

**U.C.C. WELLNESS MINISTRIES TOOLKIT**  
**Section 3**

**Exemplars of Wellness Ministries Activities**

**Physical Health and Wellness**

**Title:** *Walk to Jerusalem/Walk to Bethlehem*

**Age group served:** Youth to adults of any age

**Reason for development and implementation:**

Obesity rates have been rising across all age groups in the US. Obesity increases the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers, which are the leading causes of preventable deaths in the US.

The benefits of physical activity are well documented. Brisk walking improves brain health and weight management, strengthens muscle and bone, and improves mood. Chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are improved or prevented with regular physical activity. Physical movement also helps improve sleep and reduce stress. Playing games, doing crossword puzzles, learning new skills, or listening to music improve brain function and help prevent dementia. As little as 15 to 30 minutes a day of brisk walking can benefit our body, mind, and spirit.

*“Walking was first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3:8, ‘Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.’ It was while walking in the garden that God typically spoke to Adam and Eve. How meaningful for us to walk through our neighborhoods, through our parks, and through our communities while talking to our Creator, the One who knows us best!”* (©2003 by St. John Providence Health System. All rights reserved. Rev. 2008)

**Sharing the story:** Walking to Jerusalem: A program of exercise and meditation

Before the Season of Lent, the congregation’s Parish Care Team met to discuss ways to engage members in fellowship and healthy activity. The faith community nurse was familiar with a program written and published by St. John Providence Health System in 2008 titled *Walk to Jerusalem*, which provides the timeline to plan the program along with guides for determining and reporting miles “walked.” In addition, it shares ideas to help engage individuals of all ages, groups, families, and communities in the program and provides devotionals for reflection each week.

The Parish Care Team leader brought the program idea to the pastor and Leadership Committee for approval to purchase the curriculum and guide package for \$35. Parish Care Team members reviewed the curriculum and chose to *Walk to*

*Jerusalem* for 12 weeks during Lent. The team used the reporting templates and personalized methods to earn miles that would allow for young children and very old participants through bible study, reading, and other activities to earn miles.

Notice of the program was distributed through the church newsletter, weekly bulletins, a bulletin board, and announcements in church. In addition, a meeting was held on the launch date to provide participants with written instructions, reporting sheets, initial self-assessment, and goal-setting guidance, and to make available the purchase of an optional participant guide for ten dollars.

The pastor for children and families and the faith community nurse hosted a weekly group walk. All participants were encouraged to walk with a partner for fellowship and safety. Parish Care Team members were assigned to collect weekly report sheets in a special box each week outside the morning worship service. In addition, another team member created a visual map that recorded the weekly progress and posted it for all to see. Participants actively engaged with reporting their miles. Together we made it to Jerusalem!

### **Evaluation:**

- Members enjoyed the activity so much that they wanted to keep recording miles. They felt it made them more accountable for increasing their activity level, and they felt good doing it. In addition, families enjoyed the activities.
- This congregation did not participate in the educational activities suggested by this particular *Walk to Jerusalem* program that would have expanded historical, cultural, and geographical understanding. If volunteers are available to provide this education and meeting in person is possible, this information could enhance the program.

### **Next steps:**

- This could be a seasonal event. Various journeys in the Bible can be visualized.
- Include cultural, historical, and geographical education portions of the program.
- Ensure that those who have mobility issues understand that they are included in participation.

### **Resources:**

The [Church Health Center](#) has several *Walking With ...* devotional books and resources for growing a Health and Wellness Ministry. Devotions include a six-week program for Lent, a four-week program for Advent, and more.

[CDC: Benefits of Physical Activity](#): Physical activity improves overall health and wellness. The whole body, mind, and spirit benefits from weight management, healthy brain function, and keeping our muscles and bones strong.