

ROLE OF CLERGY IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

West-Mainline and Philadelphia Districts of the Philadelphia
Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal
Church

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8 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

1. Communicate and Provide Healthcare Information and Issues in Weekly Bulletin
2. Create Collaborations and Partnerships
3. Share Personal Experiences
4. Determine Most Prevalent Conditions Afflicting the Community
5. Operate Through the Mission of The Church¹
6. Utilize Existing Tools, Resources and Knowledge
7. Utilize the Class Leaders System
8. Operate Through Information Initiatives

¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church, The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2016, 50th edition (Nashville, Tennessee: AME Sunday School Union, 2017).23.

Eight Effective Strategies for the Promotion of Health and Wellness

After reviewing research from the project surveys, one on one interviews, and the best practices from the literature reviews, the following eight effective strategies are recommended for clergy promoting health and wellness in the churches and communities of the West-Mainline and Philadelphia Districts of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC).

1. Communicate and Provide Healthcare Information and Issues in the Weekly Bulletin

Churches are places where congregants who may have transportation challenges to hospitals and health and wellness clinics can receive health related information in their weekly bulletins.

Participants of the project survey listed church and the Sunday Bulletin as places they receive information regarding health and wellness.

2. Create Collaborations and Partnerships

A partnership to promote health and wellness was engaged by 29% of the churches. A total of 70% of the respondent used either a collaboration or a partnership to promote health and wellness in the community.

Collaborations in the community requires a spirit of working together for the well-being of the community.

3. Share Personal Experiences

When a clergy member has a firsthand experience with a disease or condition, they develop an increased awareness of the disease. The clergy person become more knowledgeable of the challenges and patterns of the disease. Moreover, the clergy person is more passionate in helping others with the disease.

Clergy members who experience a disease or condition have more ownership of meeting the goals and objectives of the strategy or initiative. One interviewee connected their personal experience with the need to promote health and wellness as a survivor from an illness.

4. Determine Most Prevalent Conditions Afflicting the Community

Diabetes, cancer and high blood pressure are the prevalent diseases and conditions afflicting the member of the 17 churches.

The purpose of a health and wellness strategy or initiative is to improve the health of persons afflicted with a disease or condition. In addition, a prevalent disease or condition. In addition, a prevalent disease such as diabetes can be a root cause of other diseases. Diabetes causes destruction to other vital organs in the body such as the skin and blood vessels.

5. Operate Through the Mission of The Church

In the AMEC, “the mission of the church is to minister to the social, spiritual and physical development of all people.”¹

The mission statements of all 10 churches of the interviews used nouns and verbs which implied similar meaning to the words of the AMEC mission statement.

6. Utilize Existing Tools, Resources and Knowledge

This strategy emerges from the observation of how clergy employed existing tools and resources at their disposal. As an example, all clergy of the AMEC have access to the “*International Health Commission Handbook, 2017*” of the AMEC. The handbook can be used to assist in developing health and wellness strategies.

This study found that clergy persons of any size church can participate in a health and wellness ministry. Use what you have!

7. Utilize the Class Leaders System

The class leaders system is an effective strategy because it is used to oversee the health and well-being of the congregants. Class leaders are required to give a report of the health status and needs of the members on their list. A report is given to the pastor and members of the health commission.

The class leaders system is an effective strategy because it gives the pastor reliable information regarding the health status of the sick and shut-in members.

8. Operate Through Information Initiatives

In the project survey, 88% of the clergy participants reported that their churches participate in information initiatives.

One responded said, “information initiatives make persons aware of their health habits.” In addition, they said, “Walk-a-thons, HIV/AIDS and other initiatives are a great significance to the young and old.”

¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2016*, 50th edition (Nashville, Tennessee: AME Sunday School Union, 2017).23.