

## Success Spotlight: The Whole Health Ministry of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Three years ago, after having worked for many years as a Special Education teacher, Walda Helvie, with the help of others, created a health ministry at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. After getting the blessing of their Pastor, Vicki Garber, the “Whole Health Ministry” surveyed their 800-person congregation, assessing what people wanted and needed from this ministry. Helvie and her team were excited by what they heard, and were fortunate to have people on the committee who were truly invested in the success of the ministry. As Helvie describes it, “It is so wonderful to be part of an active group full of so many varied gifts and talents. We do different things, but we can all share them with our congregation.”

Early on, the Whole Health Ministry partnered with ERH Parish Health Ministry, which Helvie says, “has been so helpful.” The Committee, which meets monthly, has chosen recently to utilize two popular PHM programs – “Vial of Life” and “Yellow Dot” – but one of the first things they did as a health ministry was to have monthly blood pressure screenings. Their nurses are able to reach out to people quickly and easily through this program, connecting with approximately 15-20 people each time they do the screenings.

One of the most successful events their Whole Health Ministry hosted was “Health Seminar: Preparing for Your Greatest Journey.” It was held in May of this year which included a discussion with six panelists (an attorney, Hospice, an organ donation representative, a palliative care physician, a funeral home director and Pastor Vicki Garber). Members of their congregation were able to come, and, within one room, receive answers to so many of their questions regarding end of life care and decisions. “That really was such a great workshop! It was informative and well-received. In fact, we plan do one every three years.”

In addition to programs such as the Health Seminar, The Whole Health Ministry has several ongoing programs available to their congregation. Examples include:

- **“Prayer Partners”**- little individually chosen bears that can be given to someone sick or in the hospital, as a way to remind them that the Gloria Dei “Prayer Partners” are praying for them. White bears are given for those receiving First Communion, and others are offered for those going off to college, or for those who have a new baby.
- **“Durable Medical Equipment Loan Program”**- “We have a great assortment of durable medical equipment for members, their families and friends to borrow.
- **“Care Notes”** (Abbey Press) to provide members of the congregation with little informative booklets about grief, birth, old age, mental illness, etc.
- Weekly **Seitai** (Japanese yoga) classes are taught by a member of Gloria Dei & the Whole Health Ministry who’s from Japan.

Another program in which they currently participate is “Journeying through Grief,” the grief program ERH Parish Health Ministry rolled out in August. She feels it has been a truly helpful and successful program for Gloria Dei. Helvie states, “I think it’s a great thing! I personalize the letters, and then mail the booklets. It’s a wonderful way to get comfort and support out during the grieving process.”

Whether it’s serving those dealing with issues around grief, end of life care, raising a child, or everything in between, their Whole Health Ministry succeeds because they are a sum of their parts. When asked why she commits her time and energy into the health ministry, Helvie says, “I’m an organizer. I love all the things you can do and cover in a health ministry, so it’s never boring! People have been willing to take part, be active, and really communicate as a team.” ERH Parish Health Ministry is excited for all of the Whole Health Ministry’s successes and eager to hear of all the things they’ll do in the future!

