

## “Help Us Lose a Ton of Ministers”

By Dwight Winnett

There is a major push for ministers everywhere to do better in the area of self-care. Earlier this year the Disciples of Christ even had a 3 day “Health and Wellness Summit” in Indianapolis featuring Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, M.D., author of “The Right Road; Life Choices for Clergy”. Being a medical doctor and the spouse of a Lutheran Minister, Gwen was called to be the project director for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) Ministerial Health and Wellness program, designed to enable ministers of their faith to better manage all of the factors that affect our spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical, vocational, and social-interpersonal well-being.

Herb Knudsen, Steve Workman, Linda Hunsaker, Darryl McDaniel, and I attended this incredible Summit as representatives of the Illinois/Wisconsin Clergy Senate. At a subsequent meeting of the Senate, we rated ourselves in each of the above listed well-being areas and unanimously concluded by a large margin that we did well with every category except physical well-being.

The most obvious and readily addressable aspect of physical well-being seemed to be weight reduction, so we proposed a weight loss contest called ‘Help Us Lose a Ton of Ministers’, with the goal of getting at least 50 ministers to sign up and lose an average of 40 pounds each by the Regional Assembly in November of 2008. (do the math: 50 x 40 = one ton.)

We announced and began this contest on May 2, 2007 at the Ministers Institute with official weigh-in and body mass index calculations by Pekin’s First Christian Church Parrish Nurse, Connie Julien. During the Institute we also decided to make the contest retroactive to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 for any ministers who had already begun their own weight reduction program and had official documentation of starting weight and body mass index from their doctor, nurse, or weight loss organization, such as Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, etc. Originally we had announced a prize of a \$100 Cokesbury Publishing gift certificate to the minister who loses the most pounds and the minister who achieves the greatest reduction in body mass index. Then a generous donor in the Region offered to double both prizes.

We had 21 ministers of about 60 present at the Ministers Institute weigh in and register. Since then another minister has also registered. All ministers in our Region may still register and compete by doing the following:

- ☺ Obtain a documented official starting weight and body mass index from your doctor, nurse, or weight loss organization (retroactive to January 1, 2007 if you already have such).
- ☺ Send your documentation to Dana Worrell-Jumper at the Regional Office, who will keep your information privately on file until the Regional Assembly in ’08.
- ☺ Attend the Regional Assembly in ’08 for official documented ending weigh in and b.m.i. calculation **OR** obtain same documented information from the above named sources **NO LATER THAN** the date of the Regional Assembly ’08.

We hope and pray that this contest will be fun as well as beneficial for all who participate. It was also suggested that we might consider signing up parishioners, family, and friends to individually sponsor their favorite minister for donations per pound of weigh loss with the donations going to Week of Compassion. I’m all up for that (I need to lose about 35 pounds). Wouldn’t it be great if even more ministers join us, and we exceed our goal? In God’s Joy, Dwight (Proverbs 17:22)

It is estimated that anyone who is suffering from obesity or even considerably overweight could feasibly add 4 years to their life expectancy and reduce their overall medical expenses by up to 25%.