

## Considering Healing of the Body, Mind & Spirit

*Healing is defined as the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again.*

The population of the United States is growing older. The median age has increased from 29.5 years in 1960 to 37.2 years in 2010. Since the year 2011 there are 10,000 Americans turning age 65 each day, and this pace is expected to continue until the year 2030 (1).

Heart disease, cancer and respiratory disease are the top three causes illness and death reported by the CDC (2). What this means is more of us will live longer, and experience the physical effects of these afflictions as we age. Consider the impact this will have on our society, our communities and our churches.

The mental health of our population is equally important. As reported by the National Alliance on Mental Illness one in five Americans experience mental illness in a year, one in 25 live with serious mental illness, and one-half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14 while three-fourths by 24 years of age (3).

Anxiety and depression are the top two prevalent mental illnesses reported in the United States. Mental health and addiction are often co-occurring. News of the opioid epidemic is all around us, with the greatest use among those 16-34 years old (4). Self-medication and attempts to deal with difficulties crosses all socioeconomic classes, leading to more than 52,000 annual overdoses per year (5) which is more than the 40,000 annual highway traffic deaths (6).

Healing the body and mind is only two thirds of the person. The spirit must also be recognized and treated. Several studies identify that the spiritual needs of those with terminal illnesses are going unmet. We must consider those among us who face these circumstances. Building relationships and open communication give opportunities to establish realistic goals for patients. While the physical body may not be on a healing journey, the spiritual journey may not be complete. Being open to discussion of spiritual healing can provide tremendous relief to those with serious intractable conditions (7).

As we all mark our time, and move through life, we know not when our final day arrives. We trust in God, that we are here today and tomorrow is a gift. We thank God for dwelling within us daily.

We look to the example of St. Panteleimon, who being “trained as a physician – dedicated his life to the suffering, sick, unfortunate, and needy...without charge, healing in the name of Jesus Christ” (8).

As Christians, we are called to consider the physically limited.

- How might we be available to those around us enduring physical challenges?
- How might we be prepared to offer assistance to those in need of urgent care?
- How might we assist others in our communities and neighborhoods in times of crisis?

As Christians, we are called to consider those suffering in mind.

- How might we extend hope to the depressed?
- How might we share peace with the anxious?
- How might we display caring for the addicted?

As Christians, we are called to consider the spiritually poor.

- How might we encourage reconciliation?
- How might we support forgiveness and healing?
- How might we enable peace in times of uncertainty?

Thank God for the example of St. Panteleimon, and the hope for healing of body, mind and spirit!

Scott M. Newton, DNP, RN, MHA  
Nineteenth Annual Healthcare Program  
St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
Carmichaels, Pennsylvania  
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