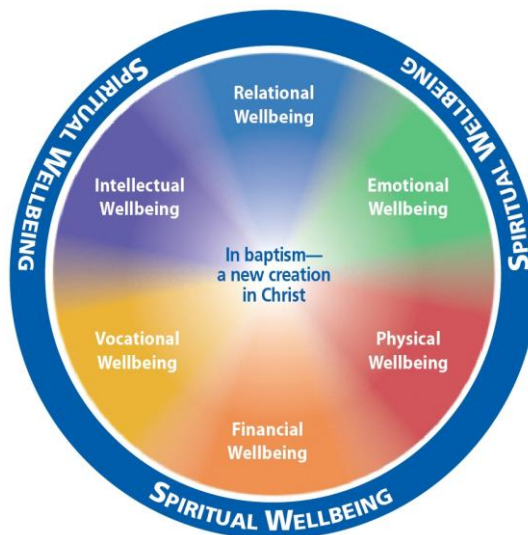




## CONGREGATION AND SCHOOL WELLNESS CONCEPTS

*Grace Place Lutheran Wellness Ministries*

The Wellness Wheel and the “Wellness Markers” for each segment that was developed by the Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness is utilized by Grace Place Congregational Wellness Weekends as a basis for addressing congregational wellness. This working image can be helpful to address the Creator’s multi-faceted design for life within the body of Christ. Throughout the weekend presentations, you will be asked to reflect on questions pertaining to each of the sections. The purpose is to make the significant link between your personal well-being and the well-being of the mission and ministry of your congregation.



The Christian life is not a private one, but one lived within the body of Christ with each person concerned for one another and considering the good of all. This is made possible through the power of Christ, who is the Head of the body.

Throughout the New Testament epistles, there are nearly sixty "one another" exhortations given to churches. All of them imply close-knit community of the Holy Spirit that will be a witness as it reaches out to others (John 13:34-35).

In the face of an increasing “ME” culture, the exciting model that Christ and the early church give us is to develop a “WE” culture in our congregations. Our churches and schools are “families;” they live as families, work as families, and experience the problems families struggle with, especially in maintaining the home as a primary school of faith formation.

For example, today’s parents are a product of a “ME” culture and think in “ME” terms for their child. They want their child to have the best possible advantage so that their child can succeed in the world. They are unaware that this logic comes from evolutionary theory – that the purpose of life is to survive and that their child has to have every advantage (such as dance lessons, soccer lessons, etc.). They are not aware that such logic that focuses on individual rights is dysfunctional for their child and for their family!

What parents can learn is that there is a “gospel” or “WE” atmosphere given by God that is functional and will produce a healthy child. A child from a home that has a healthy “WE” atmosphere has good internal control, a healthy self-image, and a concern for others. A “WE-Culture” develops a “safe place” for the child that is very attractive.

Sadly, most Christian homes today have not experienced a “WE” atmosphere, so families do not know its benefits. A Christian congregation and school can model this atmosphere and teach it to their families. As they find out that it really works there will be an interest in the source of the “WE,” namely a God who first loved us and made us a part of His family (the “WE” that is the body of Christ).

This represents an actual cultural shift from the power struggles and negative, disrespectful conversation of a ME-oriented culture. This **“WE-shift”** is a different way of thinking, a different set of emotions, a different way of perceiving, and a different way of acting, all taking into account the *best for all concerned!* This is such a refreshing difference from the usual self-centered orientation that surrounds the church – in fact so different that it will stand out as an exciting witness.

**Baptismal Wellbeing:** “Seek the Things That Are Above” (Colossians 3.1-4.18)

*A healthy congregation focuses on daily renewal of baptismal life, turning natural self-centered tendencies toward loving God, self and others*

The real problem for our churches is the sinful self (ME). Baptism is the starting point for spiritual growth in the Christian life – daily dying to sin and rising to a new life in Christ. We have been declared righteous. This frees the believer from being rules-oriented to being relationship oriented (growing the ligaments- how the body of Christ is connected together). Instead of the defensive, self-centered old self, we are free to love all persons and be more concerned about WE than ME, bringing health and functionality into our relationships.

“Put off the old self...put on the new self...” (Eph. 4). Spiritual growth for the individual occurs as the person goes from a self-centered, ME orientation (the old self) to a “WE” orientation that has concern for others at heart (the new self). The ME is dysfunctional and the WE is functional. The WE orientation (or new self) is the beginning of a new way of thinking and perceiving, and new set of emotional reactions, and a new way of behaving modeled after Christ who thought of us on the Cross (not himself).

We have been declared righteous through the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We are children of God, loved by God. This makes our sanctified life a “gitta,” instead of a “gotta.” This profound shift from law to gospel motivation brings bringing joy and excitement to our life together. The spiritual energy of the congregation starts here in the daily renewal of baptism and flows outward, bringing “shalom” – the proper order to our lives that can now be lived in praise and service.

**Discussion:**

- a. To what degree do you feel encouraged to stop, remember God’s presence, and “set your mind on things above” in your daily life?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- b. To what degree are there opportunities for personal spiritual growth through Bible study, small groups or spiritual mentoring?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- c. To what degree do you consider congregational/school activities as a privilege and joy (rather than a duty or obligation)?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

**Spiritual Wellbeing** “Whoever believes in me...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38)

***“A healthy congregation is Gospel-motivated, with the energy of its members flowing outward in worship, service, and outreach.”***

Spiritual growth is always away from our earthly, selfish nature toward Christ, the Head, as we set our minds on things above. Our sinful natures create dysfunctional relationships. The daily renewing process helps us direct our energy outward in forgiveness and love – moving toward unity in our congregations and our families

We worship a relational God (Trinity) who created us to be in a loving relationship to Him, to ourselves, and to one another. The word, “shalom” describes the peace that comes from this proper order. Fulfillment in our lives (marked by the gift of joy) comes from living for God and others – for worship and service.

Sin is a relational concept. Instead of our energy flowing upward and outward, our self-protective tendencies always turn us into ourselves (“in curvatus se”). The temptations of Christ were all to get Him to think of Himself (ME) and break the loving relationship of obedience to his Father. Such “disorder” of sin pervades every element of our lives, causing dysfunction in every aspect of the “Wellness Wheel,” leading to dispirited lives.

Spiritual well-being is a gift of God, starting with the “new self” of the baptismal covenant, flowing through every aspect of our life together (vocational, emotional, etc.), resulting in healthy spirits, excited about each new day. Key to spiritual well-being is a critical shift from the old self that will “Think ME” to the new self that can “Think WE.”

**Discussion:**

- a. How much excitement and energy do you feel – is your congregation/school alive – do you sense “*flowing rivers of living water?*”  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much
- b. To what degree is there joy expressed in outreach, building relationships with the community?  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much
- c. To what degree is there concern for the good of whole and the work of the mission of Christ (rather than private agendas)?  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

**Vocational Wellbeing** “Walk in a Manner Worthy of the Calling” (Ephesians 5)

***A healthy congregation is effectively functioning from gifted passions in efforts to extend the kingdom.***

Every Christian has a calling. Basic to this vocation is a passion for service and outreach. God places passion in everyone’s heart for His purposes. Each person is to search the heart to find the passion God has already placed there (Acts 1:24). Working out of that passion produces energy and excitement for the congregation where people do not “keep score,” but are generous with their time and efforts.

Basic to preserving the energy of this calling is to first, manage yourself well. A healthy, loving relationship with self is the first step toward directing this passion outward in service to others. Internal struggles and negative self-talk utilize this energy in the wrong way and lead to a disordered soul.

The congregation perceives every member as a gift to the church and values this work of the Holy Spirit. Opportunities are given for members to search out their passion. In that way, every member can see self as a gift (“pneumatikos charisma” – 1 Cor. 12: 1, 4) and enjoy his/her role in the ministry of the church.

**Discussion**

- a. To what degree are you encouraged to search out the passion God has placed into your heart and invest it for building up the Body of Christ?  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much
- b. To what degree are you fulfilled in your Christian vocation?  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much
- c. To what degree do you sense that you are a gift to the mission of the congregation/school?  
little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

**Intellectual Wellbeing** “The Renewal of Your Minds” (Romans 12)

***A healthy congregation demonstrates an omnipresent genuine curiosity.***

Relationships require constant communication to stay fresh and alive. Curiosity and excitement over God’s Word keeps our relationship with God growing and deepening. A healthy congregation has vibrant Bible study opportunities that allow for personal reflection and conversation.

People must get to know each other and stay in touch to keep their relationships growing. This is true for family, congregational, and community relationships. Anything that stays private stays immature.

Personal communication with appropriate self-disclosure is necessary. A healthy congregation is characterized by “disarming honesty” so that the “truth” can be spoken “in love.” Leaders model this process by letting others know what they can pray for in their personal lives.

Time and energy spent in listening are also important. Listening skills can be taught and modeled so that everyone feels understood. This is especially important in “painter/pointer” conversations to keep misunderstanding from occurring.

***Discussion:***

- a. To what degree do you and others show a genuine curiosity for God’s Word – to seek out His will?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very well

- b. How well do you know each other’s personal stories – is it safe to share?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very free

- c. To what degree do you feel listened to and understood – are people really honoring different points of view?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

**Relational Wellbeing “Opportunity to Serve One Another” (Gal. 5)**

***A healthy congregation interacts in relationships dominated by trust, respect, and love.***

Like money put in the bank, gracing one another with words of respect and kindness makes people want to get together and share their lives. In the Christian community, there is the added dimension of readily helping each other out (“bearing one another’s burdens”).

In order to model the body of Christ, the staff of the church (and school) must function as a team and model this concern for the whole in all of their interactions and decisions.

The staff must first work on its internal relationships so that it can function as a unit and can think, speak and act as a “WE.” This means regular staff meetings where relationships are addressed. This means making decisions as a “WE”. This means dealing with an upset member

(or parent) as a “WE”. This means that strained relationships between staff cannot be allowed to stand without being addressed in a spirit of love!

The congregation seeks to teach and empower parents to develop a “WE” culture in their homes so that all family members consider the welfare of all, not just self. This starts with the home and family life of staff members!

*(For congregations with a school)* Teachers in the classroom can “Think WE.” The classroom is a beautiful arena for developing and teaching how a “WE-Culture” operates. First the teacher allies with the parent for the good of the child’s education. In the class itself, children learn how to work together and solve relationship problems as a “WE.”

## Discussion

- a. How well do you and others get along – do you enjoy each other?  
*little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very well*
- b. How readily do you help each other out (“bear one another’s burdens”)?  
*little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very well*
- c. How much evidence is there of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)?  
*little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much*

## Emotional Wellbeing “An Inclusive Expression of Love and Care” 1 Tim. 2

*A healthy congregation is aware of the full range of emotions, allowing decisions to be informed by them, but emotions do not control the decisions.*

There is emotional and spiritual maturity in which leaders can handle situations with more grace “peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” - and without judgment. These can be models for those whose faith and life in Christ is weak - “bearing with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.” This is especially true when deeper emotional issues are at stake that threatens to split the congregation and school.

The critical question is: “How do we handle the various problems that arise in our daily functioning?” All of the problems can be handled with the “truth spoken in love” with the basic question, “How are **WE** going to handle this?”

**Problems with staff relationships** – Staff relationship problems are a daily occurrence. Feelings are hurt, turf is threatened, favoritism is suspected, liaisons (some sexual) are developed that triangulate two staff against another. These problems must be caught early and confronted in love so the air can stay “clear.”

**Problems with school/church relations** – Long-standing distrust and power struggles are often part of the church/school situation. Mutual discussions that raise sensitive issues with the prevailing watchword, “How are **WE** going to handle these issues for the good of all concerned?”

**Problems with relationships between members** - Often, there are long-standing factions that go back 10 or 20 years that cause power struggles. A “WE” community does not allow such factions or hurt feelings to stay under cover, but confronts them in a spirit of love. Whenever such a situation occurs, the parties

involved get tapped on the shoulder and asked to sit down together to clear the air. The attitude is always, “It is not good for US that this tension exists between you two.” The spirit of the whole body suffers!

**Deeper factions** – Hurt feelings and anger that have been long-standing (“sun goes down on the anger”) are deadly to the spirit of the congregation (and family) as “mood particles” continue to accumulate. Usually these had a definite starting point (“defining moment”) where two immaturities interacted (“spiritual DNA”). Sensitive addressing of these issues must be pursued, bringing both parties to confession so that reconciliation can occur.

**Discussion:**

a. What is the general atmosphere in your congregation/school?

distant, cold    more – than +    neutral    more + than -    warm, close, uplifting

b. To what degree are you free of hard feelings and resentment over past issues?

little or none    a little    some    fair amount    very much

c. To what degree are you open to constructive criticism, valuing the insight rather than getting defensive?

little or none    a little    some    fair amount    very much

**Physical Wellbeing** “Loving God More Than Things of This World” 1 John 2

***A healthy congregation demonstrates the awareness and evidence of care for physical well-being.***

The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). One’s spiritual act of worship is to offer the body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This mean control over the body and its natural desires is given over to the Head, to Christ, to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). This even means that inner struggles (mind verses body of Romans 7) are organized by the love of Christ and a greater shalom can be part of your soul.

The gospel of Christ brings a new, redeemed view of our physical nature. The physical body is valued and seen as a “temple of the Holy Spirit.” In a gospel focused congregation, healthy living is taught and modeled by the leadership in the church. Focus on healthy living – proper diet and exercise – is part of the congregation’s culture. A parish nurse program is vibrant and active.

Help for addictions in terms of support groups is evident. Instruction in anxiety reduction via meditation, fasting and prayer is part of the congregation’s ministry. A Church Worker Support Team is in place, looking after the health of the staff and of the congregation.

Instruction and modeling is given for the relationship people have with themselves. The usual inner conflicts are brought to the organizing influence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, bringing peace and self-control as the mind and body start working together rather than being in a power struggle.

**Discussion:**

- a. To what degree are you encouraged to care for yourself and understand that care for self is important for your mission and ministry?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- b. To what degree are healthy lifestyles encouraged and modeled – are there effective health care ministries?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- c. To what degree are you instructed in the blessing of spiritual disciplines (such as meditation, fasting, and prayer) for healthier living (freedom from addiction to this world)?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

**Financial Wellbeing** “Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9.1)

*A healthy congregation is generous and eager to be a blessing.*

Whenever a Christian community is led by the Spirit of God to “think WE,” everything a person has is seen as a blessing from God. Members are moved to generosity from this position of gratitude and humility, eager to be a blessing to others.

When we view our financial blessings as gifts from God, there are eager and generous responses to evident need without any sense of keeping score or any need for reward for such good deeds. There is joy in giving, since it is a privilege (“gitta”) not an obligation (“gotta”). Good stewardship is taught and modeled.

**Discussion:**

- a. To what degree do you and others view possessions as a gift of God and not personal property?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- b. To what degree is your congregation generous, responding with open heart to needs that are presented, eager to be a blessing?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much

- c. To what degree are finances managed well for the mission of your church/school?

little or none      a little      some      fair amount      very much