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On November 10, 2018, the third biennial faith and health symposium, “Being Well: Connecting Church, Faith, and Health,” was offered by North Park Theological Seminary and North Park University School of Nursing and Health Sciences, with sponsorship from Covenant Ministries of Benevolence, the Good Shepherd Initiative, Covenant Retirement Communities, and the Kappa Nu chapter of Sigma Theta Tau. The premise of the symposium was that, in addition to caring for the sick, the church has an important role in helping people be well that is rooted in Scripture and tradition. Claiming the church’s role in health is inherently collaborative work, and thus the symposium brought together ministry and health professionals to consider what can be done together that neither group can do alone. One hundred and thirty people attended the event, while many others joined via livestreaming, including groups hosted on the campuses of Covenant Retirement Communities in Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, and Connecticut.

The following pages offer a sampling of the richness of the symposium. This overview of the symposium is offered to set the original context within which these papers were given. The day began with a keynote address from Ruth Haley Barton,<sup>1</sup> president and CEO of the Transforming Center, “Honoring the Body as a Spiritual Practice,” a version of which is included in this issue. Haley Barton emphasized that how we care for

<sup>1</sup> Information on the Transforming Center and Ruth Haley Barton’s many books can be found at <https://transformingcenter.org/>. Video of Ruth Haley Barton’s keynote address can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/p8OmPTWYbvE?t=2769>.

our bodies is not just a matter of maintaining health but is also central to faith, and that how we engage our bodies in spiritual practices can contribute to the experience of connecting with God.

The afternoon plenary sessions modeled the symposium's goal of interdisciplinary dialogue. Scott Stoner, an Episcopalian priest and therapist, shared the Living Compass Model of Wellness Ministries, which is being used in churches throughout the country. This faith-based model of wellness, organized around the great commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30), identifies eight dimensions that contribute to overall wellness. Living Compass is more than a concept, offering excellent resources for churches wanting to engage in wellness ministries.<sup>2</sup>

Kara Davis, physician, author, and pastor at New Zion Covenant Church in Dolton, Illinois, challenged the audience to think about restoring purpose to health ministry by recognizing that works without faith are dead. Identifying health ministry as inescapably Christian, Davis proposed going beyond the works of screening and education in the church, which can be done by anyone, to embracing the church's unique role in health through a faith model that is relational in emulating Jesus Christ, learning the stories of those in need, and seeking justice in health matters where people have been treated unfairly.<sup>3</sup>

Two workshop sessions provided participants opportunities to consider areas of more specific interest paired around general themes of wellness. Exploring issues of particular interest to clergy, James Bruckner, professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary, spoke on teaching and preaching on health, exploring biblical root-concepts regarding the integration of heart and mind.<sup>4</sup> Michael Washington,

<sup>2</sup> Video of Stoner's address can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/p8OmPTWYbvE?t=17872>. Living Compass has excellent resources for wellness ministries with adults, families, and youth, available on their website, <https://www.livingcompass.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Video of Davis's plenary talk can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/p8OmPTWYbvE?t=21404>. Davis has written several books related to health, including *Spiritual Secrets to a Healthy Heart: Uncovering the Roots of America's Number One Killer* (Lake Mary, FL: Siloam, 2013) and *Timeless: Your Mind, Body, and Spirit Guide to Aging with Grace and Confidence* (Lake Mary, FL: Siloam, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Video of Bruckner's workshop can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/p8OmPTWYbvE?t=9379>. Readers may also be interested in his book *Healthy, Human Life: A Biblical Witness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), which provides an in-depth look at the Bible and health. <https://youtu.be/p8OmPTWYbvE?t=9379>.

Covenant pastor and chaplain at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, spoke on the paradox of health within illness. Washington's session was the basis for his article included in this issue, "Care with Persons Both Healthy and Unhealthy."<sup>7</sup>

Eating and exercise are central to wellness. These provided a second workshop theme, reflecting on the potential of churches to improve health through ministries that encourage healthy lifestyles. Tierney Frost, national director of LifeConnect with Covenant Retirement Communities, spoke on "Faith and Fitness." Francine White, pastor at Third Baptist Church in Chicago, presented on the ALIVE! program, an initiative using faith, food, and fitness to prevent premature deaths in five churches in the Metropolitan Chicago area. The origin, method, and outcomes of this innovative program are outlined in White's contribution to this issue, "ALIVE! Five African American Churches and a Medical Institution Join Together to Prevent Premature Deaths."

Mental health is a dimension of wellness that significantly influences the church and was the theme of North Park's first faith and health symposium in 2014.<sup>6</sup> Two workshops in the 2018 symposium addressed what the church can do to promote mental wellbeing. Focusing on individuals, Daisy Santiago-Altiery, director of counseling support services at North Park University and a pastor at New Life Covenant Church (Chicago), presented on "Spirituality, Mental Health, and the Church." Recognizing the important role that families play in mental wellbeing, Scott Stoner led a workshop on "Family Resilience and Wellness." Resilience is the quality of responding to challenges and is a dimension of mental wellbeing to which the church has much to contribute.

The role of communities in wellness was the fourth and final workshop theme. Health is influenced not only by individual behavior but also by the conditions of places people live, learn, work, and play. Recognizing that not all communities provide the same opportunities to be well, a workshop on the church's role in promoting health in under-resourced

<sup>5</sup> Video of Washington's workshop can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8OmPTWYbvE&feature=youtu.be&t=26229>.

<sup>6</sup> The inaugural faith and health symposium in 2014 was "Being Present: A Faithful Response to Mental Illness." The keynote address, "A Faithful Response to Mental Illness," was delivered by John Swinton, professor in practical theology and pastoral care at the School of Divinity, Religious Studies, and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. It can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/113926192>. The password is "npts."

communities was led by Jasmine Zapata,<sup>7</sup> pediatrician and preventive medicine/public health physician and member of Fountain of Life Covenant Church in Madison, Wisconsin. Traumatic life events also influence well-being. Recognizing that not all adversity can be avoided, Stan Sonu, pediatrician and preventive medicine/public health physician and former member of Ninth Hour Covenant Church in Chicago, led a workshop on promoting wellness after adversity. Sonu discussed the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they influence health in later years and explored how the church can contribute to nurturing resilience after adversity.

Service to the church was the ultimate purpose of this interdisciplinary continuing education event. To this end, Eric Hillabrant, Covenant pastor and chaplain at Swedish Covenant Hospital, provided closing reflections on what the day's content might mean for the church. His "Pastoral Reflections on Being Well: Connecting Church, Faith, and Health," concludes this issue.

The Being Well symposium built on decades of work in faith and health at North Park. A narrative of this rich history is offered in my own article that begins the issue, "Twenty Years of Faith and Health at North Park Theological Seminary (1998-2018)." The church has much to contribute to helping people be well and flourish, through both our institutions and our congregations.<sup>8</sup> We hope this issue gives you much to consider regarding the connections between faith and health for your personal and congregational life.

<sup>7</sup> More information on Zapata's work can be found on her website, <https://www.drjasminzapata.com/>.

<sup>8</sup> An interesting reflection of the institutional role within the Evangelical Covenant Church is found in the recent name change of "Swedish Covenant Hospital" to "Swedish Covenant Health." See <https://swedishcovenant.org/>.