

Healthy Congregations

Welcome Packet





HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

What is Healthy Congregations?

Healthy Congregations engages Great Plains United Methodist churches in projects to improve spiritual, physical, social, and emotional health in their congregations and communities. The Healthy Congregations program provides training, resources, and financial support to Great Plains United Methodist churches committed to health ministry. Healthy Congregations is the flagship program in our *Engaged Congregations and Communities* strategic focus area for 2023-2026.

What are the benefits?

- \$1,000 grant upon sign up, which can be renewed annually
- A conference-wide network of congregations doing similar work
- Access to evidence-based programming to bring positive change to the health and wellness of your community and congregation
- Consultation from the staff at the Health Fund
- Special grant opportunities

What are the requirements?

- 1.** You must be a Great Plains Conference United Methodist Congregation.
- 2.** Teams need to have at least three participants.
- 3.** Your team must participate in trainings, conference calls, and programming.

How does it work?

- 1.** Form a Healthy Congregations Team – led by a lay member, and with a total of at least three active members.
- 2.** Complete certification - Healthy Congregations core training (self-paced online format with two brief virtual check-ins).
- 3.** Annually, develop a plan for carrying out the team’s chosen work to address identified health needs, and report on the results of the prior year’s efforts.
- 4.** The Needs Assessment Tool, Plan, and Report forms are all available online at healthfund.org.



PROJECT IDEAS

Your annual \$1,000 grant supports your team's programs to improve congregational and community health. Some general examples include:

- 1.** Your congregation could fund fitness instructors to lead workouts at church.
- 2.** You could purchase healthy food for church programming, such as vacation Bible school, movie nights, healthy snacks during church, or other fellowship events.
- 3.** Funding could be used for church members to take congregants or community members to doctors' appointments, the grocery store, etc.
- 4.** Grant money can supplement special grant opportunities. For example, you could use funds to host a block party to promote neighboring through the Good Neighbor Experiment special grant, hold a blessing of the trees ceremony after receiving the Giving Groves grant, or increase voter participation by hosting an information session through Faith in Democracy.
- 5.** Funds can be used for spiritual health, e.g., funds could support a card ministry for those who are grieving or shut-in due to health reasons. You could create a walking trail or labyrinth with scriptures posted throughout the walk.
- 6.** You could use funding to lead classes, walking Bible studies, or book clubs. Grant money could be used to invite a knowledgeable speaker to facilitate and create safe spaces for conversations on racial equity, mental health, or other social justice concerns.
- 7.** Funds can support collaborative events; for example, if a non-profit is facilitating a live healthy cooking event you could partner with them and use funds to purchase ingredients.
- 8.** Grant money could support seasonal fitness events that pair health and worship, such as walking tours that pray over neighborhoods, walk to Jerusalem, etc.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q. Does our church qualify to join Healthy Congregations?**
- A.** To qualify for the program your congregation must be a Great Plains Conference United Methodist congregation.
- Q. How many team members do we need to have certified?**
- A.** Teams must have three certified active members who have completed training within two years of signing up.
- Q. Can our pastor be a team member?**
- A.** Pastors are welcome to be on a congregation's Healthy Congregations team; however, pastors cannot be counted as one of the three certified team members.
- Q. Upon sign up can we immediately participate in a special grant opportunity?**
- A.** Yes, teams are allowed to immediately participate in our special grant opportunities. However, if a team does not complete certification within 2 years, that congregation must recommit and work toward certification to participate in the program. Please note that each special opportunity has its own deadlines, which can be found on our website.
- Q. What's the benefit of being a Healthy Congregations church?**
- A.** Churches in the Healthy Congregations program will receive a renewable \$1,000 grant upon sign up, consultation with the Health Fund staff, access to our special grant opportunities, and a chance to network with 100+ Great Plains United Methodist Churches at our Intersections in Faith and Health conference and at our annual Healthy Congregations retreat.



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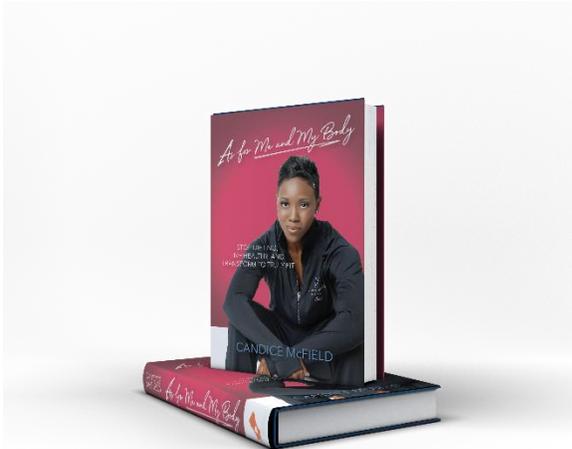


- Q.** How often will we need to submit or review our needs assessment?
- A.** We require churches to review and update (as appropriate) their needs assessment each year to qualify for the \$1,000 grant renewal. Every five years, churches are required to submit a new needs assessment and will receive an additional \$250, totaling \$1,250 of grant funding that year. Due dates are grouped by city name - A-E: 2025; F-J: 2026; K-O: 2027; P-T: 2023; U-Z: 2024.
- Q.** Our church doesn't currently have a pastor. Does this disqualify us from participating?
- A.** No, this will not disqualify Great Plains United Methodist Churches. If you are a new team wanting to sign up as a Healthy Congregations church, we will require that the District Superintendent sign in place of the Pastor.
- Q.** When should we expect our first grant check after signing up?
- A.** Please allow 2-3 weeks to receive your grant check in the mail. If after three weeks you have not received it, please let us know.
- Q.** Are there opportunities for us to learn from and work with other churches?
- A.** Yes, we are resuming the annual Healthy Congregations Retreat and also host periodic online learning and sharing sessions. Please check the Healthy Congregations Calendar and/or Newsletter for details.



SPECIAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

As for Me and My Body



As for Me and My Body is for individuals in certified Healthy Congregations churches interested in connecting their spiritual and physical health to come to a deeper understanding that taking care of the body is an act of serving God. Participants will work with Candice McField, the founder of Candice McField Fitness and author of *As for Me and My Body*. Through a five-week training, individuals will learn to strengthen their relationship with Christ and to conquer their health and fitness goals.

Participants will receive:

- a copy of the book
- 5 virtual training sessions

The Big Garden



The Big Garden special grant opportunity is for congregations that are interested in increasing access to healthy foods in their community.

The Big Garden allows churches to build relationships with their communities and local food banks by developing community gardens and providing education on hunger.

Grant recipients will receive up to \$2,700 for garden infrastructure such as:

- raised beds
- fencing
- garden shed
- water irrigation
- tools



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Bike Share in a Box



Healthy Congregations interested in this opportunity are passionate about breaking down transportation barriers and providing a fun alternative for physical activity.

Each participating church will receive:

- five bikes
- a bike rack
- bike locks
- waivers
- signage for the community
- technical assistance

Faith in Democracy



One of the strongest ways to ensure healthy communities is for each person to be engaged and to have a voice. Faith in Democracy is a nonpartisan relationship-based program focused on increasing voter turnout. This grant provides tools to support Kansas Healthy Congregations in ensuring their congregations and community members can access the polls.

Grant participants will receive:

- digital resources
- worship resources/sermon guide
- regular information on how to support members in registering to vote, finding their polling place, and knowing what is on their ballot



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The Giving Grove



Healthy Congregation churches interested in making sure that their community has access to healthy calories should consider this special grant opportunity.

The Giving Grove grant provides:

- up to ten fruit trees
- all materials and tools needed for planting day
- ongoing support and training to ensure the success of their orchards

Orchards typically take three years to produce fruit. When it's time for harvest, a percentage of the produce is given away—hence The Giving Grove!

Good Neighbor Experiment



This opportunity is for churches who want to engage their community as neighbors.

Healthy Congregations churches who participate in this nine-month-long learning cohort will receive training rooted in the practices of Asset-Based Community Development and Christian Faith.

The process includes:

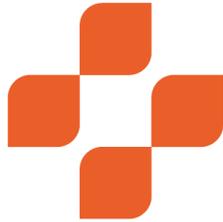
- three in-person or virtual workshops
- four action-based “labs” of small group materials, each six weeks long congregational coaching for churches



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Mental Health First Aid



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training participants will learn the risk factors and warning signs for mental health and substance abuse concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help. MHFA teaches about *recovery* and *resiliency* – the belief that individuals experiencing these challenges can get better and use their strengths to stay well.

This is a one-day, 6.5-hour virtual training that is open to all individuals from churches in the Great Plains Conference. Participants will receive the MHFA training manual and technical assistance.

Summer Food Service Program



Healthy Congregations churches interested in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) want children to continue receiving nutritious meals during summer break and unanticipated school closures. A church will receive up to \$2,000 to go toward:

- Start-up costs for new programs
- Expanding: sites, meals served, or number of months meals are served
- One-time resource expenses
- Strengthening the existing site's work or increasing numbers served: strengthening partnerships, providing programs, alleviating transportation barriers, partnering with Kansas Food Bank to provide "food backpacks" for weekend meals

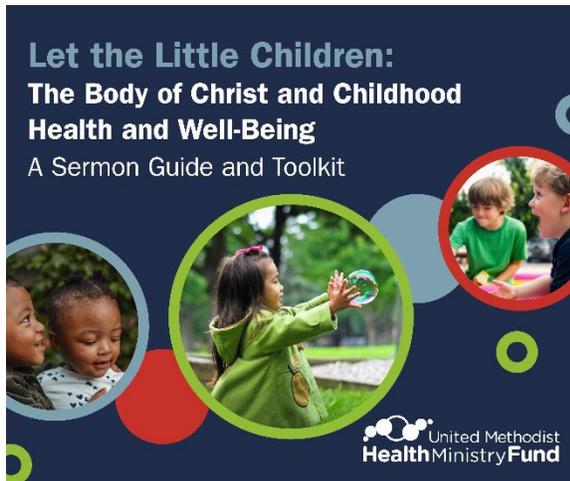


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SERMON GUIDES

Guides for Talking to Your Congregation



The Health Fund worked in partnership with Lisa Hancock, PhD, to develop a series of sermon guides that bring together scripture, theology, and health. Available at healthfund.org/a/sermon-guides, the guides cover:

- Health and wellness
- Mental wellness
- Childhood health and well-being
- Trauma and resilient love
- Civic engagement
- Maternal health



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ABOUT

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund is a statewide health foundation that facilitates conversation and action to improve the health and wholeness of Kansans—especially those in rural and under-served communities. Through funding programs and ideas, providing hands-on expertise, and convening partners, the Health Fund advances innovative solutions to improve Kansans' health for generations to come. Located in Hutchinson, Kansas, the Health Fund has provided more than \$75 million in grants and program support since its inception in 1986.
