observe World AIDS Day held every December 1. A bulletin insert was created with the Global Mission Partnerships of the General Board to help congregations raise awareness of the impact HIV/AIDS has had in the United States and overseas, especially Africa



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The following is an example of a pamphlet designed to encourage congregants to take part in an Awareness Day:

From: <http://www.brethren.org/abc/advocacy/hivaids.html>

### How is the Church of the Brethren responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis?

The Office of Global Mission Partnerships of the Church of the Brethren General Board and the Association of Brethren Caregivers are promoting World AIDS Day among congregations to raise awareness of on-going efforts and the need for more work on this important issue. The Church of the Brethren has taken both a narrow and a broad approach to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis. First, the denomination has worked with its sister church in Nigeria. Second, it has joined the wider Christian response in Africa through Church World Service.

### How can you respond?

- Pray for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.
- Host a World AIDS Day observance on December 1 and use resources available at UNAIDS ([www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)) and the Program Committee on Education Ministries of the National Council of Churches ([nccusa.org/missioneducation/aids/faces\\_of\\_aids.htm](http://nccusa.org/missioneducation/aids/faces_of_aids.htm)).
- Educate church members and youth about the on-going spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Educate your congregation about how HIV/AIDS, poverty and famine are impacting people with HIV/AIDS across the world.
- Financially support the Church of the Brethren's efforts to relieve people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa through the Church World Service. (Relief programs are described at [www.churchworldservice.org/Development/health.html](http://www.churchworldservice.org/Development/health.html).)

# HIV/AIDS

## How Will You Respond?

**World AIDS Day December 1, 2005**

**... And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of my family, you did it to me.'**

— Matthew 25:39-40 —

*Produced jointly by the Association of Brethren Caregivers and the Office of Global Mission Partnerships*



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- Rev. W. Evan Golder, editor/writer for a special United Church News insert on HIV/AIDS, October 2004



Because stigma and discrimination are major obstacles to effective HIV/AIDS prevention and care, one way churches can help overcome these problems is to welcome everyone. Christian hospitality is a key aspect of congregational ministry with people living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. When congregations reach out and embrace all people, including those affected by HIV/AIDS, healing happens, not only among individuals but the church community as a whole.

- United Methodist Church

At current rates, 100 million people worldwide will be infected [with HIV/AIDS] by 2010. Of the 14,000 persons infected each day, 85 percent live in the developing world. Tragically, only 5 percent of people in the developing world who need lifesaving AIDS medications have access to them because they are too expensive, and/or trade laws restrict their importation. In Africa, over 11 million children have lost at least one parent to the disease, leading to an explosion in "child-headed households." AIDS has wiped out as much as one quarter of the labor force in some African countries, creating economic havoc and fueling hunger.

- NCCC, Mission Education website, [www.ncccausa.org/missioneducation/aids/facts\\_of\\_aids.htm](http://www.ncccausa.org/missioneducation/aids/facts_of_aids.htm).

**These are the faces of children and families living in a world of AIDS. Their spirit, their determination, and their resilience inspire all of us to join the fight. We are one world, and these children are our children.**

- Archbishop Desmond Tutu