

Wellness for new creations

WHY IS WORKER WELLNESS A PRIORITY FOR THE CHURCH?

Because even church workers are staggered by original sin. All people know, “I am not what I should be. Something’s wrong.” Many seek to describe the problems. Some propose answers. But the problem is sin. Solutions that grow from the thought that we must work harder, or smarter, or behave better always fail. Our sin can’t be trained. It must be crucified, forgiven and drowned. Hope flows from the waters of Baptism and the Lord’s promise of new life: “We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). The Spirit once moved across the waters. Over six days, He banished chaos and created life. That same Spirit has recreated us. In Him, we are “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Each area of wellness is merely a description of a place where God creates order out of our chaos. Each area reflects a place where His promises bear fruit, “for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you” (Prov. 3:2).

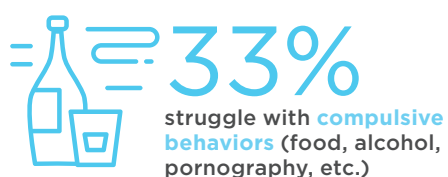
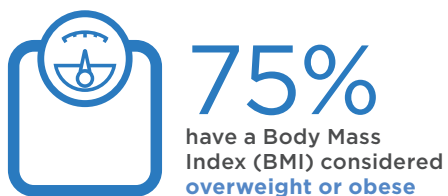
— By Rev. Robert Zagore, executive director of the LCMS Office of National Mission



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WHY WORKER WELLNESS?

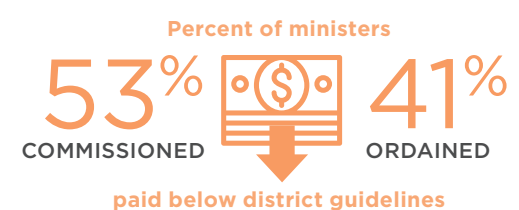
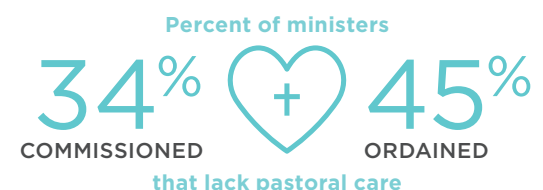
A worker-wellness survey was conducted in 2017 to help determine the extent and particular types of worker-wellness needs to be addressed among our Synod’s commissioned and ordained ministers and spouses. The results revealed that, of those surveyed:



“One of the Synod’s seven mission priorities

is to ‘nurture the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of pastors and professional church workers.’ Healthy workers make for healthy churches. That’s why we need to help those who serve us with the Gospel to drink deeply of the Word of God so they will have what it takes to bring the Word to others.”

— Rev. Dr. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.,
LCMS first vice-president

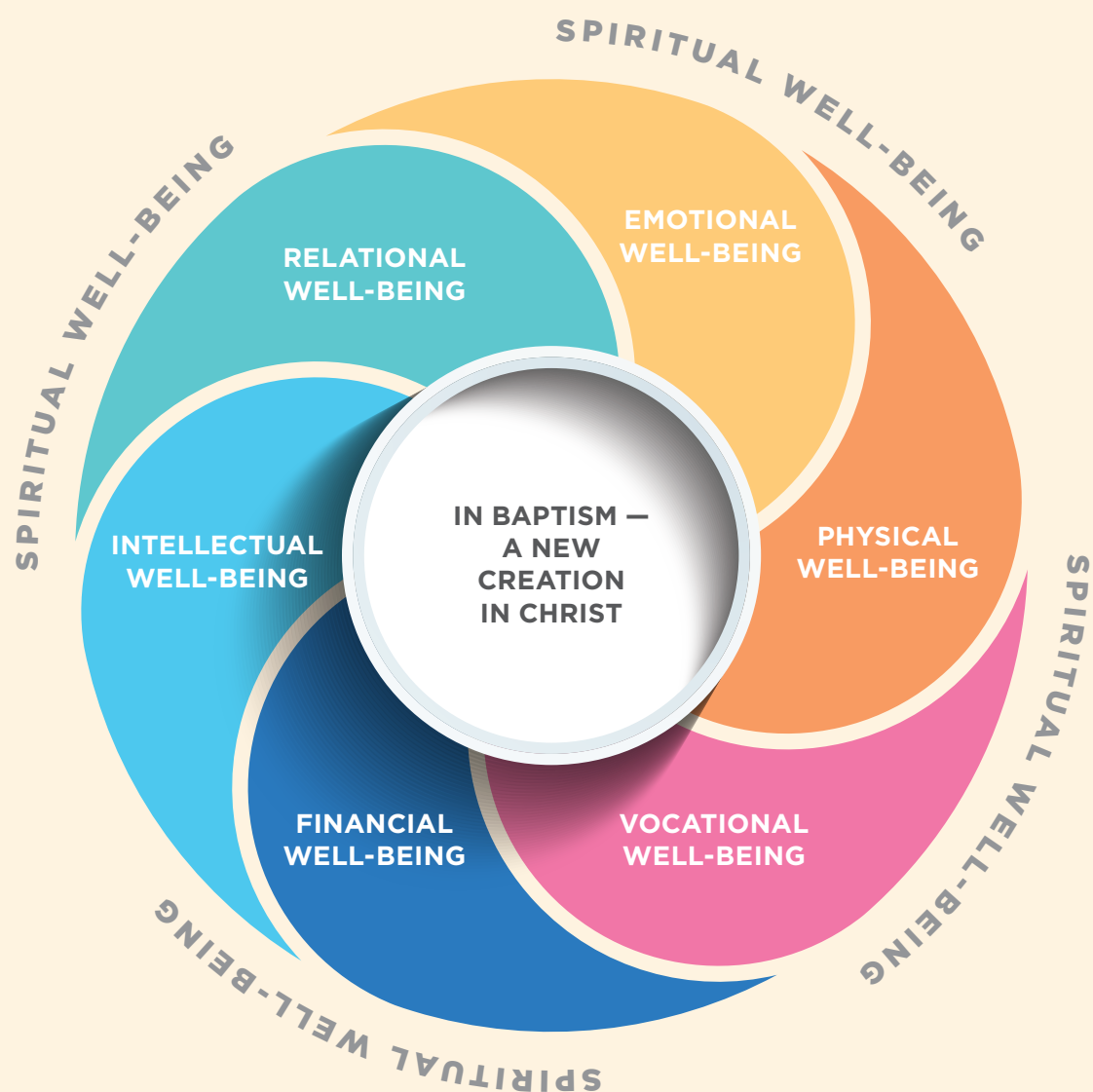


Resolving to focus on worker wellness

In 2016, the Synod in convention passed five resolutions — including 2016 Res. 18-05, “To Encourage District Presidents, Circuit Visitors, and Congregations to Utilize Resources Already Established for Ministerial Wellness” — to address worker wellness. **The new webpage, lcms.org/wellness, is one result of this focus.**

* Of those who’ve been parents. ** Of married church workers.

Church Worker Wellness



FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

“ Holistic wellness for workers includes financial well-being. Church workers are not unique. They face the same financial challenges and pitfalls that many of our congregation members face. Being a good steward of all that God entrusts to us, including the stored potential of money, is important. Talking about money is challenging because it touches a personal chord and is too often associated with difficult experiences and anxieties. We must have these conversations. We must learn together. Too often the silence has allowed financial issues to wreak havoc and harm our ministries and workers. We know our workers want help. We know they are slow to ask and fearful of consequences that will penalize them. We must rise above such fear and anxiety and trust that our challenges are not unique and that together the entire church bears responsibility for stewardship and the financial well-being of our members. We are in this together. Together we can find a better path forward that will serve our workers and the entire church.”

— Rev. Bart Day, chief executive officer of Lutheran Church Extension Fund

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

“ Good spiritual health and well-being is critical for those serving professionally in our Lord’s Church. After all, how can those called to comfort God’s people in their worries and guilt and afflictions provide such comfort and assurance if they themselves are buried under a mountain of guilt and worry [and] personal, spiritual and emotional struggles? With this in mind, the Board for National Mission is urging the Office of National Mission through its policies to provide resources for private confession and absolution, evangelical support, counsel, encouragement and care, which will promote the relational, emotional, physical, financial, vocational, intellectual and spiritual well-being of all church workers.”

— Rev. Steven Briel, chairman of the LCMS Board of National Mission

VOCATIONAL WELL-BEING

“ Service in the church as a pastor or other church worker brings physical, emotional and spiritual stress. Always giving means that there is also a need to be replenished. A life grounded in the Lord’s promises made in Baptism and continually received in His Word and nourished with His body and blood is absolutely essential. Because God has created us body and soul, church workers will also be attentive to the life of the body and the mind. Congregations need to look out for the well-being of their called workers even as these workers will need to develop good practices to maintain bodily, mental and spiritual stamina required for their callings.”

— Rev. Dr. John T. Pless, assistant professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

“ Emotional well-being is connected with our ability to process and integrate our emotions as they come to the surface, as well as reflectively. It is important for the entirety of our well-being that we allow our emotions to inform our perception of life and its stresses, while not letting them rule our beliefs and decisions, both consciously and unconsciously. We can easily give our emotions too much weight or too little attention. God’s Word, as in everything else, is unchanging stability when our emotions constantly shift and change.”

— Deaconess Heidi Goehmann, mental health advocate contractor for the LCMS

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

“ Holistic wellness is optimal physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual health. When any dimension (such as physical health) is diseased or dis-eased, it is like driving on a flat tire. In time, the flat tire (or ignored physical need) leads to serious consequences that greatly impact the ability to live life to the fullest and to serve one another.”

— Dr. Marcy Schnorr, co-coordinator of LCMS Parish Nursing

INTELLECTUAL WELL-BEING

“ The LCMS understands the importance of educated church workers. To this end, intellectual development and well-being encompasses a full understanding and articulation in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, along with immersion in the liberal arts, a well-rounded curriculum, quality instruction, practical experience, thinking skills, reasoning skills, verbal skills, philosophy, music, art, knowledge of the world and the context of culture, and a desire for and immersion in continuing education. Over time, this comprehensive knowledge and experience evolves into godly wisdom through time and suffering, which God uses to serve His people in life and saving faith.”

— Rev. Dr. James A. Baneck, executive director of LCMS Pastoral Education

RELATIONAL WELL-BEING

“ Relational well-being is an important facet of whole-person health and wellness that is crucial for church workers to enable them to continually serve their Lord and His Church. Relational well-being is giving and receiving love and support (Matt. 22:39), bearing burdens together (Gal. 6:2), resolving conflict and reconciling in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:13). It will look like having people to count on, who will be present with the church worker to listen and pray for them.”

— Deaconess Tiffany Manor, director of worker support for the LCMS New England District

lcms.org/wellness

Weighing in on Wellness

“NEXT TO STRONG, GOSPEL-SOAKED, biblical teaching and practice, there is nothing so critical to the church’s life as the well-being of our pastors and church workers. Most are doing well and find joy in their vocations. Many are hurting and need all of our love and support. In the name of Jesus, let’s step up. ‘Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth’ (1 John 3:18).”

— Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison,
LCMS president

“CHURCH WORKERS IN THE LCMS are the front-line ‘field soldiers,’ where they are called to serve, in the ongoing battle with the devil, the world and sin. They need, gratefully anticipate and deserve the prayers of the church. But also, church workers in the Synod need the support and encouragement of their congregations, districts and Synod to prioritize self-care.”

— Rev. Dr. Carlos Hernandez,
contractor for LCMS Soldiers of the Cross

“DEDICATED CHURCH WORKERS spend upward of 60 or more hours a week equipping students and caring for families in programs and classrooms across the country. Leaving their wellness last on the list is often the norm rather than the exception for these dedicated servants. The worker wellness materials are excellent tools for congregations and schools to provide, encourage and equip cherished workers to live healthier, balanced lives.”

— Dr. Rebecca Schmidt,
director of LCMS School Ministry

“ON ANY GIVEN DAY, I observe students, faculty and staff celebrating the gift of life God has given them through exercise, recreation and athletic competition. It inspires me to know that many of my partners in ministry at Concordia University, Nebraska find time in their busy schedules to care for their mental, physical and emotional health by

walking, jogging, lifting weights and a wide array of other physical activities. I am convinced that this productive use of time enables them to be well so that they can serve well. God has given us the gifts of life and health to steward wisely and carefully so that we may serve Him and care for others for all the years He grants.”

— Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich,
president of Concordia University, Nebraska

“THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS MOVED by the Holy Spirit to write: ‘Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you’ (1 Tim. 4:16). The importance of ‘paying attention to oneself’ with godly eyes and intent in this day and age of technological, social, cultural and contextual change — with its added pressures and demands — is absolutely critical. The work of ... [the] Synod’s worker wellness committee is, and will continue to be, a crucial framework for the care and well-being of professional church workers in the LCMS now and into the future. The Council of Presidents has been informed of — and is grateful for — this necessary and invaluable work.”

— Rev. Dr. David Maier,
president of the LCMS Michigan District, chairman of the Council of Presidents and chairman of the 2016 convention floor committee on worker wellness



lcms.org/wellness

Journeys to Wellness

PERSONAL
STRUGGLES



RESOURCES
AT [LCMS.ORG/
WELLNESS](https://lcms.org/wellness)



INCREASED
WELL-BEING

Fear, distrust,
shame and hiding



Compassion,
understanding
and care



Healing within
community

Need ▶ Rom. 6:4 ▶ Hope

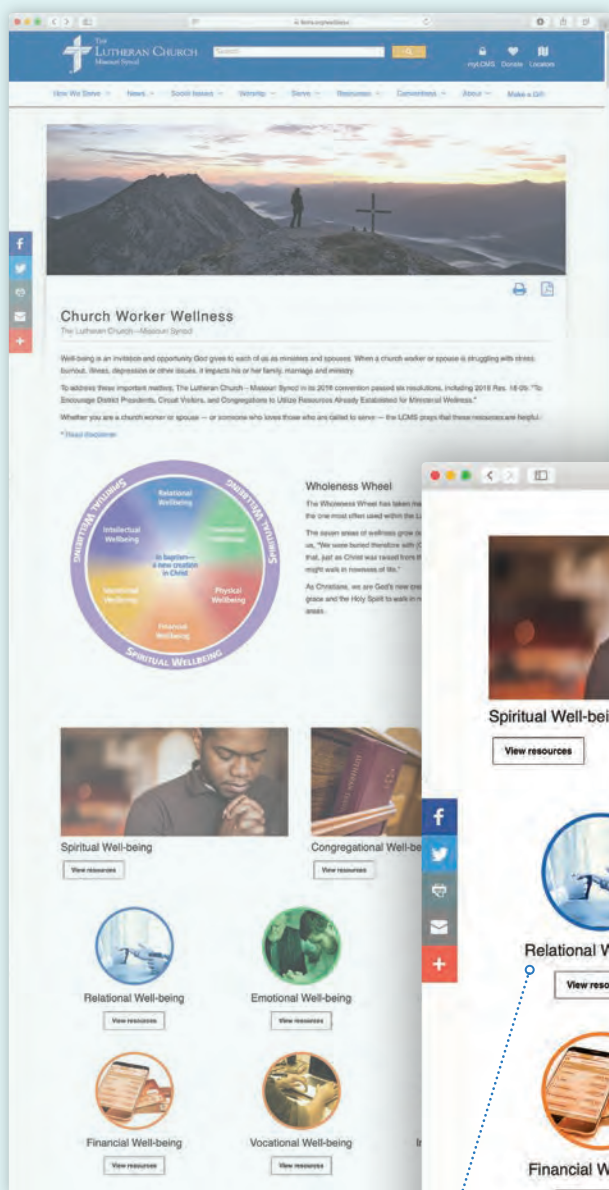


A series of at least 52 devotions that will be offered on the webpage and social media, written by workers for workers

A prayer initiative for church workers that will include both weekly reminders and (liturgical) seasonal reminders on social media

A series of theological statements regarding each topic on the wholeness wheel as well as congregational well-being

Wellness at your fingertips



SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

Devotional videos to strengthen and encourage *Lutheran Hour Ministries*

Video devotions by LCMS President *Matthew Harrison*

“Prayer Life of the Pastor and Family” video *Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS)*

CONGREGATIONAL WELL-BEING

VisionPath, a program that helps congregations align ministry purpose
Lutheran Church Extension Fund

Worker’s compensation tool
Concordia Plan Services

Video courses on stress, worry, mentoring and conflict
Lutheran Hour Ministries

NEW WORKER WELLNESS WEBPAGE!

Helpful resources available from the LCMS and others.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Dealing with pornography
DOXOLOGY

Helpful questions when seeking a counselor

“I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression” by Rev. Todd Peperkorn

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Church Worker Wellness Series: Vacation
KFUO Radio

Recipes and fitness
Concordia Plan Services

Women’s health videos
Grace Place Wellness Ministries

INTELLECTUAL WELL-BEING

Sermon on mental health by Rev. Dr. Herbert Mueller Jr.

Lectionary at Lunch
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

“Four faces of a mentor”

lcms.org/wellness

RELATIONAL WELL-BEING

Writings about relational well-being
Articles by Deaconess Heidi Goehmann

“Relational well-being and Romans 1”
Grace Place Wellness Ministries

Articles and resources
Ambassadors of Reconciliation

FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

Rostered church worker mortgage loans
Lutheran Federal Credit Union

Serving church workers
Soldiers and Veterans of the Cross

Online learning video lessons on financial basics
Lutheran Federal Credit Union

VOCATIONAL WELL-BEING

“Church Workers in Mission: Pastor to Pastor” videos
Lutheran Women’s Missionary League

Sabbatical resources
Ministry Sabbatical Resources

Ways of nurturing church workers
Concordia University, Nebraska

Wellness: A work in progress

Wellness is a work in progress for all of us who walk with the Lord. The various resources on the new webpage are from Synod partners as well as from the LCMS Office of National Mission, and we’d love to add to it.

- » What has worked for you? Let us know.
- » Know a good mental health provider? Send us an email. We are developing a list.
- » Have you been served by a helpful wellness organization? Share the information.
- » Have a concern? We want to hear from you.
- » Not currently in need of support? Pray for those who are seeking wholeness and wellness.

WELL-DESERVING OF MANY THANKS

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Rebeka Garcia Cook

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