

HHU Lead Training Session #1

Application Panel: Growing Health Knowledge & Empowerment in the Church May 31, 2014

Panel:

Rev. Lee Plummer, St James AME Church, Quincy
Rev. Roosevelt Rogers, Old Jerusalem MB Church, Havana
Ms. Alisha Bradley-Nelson, Greater Mt. Pleasant MB Church

The key message is “Take Charge of Your Health” with three major points:

- Increase knowledge
- Know resources
- Get empowered

1. What are some strategies your church used to help members take charge of their health?

- Pastor Leadership
 - Pastor needs to be clear about expectations regarding health as a priority in the church
- Consistency
 - Pastor needs to say something about health from the pulpit every Sunday
 - Desired action needs to be followed by explanation to the members (e.g. stopped frying chicken, then explained why)
- Incorporate Resources
 - Health care professionals can be used (for example, at Bible study once or twice a month)
 - Healthy menu/health information on back of monthly church calendar
 - Health information (brochures, posters) provided throughout the church so people have access and constant reminders
- Change Food served in the Church
 - Examples include eliminating fried foods, serving healthy breakfasts
- Application and Accountability
 - Church members need to have ways to apply information (hands on activities such as prayer walks)

- Accountability is very important. Get the majority of members to participate in healthy changes (“group mentality”)

2. What resources did you find most helpful? (Resources could include people identified to serve in health-related roles, structure of health ministry, outside sources you brought into the church, among others.)

- Florida Department of Health (including local health departments in Gadsden and Leon counties)
- Credible websites (for example, Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health)
- Seek members who may have information
- Reach out to other churches
- Personal testimonies
- Local colleges/universities (FSU College of Medicine, FAMU College of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences) and health centers (Lincoln Neighborhood Health Center, Bond Community Health Center) have great information and their services are usually free
- National Health Awareness calendar that focuses on a different health topic each month
- Veterans Affairs (VA) Centers have a lot of information
- Reminders to church members to get check-ups
- Health activities incorporated into church calendar (e.g. health walk for Women’s Month)
- Promotion of “Know your numbers” – blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose level

3. What were the opportunities, challenges and lessons learned?

- Be consistent with changes you make in spite of opposition from members (“conviction greater than opposition”)
- Know your church
- Opposition within the church was a challenge but be firm (“stand your ground”)
- Spiritual focus is important. Help members understand that your body is a temple of God and we must keep it healthy.

4. What are some final thoughts or suggestions for empowerment?

- “Start somewhere”
- Make changes step-by-step, don’t try and tackle everything at one time
- Realize the time investment that is necessary for change
- Apply useful information to daily life
- Use themes that can be incorporated church-wide (for example, “Live holy, live healthy”)