Implications for the Congregation

This paper will address the implications, or possible ways ideas from the book *Healing Bodies and Souls: A Practical Guide for Congregations* can be put into ministries at Risen Christ Lutheran Church. These areas include education, practice and leadership, worship and preaching, counseling, hospital calls, and various other avenues.

**Education**

In talking with the church and task force about a health ministry, a pastor will naturally *educate himself* about the needs of the church and community. The pastor then has an opportunity to articulate and teach his congregation about health issues in the community in correlation with the task force. The pastor should also educate the church’s members how they can care for each other and how the church can help the community.

The education needs to be inclusive in that it incorporates all genders, ethnic groups, social-economic groups, and ages. The education should lead to shaping the whole person, as well as equipping the member to help and serve Risen Christ Lutheran Church and the Davenport community. One way this will happen is to provide resources which discuss the issues and to form a library which contains such resources. A parish nurse would be a key addition that will make this ministry lively and effective. The parish nurse or health minister is a valuable person to educate and care for the church and community. The parish nurse would also be a key person in assessing the health needs of the community and caring for these needs by arranging for health screenings (e.g., blood pressure and Life Line) and promoting healthy habits among the members of Risen Christ Lutheran Church (e.g., better fellowship snack offerings and healthy eating tips).

**Practice and Leadership**
A pastor can lead through actions as well as words. A pastor can display a healthy life by exercising, healthy eating, abstaining from unhealthy activity (e.g., over consumption of alcohol), and by living a balanced life between work, family, and personal care. The pastor can be an advocate for healthy living amongst the church members. This can be done in various areas such as promoting healthy food at events and limiting access to things such as soda and coffee. The pastor could support schedules for staff and volunteers which keep them from becoming exhausted or burned-out. The pastor may be able to address policies that promote health or educate against policies that hinder health.

Visual and general support for the health ministry task force and any staff member that works with the health ministry will be very important. A pastor’s support will increase the possibility of success for a ministry effort. One task is to meet regularly with the task force by attending the meetings. Through this interaction, a pastor will stay updated about the needs of the community and the progress of the ministry area. The pastor should try to attend as many health ministry activities (i.e., health fairs, blood drives, healing services) to participate and show support for the ministry taking place. In this way, he serves as an advocate that is pushing the ministry forward. These events are also a great way to meet citizens of the community that may not be members of the church.

Worship and Preaching

The area of corporate worship and preaching is a valuable place for whole person ministry to take place. In God’s words in the Divine Service, people hear God’s forgiveness of sins, the ultimate healing. At worship, the parishioner receives the body and blood of the Great Healer. The context exists for healing – spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally – to be proclaimed. A special healing service can be provided monthly, quarterly, or as the
congregational deems needed. The pastor’s preaching can also reflect a care for the whole person. As Lutherans, we do a good job of preaching the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. We preach justification, but often times shy away from preaching the sanctified or “whole” life. This type of sermon would be a natural fit in any healing service or service in which the whole-person health ministry is going to be highlighted. Also, if the congregation is attached to a whole-person health ministry, a pastor needs to preach on the subject on a regular basis.

Counseling

In ministering to the whole person, a natural connection exists between worship and preaching and the act of counseling. When a pastor understands holistic ministry, they will care for the mental, emotional, and physical states as well as the spiritual. If the opportunity allows, the parish nurse, deaconess, other care staff, or volunteers will also serve an important role in counseling the member. Obviously none of these servants can do evasive medical work, but lifting the person in prayer and showing care can do a lot for holistic healing. Also, incorporating members of the health ministry task force into shut-in visits and other counseling can add support for the individual in need. This counseling program could become an overarching ministry of Risen Christ Lutheran Church that develops into its own counseling center. This could entail offerings that would address marriage ministry (marriage preparation, marriage enrichment, marriage intervention, marriage rehabilitation, and divorce care), grief counseling, and depression.

Hospital Calls

Hospital calls would still be an integral part of our ministry, along with small group care; however, these visits would be more purposefully directed at the whole-person health. The purpose of hospital calls would be founded on the connection between the person’s current
health condition as well as nurturing their current spiritual disposition. To do this the pastoral staff would offer the private rite of anointing and prayer, as established by the Board of Elders under the direction of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s existing rites. Other individuals in the care ministry would then be able to offer this ministry along with their support and encouragement to the whole-person—body, spirit, and mind.

**Other Avenues**

There are a multitude of other areas that this ministry could reach out in that doesn’t imply a specific need, but that meets people where they are in life. These offerings could be done through various athletic programs—expanding and directing our current offering of softball and basketball. Facilities could be used to offer aerobic classes (Zumba or the like) as well as activities that lead into worship or Bible study. Stress and time management classes could be regularly offered to the community that gave practical ways to minister to the whole-person. Walking and running groups could be a way to develop new small groups that meet the needs of individuals. The options are limited only be the creativity, needs, and volunteers of Risen Christ Lutheran Church.

**Summary**

Risen Christ Lutheran Church stands at the threshold of a new and exciting ministry. There are manifold opportunities for us to minister to the needs of our members as well as serving as an outreach to the Davenport community. To do this we will need to take up once again the passion for the whole-person health and minister to the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of individuals.
Resources

