



# ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey – Health Ministry

ELCA Research and Evaluation  
September 2025



# ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey Overview

- The ELCA Congregation Pulse Surveys are an experimental effort to allow ELCA congregations and worshiping communities to communicate their perspectives, strengths, and development needs to synods and the churchwide organization.
- The April 2025 Pulse Survey was distributed to 1,808 congregations and worshiping communities. Key informants from 370 of these communities responded to the survey, for a response rate of 20%. Responses came from congregations and worshiping communities in 64 of 65 synods.
- Responding congregations and worshiping communities were largely representative of the ELCA in terms of average in-person worship attendance and racial diversity; some differences were observed in community context. Responses were more likely to come from suburban congregations and less likely to come from rural congregations than the ELCA overall.

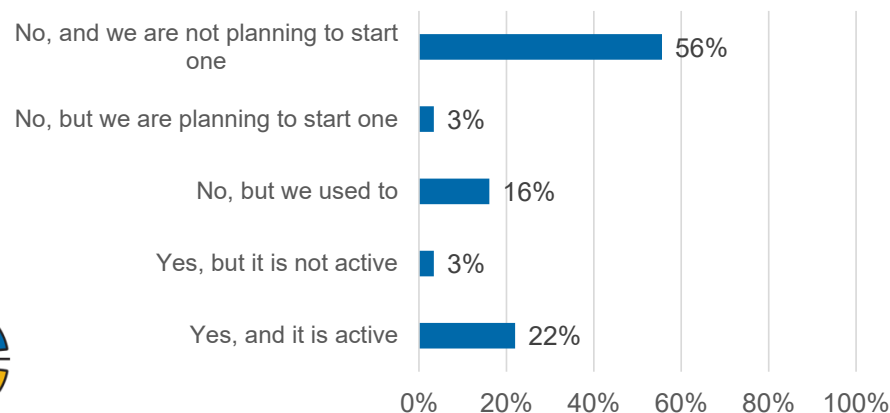
	Avg Worship Attendance (in-person)			Community Context			% Active Participants (BIPOC)
	1-100	101-250	251+	% Urban	% Suburban	% Rural	
Respondents	80%	19%	2%	37%	25%	38%	10.2%
ELCA overall	83%	14%	3%	37%	18%	45%	7.2%



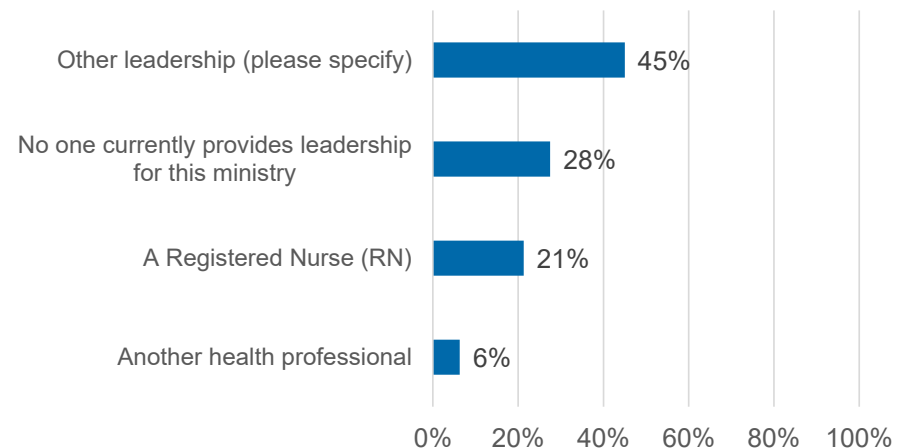
# Health ministries and their leadership

- Approximately one quarter (22%) of congregations reported having an active health ministry. These types of ministries were more common in suburban congregations (29%) and least likely in rural congregations (17%) and in congregations with 100 or fewer in attendance (19%).
- More than half (56%) of congregations do not have a health ministry and do not plan to start one.
- Of congregations that reported having a health ministry, 72% reported some type of leadership.
  - Over one quarter are led by a health professional (Registered Nurses = 21%; Other health professional = 6%).
  - Nearly half (45%) are led by someone other than a health professional. (See page 12 for open-ended responses describing the leaders.)

**Does your congregation or worshiping community have a health ministry?**

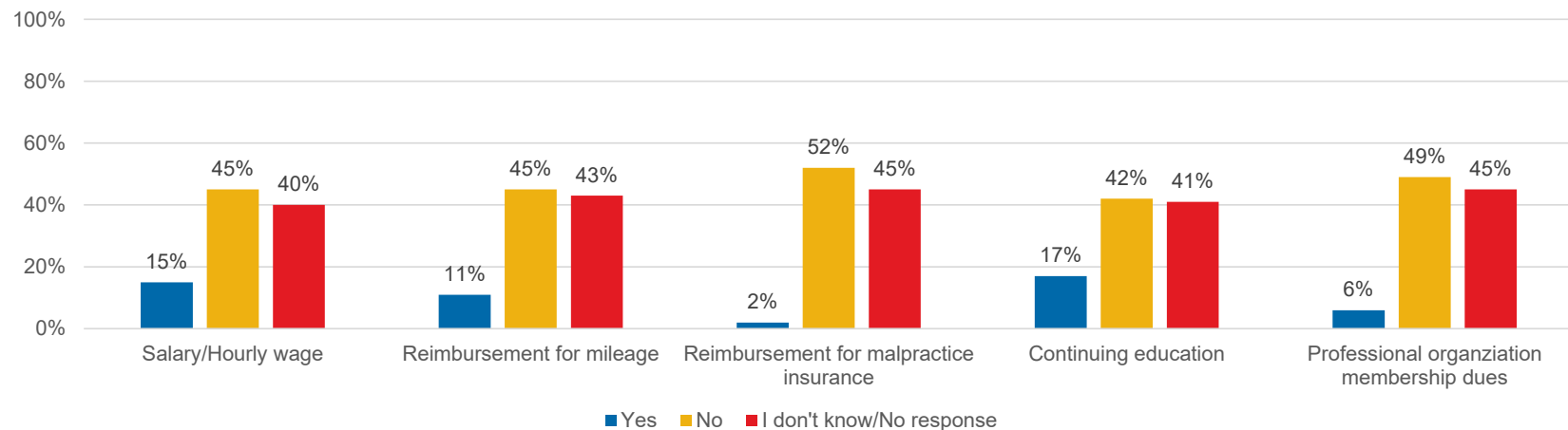


**Who provides leadership for this ministry**

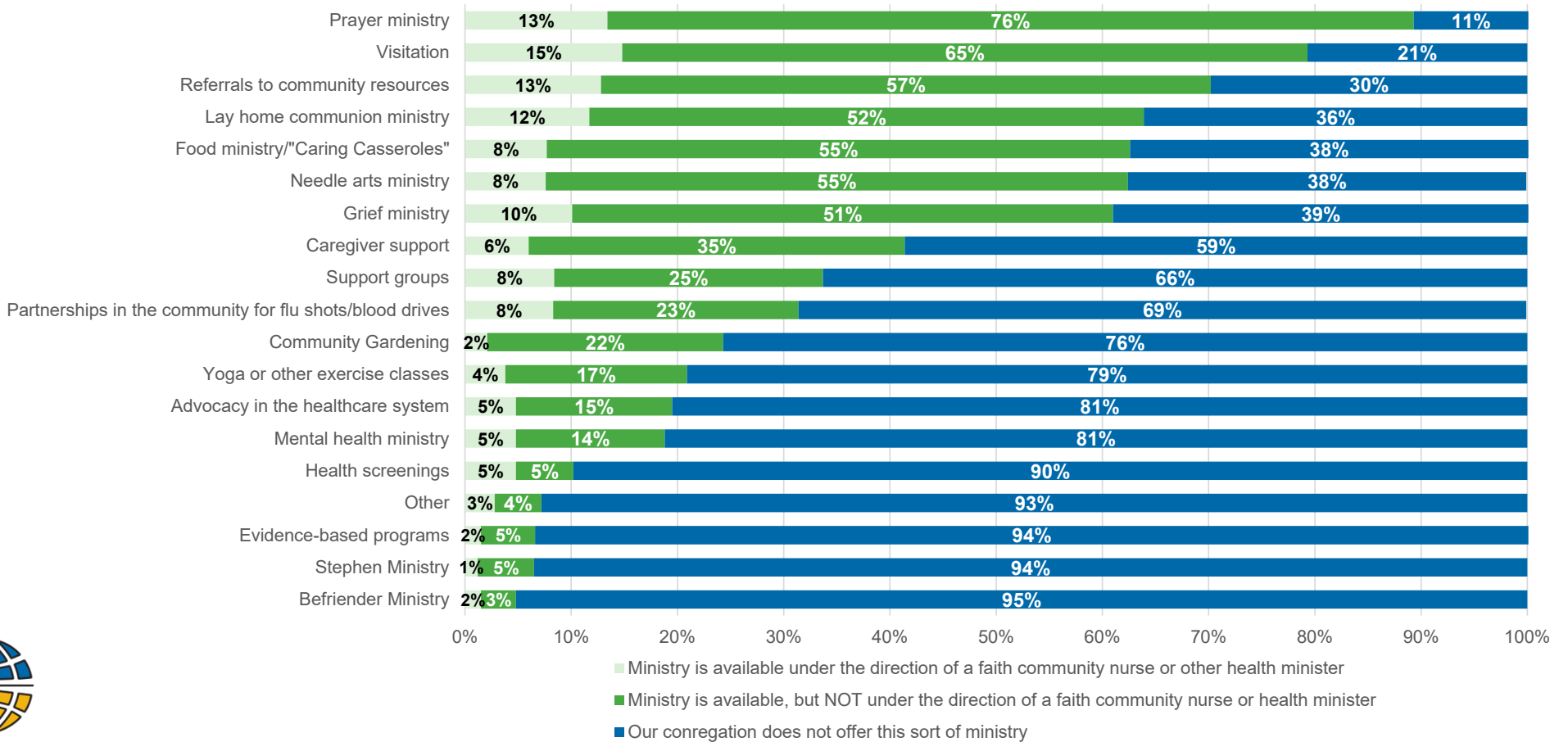


# Health ministry leaders' training and compensation

- Of the 88 congregations that reported having a health ministry, only 8 (9%) indicated their leader had taken a course to prepare them to lead a health ministry.
- Most respondents indicated their congregation either did not provide any type compensation to their health ministry leaders (38%) or they didn't know/didn't respond (53%).
- When compensation was provided, continuing education reimbursement and salary/hourly wages were the most common types of compensation provided to health leaders, 17% and 15%, respectively.



# Health and wellness programs or initiatives offered by congregations



## Comparing program offerings in congregations with a health ministry and those without

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- Many congregations provide certain health and wellness programs, even if they do not have a formal health ministry.
  - Prayer ministry (Health ministry – 93%; No health ministry – 89%)
  - Visitation (Health ministry – 84%; No health ministry – 78%)
  - Referrals to community resources (Health ministry – 78%; No health ministry – 69%)
  - Food ministry/“Caring casseroles” (Health ministry – 63%; No health ministry – 62%)
- Congregations with an active health ministry are more likely than those without one to offer at least one program directly related to healthcare (57% and 46%, respectively).
  - These congregations offer mental health ministry (Health ministry – 39%; No health ministry – 15%) and health screenings (Health ministry – 30%; No health ministry – 6%) at a much greater rate than those that do not have an active health ministry.
- Among congregations reporting an active health ministry, health and wellness programs are more often led by someone other than a faith community nurse or health minister.

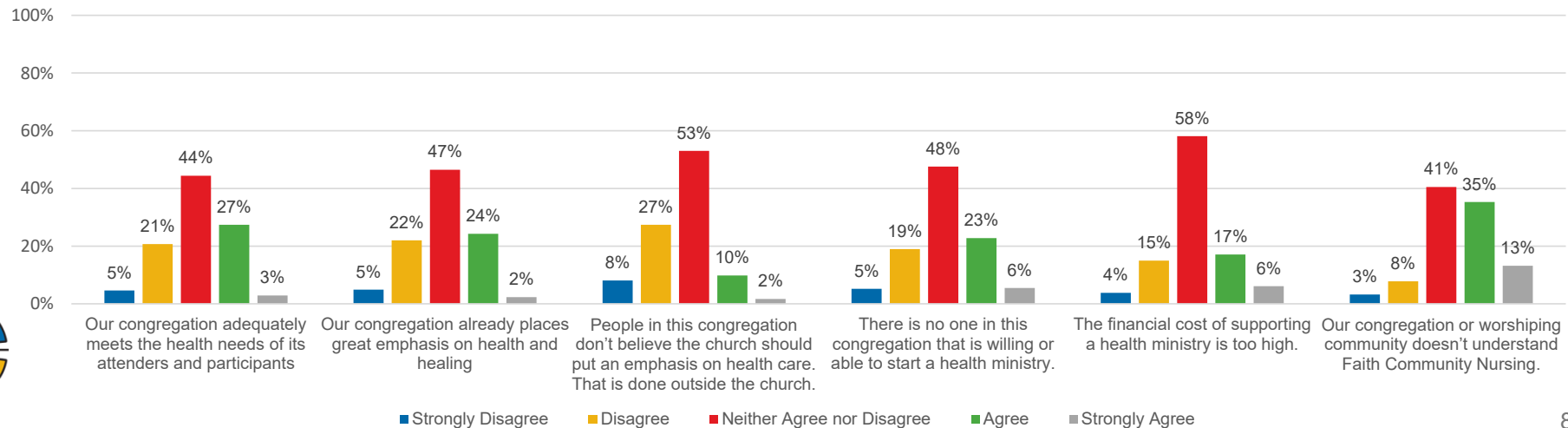
## Comparing program offerings based on size and location

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- Medium-sized congregations (101-250 in worship attendance) were more likely than smaller congregations (1-101 in worship attendance) to offer most health-related ministries including visitation, referrals to community resources, grief ministry, caregiver support, needle arts ministry, partnerships in the community for flu shots and blood drives, lay home communion, and support groups. Large congregations (over 250 in worship attendance) were excluded from this discussion as so few responded.
- Suburban congregations (91%) were more likely to offer visitation than rural (80%) and urban (79%) congregations, though it was common in all contexts. They also offered lay home communion at a higher rate (74%) than urban congregations (64%) and rural congregations (59%). Suburban congregations were less likely to engage in healthcare advocacy (10%) compared with urban (25%) and rural congregations (21%).
- Urban congregations (40%) and rural congregations (36%) were more likely than suburban congregations (12%) to have partnerships in the community for flu shots/blood drives.
- Rural congregations (16%) offered community gardening less than suburban (25%) and urban (32%) congregations.

# Perceptions of Congregational Health Ministry

- The most common response to items about congregational perspectives and participation in health ministry was “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” This may suggest that respondents lacked strong opinions, were unsure of their congregation’s views, or had not given the topic much consideration.
- On most items, the level of agreement and disagreement was relatively balanced with the following exceptions:
  - Nearly half (48%) of respondents reported that their congregation doesn’t understand Faith Community Nursing.
  - Only 12% of respondents reported that their congregation agrees that the church should not place an emphasis on health care.
- Small congregations were more likely to indicate there was no one willing or able to start a health ministry at a much higher rater than medium congregations (31% and 19%, respectively).



# Frequency Tables

## Does your congregation or worshiping community have a health ministry?

	Yes, and it is active	Yes, but it is not active	No, but we used to	No, but we are planning to start one	No, and we are not planning to start one	
Overall (n = 354)	22% (76)	3% (12)	16% (57)	3% (12)	56% (197)	
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n = 259)	19% (48)	4% (11)	17% (43)	4% (9)	57% (148)
	101-250 (n = 62)	32% (20)	0% (0)	16% (10)	2% (1)	50% (31)
	251+ (n = 6)	67% (4)	0% (0)	17% (1)	0% (0)	17% (1)
Community Context*	Rural (n = 98)	17% (17)	7% (7)	16% (16)	3% (3)	56% (55)
	Urban (n = 103)	22% (23)	1% (1)	17% (17)	3% (3)	57% (59)
	Suburban (n = 68)	29% (20)	0% (0)	16% (11)	0% (0)	54% (37)

\*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Who provides leadership for this ministry?

	A Registered Nurse (RN)	A License Practical Nurse (LPN)	Another health professional	No one currently provides leadership	Other leadership	
Overall (n = 80)	21% (17)	0% (0)	6% (5)	28% (22)	45% (36)	
In-person Worship Attendance*	1-100 (n = 56)	25% (14)	0% (0)	2% (1)	32% (18)	41% (23)
	101-250 (n = 15)	13% (2)	0% (0)	13% (2)	20% (3)	53% (8)
	251+ (n = 4)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	75% (3)
Community Context*	Rural (n = 24)	13% (3)	0% (0)	4% (1)	33% (8)	50% (12)
	Urban (n = 20)	30% (6)	0% (0)	5% (1)	15% (3)	50% (10)
	Suburban (n = 17)	29% (5)	0% (0)	6% (1)	24% (4)	41% (7)

\*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Who provides leadership for this ministry? (Verbatim responses to Other)

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- A formerly registered nurse and a person who previously directed a senior center
- A lay ministry team administers a medical supplies library, caring visitors, and a meal train.
- Chaplin
- Church Minister Helper
- Community Health Workers
- congregation
- congregation members
- Deacon & some nurses in the church collaborate on this effort
- Faith Based Group
- I Stephen Ministry and health and wellness leaders.
- Interim Pastor
- Laypersons
- Minister
- Non professionals. Healthy food and climate are our foci.
- Our Health Ministry Team (3 out of 4 members are RNs)
- Outreach Committee Members
- Outreach team and the church council
- pastor
- Pastor
- Pastor
- Pastor and Leadership team
- Pastor Gary Zeman, SAM
- Pastor Todd Hunter
- Pastoral Leadership - Pastor with a MA in Counseling Psych.. We will be hiring a 1/4 time Pastoral Care Pastor.
- Pastors
- persons from community who come during and after our noon hot meal
- Retired RN and lay leaders with various medical backgrounds
- Salud mental y emocional
- Senior Ministries Committee, Como Connects, Lyngblomsten
- Volunteers - but only with loaning equipment. So very limited health ministry.
- We currently have a bridge pastor.
- We have volunteers
- We provide this thru our lay leadership and our ordained pastors
- WELCA

## Has this person taken a course (e.g., Westberg Foundations Curriculum) to prepare them to lead health ministry?

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	Yes	No	I don't know/ No response
(n = 88)	9% (8)	38% (33)	53% (47)

## Does this person receive any of the following forms of compensation?

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	Yes	No	I don't know/ No response
Continuing education expenses	17% (15)	42% (37)	41% (36)
Salary/Hourly wage	15% (13)	45% (40)	40% (35)
Reimbursement for mileage	11% (10)	45% (40)	43% (38)
Professional organization membership dues	6% (5)	49% (43)	45% (40)
Reimbursement for malpractice insurance	2% (2)	52% (46)	45% (40)
Other	--	22% (19)	78% (69)

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness?

	Ministry is available under the direction of a faith community nurse or other health minister	Ministry is available, NOT under the direction of a faith community nurse or other health minister	Our congregation does not offer this sort of ministry
Prayer ministry	13% (46)	76% (261)	11% (37)
Visitation	15% (50)	65% (218)	21% (70)
Referrals to community resources	13% (43)	57% (193)	30% (100)
Lay home communion ministry	12% (40)	52% (178)	36% (123)
Food ministry/"Caring Casseroles"	8% (26)	55% (186)	38% (127)
Needle arts ministry	8% (26)	55% (187)	38% (128)
Grief ministry	10% (34)	51% (172)	39% (132)
Caregiver support	6% (20)	35% (119)	59% (197)
Support groups (see pp. 16-17 for verbatim responses)	8% (24)	25% (72)	66% (189)
Partnerships in the community for shots/blood drives	8% (28)	23% (78)	69% (231)
Community gardening	2% (7)	22% (75)	76% (256)
Yoga or other exercise classes	4% (13)	17% (58)	79% (269)
Advocacy in the healthcare system	5% (16)	15% (49)	81% (268)
Mental health ministry	5% (16)	14% (47)	81% (272)
Health screenings	5% (16)	5% (18)	90% (300)
Other health ministries (see page 18 for verbatim responses)	3% (7)	4% (11)	93% (231)
Evidence-based programs	2% (5)	5% (17)	94% (314)
Stephen Ministry	1% (4)	5% (18)	94% (315)
Befriender Ministry	2% (5)	3% (11)	95% (317)

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness? (Verbatim responses to Support Groups)

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- 12-Step groups
- AA & Celebrate Recovery
- AA and Al-Anon (3 responses)
- AA and Nami use our facilities
- AA Sister's of Sobriety
- AA uses our facility to meet once a week.
- AA, Al Anon, Weekly Bible Study
- AA, Al-Anon, Nar-Anon
- AA, Al-Anon, OA
- AA, Al-Anon, Single Parent
- AA, Alzheimer's
- AA, NA, Al-Anon
- AA. West Suburban Grief Coalition. His House Family Foundation.
- Al-Anon, La Leehe, NA, Family Crisis
- Alcoholics Anonymous (17 responses)
- Alcoholics Anonymous Narcotics Anonymous (6 responses)
- Allanon AA groups Alateen
- Almuerzos comunitarios semanales. Entrega de compras de alimentos y articulos de primera necesidad. Clases de Musica y arte desde niños hasta adultos. Apoyo a mision en Republica Dominicana con ropa, zapatos y articulos de primera necesidad.
- AS, NA, AL ANON
- Bible Based Recovery
- Bible study
- Breast Cancer Support Narcotics Anonymous
- Broken Vessels - A local grief support group for parents and grandparents who have experienced the death of a child. They meet at our church.
- Cancer Caring Ministry; AA; Al-Anon
- Cancer patients and caregivers
- Caregiver support group
- Caregivers
- Caregivers Grief
- Clases de arte que se convierten en grupos de apoyo emocional.
- Clases de Musica y arte para niños, adultos y jovenes. Almuerzos semanales para la comunidad. 135 a 150 semanales. Compras de alimentos una vez al mes: 50 a 60 compras se reparten. Apoyo a mision en Republica Dominicana con ropa, zapato, articulos personales. Esto se realiza una vez al mes.
- Co-Dependence Anonymous
- Community AA, Alon, NA and others
- Community Tai Chi for balance and fall prevention
- Faith Based Network Jefferson County Health Department
- Faith formation support group dives into where Spirit is working through life events; men's ministry offers support to men, male to male, including bible study and faith work, prayer; bible studies that offer support for daily life issues
- Faith Partners addiction ministry
- Gambler's Anonymous
- Good and Necessary Trouble- a support group for those struggling to engage and hold accountable harmful governmental policies in faithful ways.
- Grief AA
- Grief Share
- Grief Support
- Grief Support - jointly with other local congregations

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness? (Verbatim responses to Support Groups)

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- Grief support classes and individual meetings with the Pastor and Stephen Ministers
- Grief support group. AA
- Grief Support, Caregiver (mostly dementia) Support
- GriefShare
- Growing Through Loss - we promote
- Men's Prayer Breakfast; Women's Ministry
- MS-Support Group
- N/A, Foster Closet support, homeless connections for basic needs, blessing boxes
- NA, AA
- NA, AA, SA, ACA - recovery groups
- NA, AA, SA, Mental Health
- NAMI and AA
- Narcotics anonymous (3 responses)
- Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous
- None
- Our campus is open to several of these ministries
- Our home health agency leads a grief group at our church and we encourage our members to attend
- Parents of teens, parents of young children, people caring for parents, people affected by cancer
- Parkinsons, Narcotics Anonymous, Alanon, MomCo, Mother's Group, PEA women, widows' group
- Partner with outside organizations who provide grief support.
- Prayer group
- Relay for Life support
- Song (singing) group. Knitting group for caps for newborns. Community garden project,
- Spirituality and Aging Support Group
- Stephen ministry is in the training stages
- Stewardship, Discipleship, Member Care, Youth & Family, Outreach
- Support group for caregivers of those with signs of memory loss
- Support local AA programs meetings with use of space
- Two AA groups
- Two grief groups and two AA groups.
- Variety of AA and other similar groups.
- Walking group Bible study support group
- We have a coat ministry, that give coats to the schools, people off the street and other churches to share with those in need
- we have a multiple myeloma support group use our space, but it is separate from the work of the church
- We host four AA groups and an Al Anon group on a weekly basis.
- We host outside groups including AA and ACA
- We promote support groups in the community
- Widows and widowers support group under direction of former RN
- women's support group family/parent support group

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness? (Verbatim responses to Other)

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- Annual health fair for our Latino neighbors
- BP station available Medication management assistance Confidential health-related issues conversation Monthly emphases with temple talk and literature handouts
- Care Team (visits, cards, meals, rides) Blood Pressure Screenings
- Donacion de medicamentos, pampers y otros cuando hay alguna solicitud
- Enneagram discussion group
- Food pantry has a monthly nutrition consultant.
- Free community meal weekly
- Free community meals monthly Shut in visitation regularly
- Free Monday Night Meals
- healing prayer offered in worship, a women's prayer and share group,
- Homeless ministry
- Loaves and Fishes Grace Space (time limited)
- Mental Health and therapy
- None. Members work to meet needs when identified by pastor or themselves but there's nobody driving the boat to organize this type of ministry. Pastor cannot do it alone, either. Congregation is aging and has increasing needs.
- Plant Based Eating Group
- Reiki
- Rides for Health is a ministry that arranges rides for people to get to and from doctor appointments.
- TDR Safety Training
- TOPS
- Walking group that walks together twice a month and is open to all
- We have 3 people who were once trained in Stephen Ministry. We have not had any new trainings for years.
- We have an informal health ministry with a PA, two active nurses and two retired nurses, who provide a sounding board and some advocacy.
- We have had a medical clinic in three locations in our town in three different churches. It was a clinic staffed by doctors and nurses and social workers who volunteered from the community. All three have been moved to a neighboring town and one building has been purchased. They were unable to staff the clinic and get the translators needed in various disciplines which has been much easier in the other town 40 minutes from here where there is a large number of Spanish speaking persons.
- We have hosted a mental health first aid training, and have been planning a mental health ministry, but our volunteers are chronically over-committed and we are trying to imagine how this will look.
- We have strongly encouraged members to be trained in Mental Health First Aid
- We support the school, back pack program to send food home with children on weekends. We supply clothing to the school closets.
- What we have is a Parish Nurse who is available for questions and provides an article every month in our monthly newsletter.

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness?

		Ministry is available	Ministry is not available
Prayer ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 67)</i>	93% (62)	8% (5)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 277)</i>	89% (245)	12% (32)
Visitation	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 61)</i>	84% (51)	16% (10)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 277)</i>	78% (217)	22% (60)
Referrals to community resources	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 60)</i>	78% (47)	22% (13)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	69% (189)	32% (87)
Lay home communion ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 62)</i>	77% (48)	23% (14)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 279)</i>	61% (170)	39% (109)
Food ministry/ "Caring Casseroles"	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 62)</i>	63% (39)	37% (23)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 277)</i>	62% (173)	38% (104)
Needle arts ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 62)</i>	81% (50)	19% (12)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 279)</i>	58% (163)	42% (116)

*\*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness?

		Ministry is available	Ministry is not available
Grief ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 63)</i>	78% (49)	22% (14)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 275)</i>	57% (157)	43% (118)
Caregiver support	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 60)</i>	57% (34)	43% (26)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	38% (105)	62% (171)
Support groups	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 50)</i>	46% (23)	54% (27)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 235)</i>	31% (73)	69% (162)
Partnerships in the community for shots/blood drives	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 61)</i>	41% (25)	59% (36)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	29% (81)	71% (195)
Community gardening	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 62)</i>	21% (13)	79% (49)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	25% (69)	75% (207)
Yoga or other exercise classes	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 63)</i>	35% (22)	65% (41)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 277)</i>	18% (49)	82% (228)

*\*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*

## What programs or initiatives are available in your congregation or worshiping community to promote health and wellness?

		Ministry is available	Ministry is not available
Advocacy in the healthcare system	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 59)</i>	32% (19)	68% (40)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 274)</i>	17% (46)	83% (228)
Mental health ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 59)</i>	39% (23)	61% (36)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	15% (40)	86% (236)
Health screenings	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 60)</i>	30% (18)	70% (42)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 274)</i>	6% (16)	94% (258)
Other health ministries	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 37)</i>	14% (5)	87% (32)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 212)</i>	6% (13)	94% (199)
Evidence-based programs	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 59)</i>	15% (9)	85% (50)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 277)</i>	5% (13)	95% (264)
Stephen ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 61)</i>	13% (8)	87% (53)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 276)</i>	5% (14)	95% (262)
Befriender ministry	<i>Congregation has health ministry (n = 61)</i>	10% (6)	90% (55)
	<i>Congregation does not have health ministry (n = 272)</i>	4% (10)	96% (262)

*\*Not all respondents provided their congregation ID. As a result, we do not know the average worship attendance or community context of all respondents. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*

## To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our congregation or worshiping community adequately meets the health needs of its attenders and participants.	5% (16)	21% (72)	44% (154)	27% (95)	3% (10)
Our congregation or worshiping community already places great emphasis on health and healing.	5% (17)	22% (76)	47% (161)	24% (84)	2% (8)
People in this congregation don't believe the church should put an emphasis on health care. That is done outside the church.	8% (28)	27% (95)	53% (184)	10% (34)	2% (6)
There is no one in this congregation that is willing or able to start a health ministry.	5% (18)	19% (66)	48% (165)	23% (79)	6% (19)
The financial cost of supporting a health ministry is too high.	4% (13)	15% (52)	58% (201)	17% (59)	6% (21)
Our congregation or worshiping community doesn't understand Faith Community Nursing.	3% (11)	8% (27)	41% (141)	35% (123)	13% (46)

*Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.*