

# Group Encourages Clergy To Get Healthy

BY COLETTE M. JENKINS

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AKRON, Ohio — The Rev. Mark Ford was offended when a few of his fellow clergy insinuated he should do something about his weight and stop burning the candle at both ends.

"I got mad and I thought, 'My mental and physical health is none of your business.' Now, if they wanted to talk about my character, that was one thing. But my body was none of their business," said Ford, executive director of Love Akron. "Then I went home, and the Holy Spirit went with me. God spoke to me very clearly, saying he sent those brothers to admonish me, so that I could be a better servant."

That was three years ago. Now 50 pounds lighter, Ford is ready to run the 26.2-mile Akron (Ohio) Marathon on Sept. 24. He hopes his participation will encourage other clergy to commit to a healthy lifestyle.

"For me, this marathon is doing something extreme to express in a tangible way my concern about pastors taking care of themselves," Ford said. "Pastors are caretakers and many times, caretakers are so busy taking care of everybody else that they forget to take care of themselves."

Ford said he was encouraged to run the marathon after reading an article last

year in the Akron Beacon Journal about Chuck Gough, a Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, man who had lost 135 pounds in a little more than a year after bariatric surgery, and ran in the 2010 marathon as part of his quest to get healthier.

Like Gough, Ford trained in the 17-week Marathon 101 course at the University of Akron. And as Gough was an inspiration to Ford, Ford now wants to be an inspiration to leaders in the religious community.

Last week, Ford stood before a crowd of nearly 100 church leaders during Love Akron's quarterly prayer gathering and shared his vision for a health and wellness initiative for local pastors. The gatherings, which help local church leaders build relationships through prayer, are typically held at churches.

This time, the event was at Akron General's Health & Wellness Center in Bath Township, Ohio. And instead of wearing a suit and tie, Ford showed up in his Marathon 101 T-shirt, sweat pants and a baseball cap.

The visuals and Ford's message were well received.

Dottie Achmoody, chief executive at Akron's OPEN M (Opportunity Parish Ecumenical Neighborhood Ministry), said she was encouraged to get back into her walking routine. OPEN M is a faith-based ministry that feeds the hungry, cares for the sick, nurtures children and strength-

ens families.

"In the last two months, things have been really busy and I've kind of fallen off the wagon, not walking like I had been," said Achmoody, 62. "Attending the gathering helped redirect me. I can get so focused on work that I eat, sleep and drink OPEN M. I was reminded that I have to be in good shape to help others and I'm hoping to get back on track."

The Rev. Mark Ruppert, pastor at Akron's First Presbyterian Church, said he is better able to help others when he is healthy. Ruppert said he is getting back into his running routine after recovering from an injury last fall.

"Staying healthy has always been important to me — I was a high school and college athlete," said Ruppert, 55. "Eating right, exercising and getting enough rest helps me better deal with the pressures and strains of being a caretaker."

Ruppert, and the Rev. Benjamin Drone agree being a pastor is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week vocation. Physical activity can help increase energy and can serve as an outlet for some of the stress.

Drone, pastor at Akron's Faith Temple Church of the Living God, quipped that his weekly golf outing with the Tire Town Golf League serves as a stress reliever "if I'm playing a good game."

"It does relieve stress and it gives me an opportunity to take time to laugh and



PHIL MASTURZO/AKRON BEACON JOURNAL/MCT

Rev. Mark Ford sings along in worship at a health initiative for local pastors at the Akron General Health and Wellness Center in Fairlawn, Ohio.

talk with a group of positive people," said Drone, 65. "As pastors, we have to learn to balance the spiritual with the physical. We have to be physically strong and healthy because we are here to serve others. If we are sick, we can't do what we need to do for others."

In addition to helping pastors become physically fit, Ford hopes that a wellness strategy for clergy will include mental health and spiritual health components.

"Just like those brothers who came to

me because they were concerned about me, I am reaching out to my fellow clergy and expressing that same kind of concern," said Ford, 59. "In many ways, this marathon is symbolic of my life."

"I joke that I'm going to start on Sept. 24 and hopefully end by Dec. 24 to get back in time for Christmas Eve service. I really hope to finish by one o'clock (it starts at 7 a.m.). But time is not an issue for me. One of my goals in life is to finish well and that's what I want to do in this race, finish well."

## First Assembly Missions Festival Next Wednesday

Yankton First Assembly of God Missions Festival activities have been planned to be held at the church at 801 W 25th Street, Yankton.

Beginning Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 6:30 p.m. a night of prayer with information about upcoming mission opportunities will be held.

On Saturday, Oct. 1 at 6 p.m. a missions banquet will be held with Stephen's House ministry serving: bacon wrapped chicken, corn on the cob, baked potato and salads.

The drama "Are You Ready for the Trumpet Call?" will be presented.

A free will offering will be taken.

Sunday, Oct. 2 at 10 a.m. with guest missionaries Mark & Daniela Brink — Teen Challenge for Muslims.

# Meditating In The Park To Find God

BY RON OROZCO

McClatchy Newspapers (2011MCT)

FRESNO, Calif. — Under a canopy of trees at Woodward Park in Fresno, Calif., people from various faiths come together to practice contemplative prayer and meditation as a way to reduce stress, enhance peace — and live out their faith.

The "Mediation in the Park" interfaith gatherings bring together Buddhists, Christians and Hindus. They sit in lawn chairs, listen to instruction on each religion's practice, then try them out, from their chairs and on walks together. Everyone leaves feeling refreshed.

"We all are looking and trying to connect with our inner self; we just may have different methods," says Veena Kapoor, a Hindu who teaches raja yoga meditation at the gatherings. "It lends itself to connecting with nature and the feeling of reaching out to the world."

Contemplative prayer was practiced in the Early Church for centuries before it fell out of favor at the time of the Reformation. In recent years, spiritual seekers are

returning to the ancient practice in Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant forms.

In the central San Joaquin Valley, the contemplative prayer and meditation gatherings have become fixtures at Woodward Park since 2008. Previously called "Interspiritual Peace Meditation" events, they are held the fourth Saturdays monthly and average 15-20 people.

"Our purpose is to cultivate a relationship of intimacy with God and to consent to the divine presence within and all around us," says Everardo Pedraza, coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Central California, which oversees the gatherings and is a chapter of the Contemplative Outreach international organization. The group was founded by a monk, Thomas Keating, who sought to recover the contemplative dimensions of Christianity.

At Woodward Park, the Buddhists, Christians and Hindus come with open minds to differences in theology and ways of practicing contemplative prayer and meditation.

Zen Buddhism and raja yoga teach that

contemplative meditation is practiced with eyes slightly open.

"We can be in a meditative state even while doing things — and we don't move around with eyes closed," Kapoor explains.

With Christian contemplative prayer, eyes are closed.

"No one is trying to convert the other," Pedraza says. "As friends, we come together and simply teach from the authenticity of each tradition. In that common ground of silence, we share a bond. That's what brings us together and unites us in sharing this ministry with others."

Contemplative Outreach of Central California also holds semiannual retreats for Christian contemplative prayer, called centering prayer.

Centering prayer requires participants to direct their loving attention to God for 20 minutes at a time — and to try to let go of all other thoughts, feelings and ideas. If distractions arise, participants are trained to say a word — such as "peace" or "Jesus" — that can help them redirect their attention.

"The intention is to connect to God's

presence and action in our lives," says Cathy Wingert, who teaches a centering prayer group at 6:30 p.m. Mondays at University Presbyterian Church. Another centering prayer group meets at Saint Anthony of Padua Catholic Church.

A group at University Presbyterian Church also practices Lectio divina (Latin for "divine reading"), using the Psalms, and ends with a contemplative form of Communion where the liturgy is different and flows with the silence and Scripture reading.

Susan Quinn, a retired Fresno art teacher, says practicing centering prayer is an important part of her life. She says it helps her to let go of situations that, if she dwells on them, could cause stress.

"I'm more peaceful and more able to recognize the things that used to really take over," she says. "I'm more easily able to unhook from that."

"After you do it for a long time, you're able to have that pattern where you bring yourself to that quiet, which is presence with God."

## CHURCH SCHEDULES

Abundant Life	Baptist	Catholic	Charismatic	Lutheran	Non-Denominational	United Methodist
<b>ABUNDANT LIFE MINISTRIES</b> , 517 Burleigh, Lawrence and Barbara Hladky, pastors, 665-0889. SAT 7pm Praise and worship celebration, SUN. 10am Worship. WED. 7pm Worship. Teens prayer daily 10am.	<b>CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH</b> , 2407 Broadway, Yankton. (605)665-5594. Rev. Jon Cooke, Pastor Jeremy Nelson, and Laura Kotalik. www.cbchurch.com <b>SUNDAY</b> Sept. 25 8:30 AM Intercessory Prayer Time 9:00 AM Adult ENCORE Community 9:00 AM & 10:45 AM Worship Service <b>MES-SAGE</b> : "Signs of Neglect" 10:45 AM Sunday School for all ages 6:00 PM Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University <b>MONDAY</b> Sept. 26 9:00 AM Ladies Shop Time (Prayer Time) 7:00 PM Divorce Care/DC4K 7:30 PM Service broadcast on Channels 3 & 98 <b>TUESDAY</b> Sept. 27 7:00 PM Friendship Through Cards <b>WEDNESDAY</b> Sept. 28 6:45 AM Men's Prayer Time 9:00 AM Joy In the Morning 5:45 PM Wednesday Night Meal 6:00 PM Intercessory Prayer 6:30 PM <b>TORCH Bible Study</b> 6:30 PM <b>AWANA</b> 6:30 PM 7 & 8 Grade Youth Group 7:00 PM 9-12 Grade Youth Group 7:00 PM Adult Bible Study <b>THURSDAY</b> Sept. 29 10:00 AM Preschool Storytime 7:00 PM Celebrate Recovery <b>FRIDAY</b> Sept. 30 11:30 Mid Day Meal.	<b>ST. AGNES PARISH: SIGEL</b> , rural Utica. SUN. 9am Mass, confessions 1/2 hour before Mass. <b>ST. ANDREW'S CATHOLIC CHURCH</b> , Bloomfield, NE. Fr. Michael Schmitz. SUN. Mass: 10:30am; TUE. Mass: 8am; THUR. Mass: 7pm. Confessions: THUR. 6:30-6:55pm. <b>ST. BENEDICT CATHOLIC CHURCH</b> , 1500 St. Benedict Drive, Yankton, Father Ken Lulf, 664-6214 (church). Masses: SAT. 5pm. SUN. 8:30am&10:30am. <b>ST. BONIFACE CATHOLIC CHURCH</b> , Menominee, Neb., Rev. David Fulton, pastor. SUN. 8:30am Mass. <b>ST. BONIFACE CHURCH</b> , rural Freeman. <b>SEPTEMBER WEEK-END</b> Mass Saturdays 4:30pm or call Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly. (605)583-4318. <b>ST. COLUMBA CHURCH</b> , rural Irene. <b>SEPTEMBER WEEKENDS</b> Mass Saturdays: 6:15pm or call Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly. (605)583-4318. <b>ST. GEORGE CHURCH</b> , Scotland, SD. Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly. <b>SEPTEMBER WEEKEND</b> Mass Sundays 9:30am or call (605)583-4318. <b>ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC</b> , Fordyce, Neb. Rev. David Fulton. SUN. 10:30am Mass. <b>ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC</b> , Lesterville. SUN. 10:30am Mass. <b>ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH</b> , Constance, Neb., Fr. David Fulton, pastor. SAT. Mass: 7:30pm. <b>ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC</b> , Wakonda, Rev. Scott Trayner, 624-2697. SUN. 8:30am Mass. <b>ST. ROSE OF LIMA</b> , Crofton, Neb. Fr. Michael Schmitz. SAT. Mass: 8:00am & 5:30pm. SUN. Mass: 8:30am. WED/FRI Masses: 8:15am. Confessions: WED. 11am-11:30am. SAT. 5-5:20pm. <b>ST. WENCESLAUS</b> , Tabor, (605)463-2336. Rev. Joseph Puthenkulathil, SAT. 7pm Mass. SUN. 8:30am Mass. <b>THE HOUSE OF MARY SHRINE</b> , 6-mi. W. Yankton, Hwy.52. Masses: Monday 8:30 through October. Masses Saturday 9:00 every Saturday. Rosary Sunday 4:00. Rosary 4:00. Open 7 days a week for prayer. thehouseofmaryshrine.org	<b>YAHWEH-SHALOM CHARISMATIC</b> , St. Benedict Catholic Church. MON. 7:30pm prayer meeting <b>CHRISTIAN KINGSWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH</b> , 19th & Burleigh, 665-6317. Joseph Mason, Pastor. 9am-SS; Worship 10:15am. Wed.-6pm-Kids games; 7pm Kids for Christ & Adult Bible Study. <b>Church of Christ</b> <b>CHURCH OF CHRIST</b> , 1114 West 12th, Yankton, 665-6379. SUN. 9:30am Bible study; classes for all ages. 10:30am Worship. <b>Church of Jesus Christ</b> <b>CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LATTER-DAY SAINTS</b> , 2300 Douglas, Yankton. Randy Campbell, (605)565-2016. Family History Ctr 665-0901. SUN. 10am Sacrament meeting. <b>CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH</b> , 517 Douglas, Yankton. Rev. James Pearson, (605)665-2456. Sundays 9:00 Serenity 10:15 Morning Prayer. <b>Evangelical</b> <b>Cornerstone Evangelical Church</b> , Pastor Oliver Omanson, Stewart Elementary School; Morning Service 10:30 a.m. Wednesday College Bible Study 1306 Maple Street. Mike Stevens 665-8750. <b>EMMANUEL EVANGELICAL</b> (meets at Summit Center Theatre) www.emmanuel.yankton.com 1801 Summit, Yankton Sunday School-9:30 Coffee Juice & Donuts -10:15 Worship Service -10:45	<b>GAYVILLE-BERGEN LUTHERAN</b> Pastor Ralph Egbert. (605)267-4342 (church) Sunday: Bergen Worship 9:00am, SS-10:15am GLC SS- 9:15am, GLC Worship-10:30am. <b>HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> , AFLC 200 South Wilson, Delmont. (605)935-6941. SUN 9am Worship. 10am Sunday school. firsthope@santel.net <b>Martinus Lutheran Church</b> , Ulica. Pastor Dean Schroeder Sunday Divine Service 10:30am (605)589-3195 www.MartinusLutheran.org <b>OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN</b> , rural Irene. 263-3724. SUN. 9am Worship. <b>OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN</b> , LCMC/NALC, Menno. Interim Pastor Leon Schulz. SUN. Worship, 8:30am with potluck brunch to follow. Questions call (605)387-5256 <b>OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN</b> , LCMs, 12th and Elm, Springfield. Rev. Kenneth Johnson, pastor. SUN. 8am Worship. 9am SS. THUR. 7pm Adult Bible study. <b>PRINCE OF PEACE</b> , Wisconsin Synod, 201 East 25th St., Pastor Werre, 665-4793. Sat. 6pm Worship. <b>South Dakota Lutheran Church</b> Missouri Synod, MAIN STREET LIVING television program, 10a.m. (CST) on KDLT-NBC; and 11a.m. (CST) on KAUN-PAX; and 10a.m. (MST) on KFRA-PAX. <b>St. John Lutheran Church</b> , Tyn-dall, Pastor Dean Schroeder. Sunday Divine Service: 8:30am (605)589-3195. www.StJohnsTynDallLCMS.org <b>ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> (LCMS), 1009 Jackson. David Gunderson, Pastor. SUN. 8am Worship; 9:15am Education Hour; 10:30am Worship. <b>TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> , 403 Broadway, Yankton, 665-7415. Saturday-5:30p.m. Worship; Sunday-8:15a.m./10:45a.m. Worship; 9 a.m.-Breakfast; Classes-9:30a.m. <b>TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> , Hartington/Crofton, NE. Justin Wi-ese, interim pastor; (402)254-6606. SUN. 9am Worship (Hartington), 10am SS (Hartington), 11am Worship (Crofton). <b>TRONDHEIM LUTHERAN CHURCH</b> (AFLC), rural Volin. 263-3841. SUN. 9:15am; 10:30am Worship.	<b>FAITH ALIVE</b> , 501 Cedar St., Yankton. 665-4797. Contemporary Worship & Family Values. SUN: 10am Service. WED. 7pm Care-Cells "Small Groups For Building Relationships" Various Locations. <b>GLORY CHRISTIAN CENTER</b> , 901 E 11th St. Yankton. Gail Ryken, pastor, 665-2369. SUN. 10am Service. WED. 6pm Prayer. GC School, call (605)665-1988. <b>Presbyterian</b> <b>PEACE PRESBYTERIAN</b> (PCUSA), 206 E. 31st. 665-0448. Rev. Dr. Nelson Stone & Rev. Marilyn Stone. Sun-10am worship. Coffee to follow. SS for kids 10:30am. Aired at 8pm Fri. on Ch. 3 & 98. <b>Reformed</b> <b>RIVERVIEW REFORMED</b> , 17th St. & Burleigh, Rev. Rodney Veld-huizen, pastor. 665-9204. SUN. 9:30am Worship, 10:15am SS. WED. Youth group & adult choir. <b>Seventh-Day</b> <b>SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST</b> , 722 Locust St., Yankton, 665-1032. SAT. 9:30am Sabbath School, 11am Worship. 665-4496, 665-4881. Pastor George Shaver Home phone (605)369-5496. <b>United Church</b> <b>CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST</b> , Newcastle, Neb., 303 Highway 12, Rev. Gary Kimm, pastor. SAT. 6PM Church school, 7PM Worship. Second THUR. 2PM Ladies Aid. <b>FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST</b> , 301 W. Franklin, Hartington, NE. (402) 254-6563 or 664-5310. Rev. Gary Kimm, pastor. SUN. 8:15am Church school, 9am Worship. <b>PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL UCC</b> , 103 S. Elm St., Coleridge, Neb., (402) 283-4824 or 664-5310. Rev. Gary Kimm, pastor. SUN. 9:30am Church School, 10:30am Worship. <b>UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST</b> , (Congregational) 210 West 5th St., Yankton. (605)665-7320. Rev. Joe Schulte, Pastor. SUN-10am Worship, 11am-Fellowship, 11:05am Church Schl. Nursery Provided. <b>UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST</b> , Crofton, Neb., 412 W. Main St., (402)388-4124, Pastor Les Parmenter. SUN. 10:00am Worship.	<b>FIRST UNITED METHODIST</b> , Yankton. Rev. Ron Johnson Pastor. 665-2991. Sunday, Contemporary Worship 9:00; Trad. 10:30. Childcare 8:45-11:45. 8:30 UM Hour, KYNT. <b>GAYVILLE-VOLIN UNITED METHOD-ODIST</b> , Brook McBride, pastor. 624-2179. 9am Worship Service. 10:00am Sunday School. <b>WAKONDA, IRENE, VIBORG, UNITED METHODIST</b> , Pastor Mark Gronseth. SUN. 8:30am Worship at Wakonda; 9:45am Worship at Irene; 11am Worship at Viborg. <b>KYNT 1450 AM Radio</b> <b>KYNT 1450 AM Radio</b> SAT. 10:30am "Saturday Morning Live." SUN. 8:30am United Methodist Hour. 9:05am "God's Good News." 9:30am St. John's Lutheran Church <b>WNAX 570 AM Radio</b> <b>WNAX 570 AM Radio</b> . Lutheran Shows-6:30am, 8am, 11am. Wings of Healing-7:30am. Words of Hope 8:30am. Prop. Ref. Church-8:45am. Voice of Prov. 9:30am. Hr. of Hope 10am.ChristianCrusaders-10:30am. <b>MIX 106 FM Radio</b> <b>CLASSIC HITS 106 KVHT FM</b> Radio SUN.-THUR. 10:05PM "Family Radio Rosary" with Bishop Robert Carlson. <b>ESPN Radio 1570</b> <b>ESPN RADIO 1570</b> SUN. 10:30AM Trinity Lutheran Church, Vermillion, worship. <b>Knology</b> <b>KNOLGY</b> . MON. 6:30pm St. John's Lutheran; 7:30pm Calvary Baptist. TUE. 6:30pm Trinity Lutheran. WED. 6:30pm Antioch Baptist; 7:30pm Grace Bible. THUR. 8pm Assembly of God. FRI. 7pm United Church of Christ; 8pm Peace Presbyterian.

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