NAACP

HEART & SOUL

A Learning Guide About Heart Health for Faith Communities

INTRODUCTION



November 2026

ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM

Heart & Soul

Heart & Soul is an easy-to-use learning guide to help faith communities understand heart health and support healthier choices at the personal level and across entire families and congregations.

This curriculum includes straightforward information, resources, tools, and guidance on how to make better health decisions and create spaces for wellness within our faith communities. It can be used by faith leaders, laypeople, and community members alike.

Heart & Soul is made up of six sessions, each tied to general and heart health topics:

- **Session 1: Caring for the Temple – Whole Person Wellness**
- **Session 2: Mindful Eating – Food & Nutrition**
- **Session 3: Movement With Purpose – Physical Activity**
- **Session 4: Rest & Restore – Sleep Hygiene**
- **Session 5: Building Soul Power – Stress Relief**
- **Session 6: Guarding the Heart – Heart Health**

Each session provides educational information, moments for reflection and discussion, simple activities, and suggested action and advocacy steps that move the learning from personal growth into community action.

Find all sessions and activities on our Heart & Soul Curriculum page.



CALL TO ACTION

Our communities are strong. Our communities are bold. Our communities are filled with stories that inspire and challenge us to be our highest selves. While we face unfair realities and problems, we are problem-solvers and partners in a beloved community.

Why Faith Communities?

The NAACP values the special role faith communities play in supporting the health and well-being of the people and communities they care about.

Unique trust. As trusted places for information and guidance, faith communities have a unique opportunity to share reliable health facts, promote healthy habits, and create healing spaces people can use in their everyday lives.

Established partnerships. Faith-based organizations have respected leaders, established relationships, and existing programs that can all support health education and disease prevention. Heart & Soul builds upon these strengths by providing simple tools to use in current programs, ministries, and community activities.

The State of Community Health

Health is about more than individual choices. The conditions and relationships around us shape our health and risks of illness, for better or worse. This curriculum considers not only individual health choices but also the conditions where people live, grow, work, pray, and age, known as the social determinants of health (SDOH).

Disease prevention is an important part of improving community health. There are different ways to prevent and manage diseases. For example, we can prevent illness in people who are well but may have risk factors for certain health conditions. We can prevent symptoms from developing in people whose disease is still in its early stages, before they know they have it. And we can prevent people who are already sick from getting worse, and keep them feeling healthy for as long as possible.

People living with health conditions often need more help, ongoing care, and support. This is where faith communities can support health care systems. As shown by the ACE Your Health Survey Report, 63% of people report living with at least one chronic health condition, a number that increases with age. This causes us to ask:

- What do people need to be well?
- What actions improve wellness or lead to illness?
- What conditions in communities help or harm health and well-being?

CALL TO ACTION

Faith communities can create a culture of health. We know that positive social connections and health literacy play important roles in good health. Faith communities are powerful health partners and pillars of safety, healing, and care in the community. Faith communities also contain trusted educators and advocates who can share and use crucial health information.

Many individuals and families center their lives in faith communities. They can set an example of healthy habits and uphold dignity and equity with their actions, love, and care for all who they reach.

Read on to learn about the foundation for this curriculum and how to use it.

THE HEALTHY FIVE :

A Foundation for the Curriculum

A person's everyday actions in five important areas can promote heart health and overall mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

The Healthy Five Pillars



The Healthy Five work together. Understanding the guidelines in each of these five areas is important, and we know that healthy foods and physical activity are two especially powerful tools for preventing disease and promoting health.

When people take regular steps towards being healthy, they create everyday habits in their lives. Over time, these actions can change how they feel, creating better health, wellness, and outcomes. By focusing on the topics in each pillar, people can identify habits and strengthen their foundation for lifelong health.

How to Use This Curriculum

Heart & Soul is designed to be flexible and easy to add to current faith programs and routines. It is anchored on the Healthy Five topics.

WHO: The curriculum is made for faith leaders, health ministry leads, ministry volunteers, and other community members interested in promoting health and wellness in their congregations. No formal health background is needed to lead the sessions.

WHEN: The curriculum includes six sessions that can be rolled out monthly or every other month, allowing congregations to complete the full curriculum once or twice a year. A ministry can determine how long each session lasts.

WHAT: Each session includes education on one area of the Healthy Five, an activity to help participants apply what they learned to their own lives, a Heart & Soul in Action plan that identifies a simple step the faith community can take to support wellness at the congregation or community level, and additional community advocacy tools to go further.

HOW: This guide can be used as part of an existing program in your congregation, or you can create a gathering to roll out each session and any related activities.

For each session, there is a **Facilitator's Guide** with tips on how to prepare, what we hope people will learn, discussion questions, activity instructions, and ready-to-use communication templates.

At the end of the document for each session, there is an **Activity**, **Tool**, or **Resource** for participants.

> We recommend that Heart & Soul participants and facilitators read each session's content before the session, print the session material beforehand, or follow along during the class with their smartphone or other device.

Faith communities can use and adapt Heart & Soul to meet the needs of their congregations. Sessions can be part of existing health ministries, small groups, workshops, community events, or other programs. Facilitators may adjust the format, timing, and activities while keeping the core health information and session goals the same.

Heart & Soul can be used with other tools in our NAACP Health & Well-Being hub, including:

- Supporting Healthy Weight and Preventing Obesity resources:
  - Full Learning and Action Guide
  - Quick Action Guide
- ACE Your Health resources

