



There are seven dimensions of health. Physical health is only one of them. Intellectual, emotional, social, vocational, and environmental are also important factors in our overall wellbeing. The seventh dimension is *spiritual*. Being spiritually healthy is a big part of our overall wellbeing.

All of these are connected to one another. If things are going badly at work, then that can affect our sleep patterns and our relationships with others. When we are in physical pain, we have a hard time thinking clearly and, often, feel anger or sadness. The opposite is also true, that if we are struggling in one area, but doing well in the others, we are likely to recover more quickly.

Being spiritually healthy strengthens us in our jobs, our relationships, and every area of our lives. Spiritual care can be especially helpful in managing physical pain. I remember one day doing rounds as a chaplain in the hospital. There was a woman lying in bed with silent tears running down her cheeks. She looked at me with such desperation as she whispered, "It just hurts so much."

I took her hand and started to pray. I directed her in meditating: breathing in the Holy Spirit; breathing out the pain. Her body started to relax and she fell asleep. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to provide comfort in body and mind. I know that God works through medical professionals to care for our bodies AND I know that God works through all of us to provide comfort to souls in any kind of struggle.

But, how do we care for our souls? We have some idea of how to care for our bodies: exercise and nutritious food. We know that reading and doing puzzles keeps our minds sharp. We know that conversation and time together is the key to healthy relationships. What about our spiritual health?

The two biggest things are prayer and reading scripture. Doing these alone in the privacy of your home is great, but doing them in community with a church is even better. Praying and reading the bible feed our souls. It is also important to exercise our faith – to practice trusting in God. We do this by worshiping.

My New Testament professor used to say to us that there are really only two ways the congregation *worships* God. The first is singing the hymns. The second is giving of tithes and offerings. Most of what happens in the worship service is feeding the souls of the congregation, which is a very important part of being church. But, when it comes to *worshiping the Lord*, we do that by singing God's praises and giving to God from what God has richly given us.

Giving of ourselves, our time, and our possessions is a big part of our spirituality. It is an appropriate measure of our spiritual health. Giving to the church means giving over control of a piece of ourselves to the realm of God. It is trusting in the body of Christ. Please prayerfully consider how you want to give.

The Stewardship committee is offering this prayer from the Evangelical Lutheran Worship book:

God, our gracious giver, your Son Jesus taught us that where our treasure is there our hearts will be also. Teach us to love people more than money, relationships more than things, and you above all, that the way we live will reflect what we truly value and believe. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who emptied himself in love for us, and now reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen