

Steps to Starting a Health Ministry

1. Form a team.
 - Think of people that you do not automatically think of to serve.
 - Ensure diversity in the group including age, gender, marital status, disability status, health professionals and non-health professionals, etc.
 - Have a large enough group to support the ministry.
 - Invite people versus recruiting. Invite people to offer what they love to do, what excites them, what they feel they can give.
 - Make relationship building and building beloved community a priority in your team. Take the time for fellowship and learning about each one's journey.
 - Install and commission health ministry team members.
2. As a team, learn more about the health issues in the congregation and community. Think holistically, but also "ecologically". Use public health data, stories of people in the congregation; interview leaders from community based health organizations; talk with long-term residents about the history of the community, etc....
3. Study the Bible to seek clues for what God's vision for health and wholeness/beloved community is for the community.
4. Make a list of what your congregation is already doing to support health and create beloved community. Again, think broadly about all the things that help keep people healthy—adequate housing, good nutrition, a clean environment, friendships and love, enough money to live on, access to medical care, etc...
5. Bring the results of your study back to the congregation so that everyone knows what you have been discovering about
 - the health of your community
 - what your Bible study has revealed,
 - what the strengths of your congregation are
 - what kinds of ministries you are already doing
6. As a congregation, pray for God's leading.
 - Given what we know about the health of our community...
 - Given what we know about God's vision for beloved community...
 - Given what we know about the gifts and strengths of our congregations...
 - ***what is God calling us to do?***
7. Set a goal: What will be different as a result of our ministry?
8. Establish steps to meet those goals: To make things different, we will do 1....., 2....., 3..... Don't forget to think about how you can meet your goal in partnership with other churches and with the health providers in your community!
9. Implement your plan.
10. Gather regularly for prayer, Bible study, sharing stories, building relationships with each other and with others in the collaborative. Keep asking the question, "*Given what we know, what is God calling us to do?*"
11. Remember, it is all about building and sustaining relationships!

*The cutting edge of health ministry does not lie up some unexplored river, over some academic horizon, in some clever new management paradigm, out amid some cosmic mystery. The cutting edge is in between us, among those who literally share our breath and water, our food and shelter. **The cutting edge of health ministries is not technical, but relational...how we care for each other.***

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