

President Jerome Morasko, Avita Health  
President Jean Halpin, Ohio Health  
Executive Director Pam Crank, Richland Pregnancy Services  
Health Commissioner Martin Tremmel, Richland Public Health  
Health Commissioner Dr. Ajay Chawla, Shelby Health Department  
CEO Jared Pollick, Third Street Clinic

November 25, 2016

## **RE: Noteworthy case study regarding disease prevention**

Dear Health Care Stakeholder,

Thank you for your unwavering service to our community. Despite skyrocketing health care costs and an aging populace, Richland County is alive and kicking!

**In light of the recent National Family Health History Day which took place on Thursday, November 24th, we pastors wanted to bring to your attention a meaningful case study pertaining to disease prevention that was reported in Spring of 2016. This twenty-year study conducted by Harvard University concluded that there is an effective way to prevent disease: *attending a religious service.***

According to the senior author of the study, Mr. Tyler VanderWeele, professor of epidemiology at Harvard Chan School:

*“Our results suggest that there may be something important about religious service attendance beyond solitary spirituality. Part of the benefit seems to be that attending religious services increases social support, discourages smoking, decreases depression, and helps people develop a more optimistic or hopeful outlook on life.”*

The researchers looked at data from 1992-2012 of 74,534 women, mainly with Bible-based backgrounds, who participated in the Nurses' Health Study. The women answered questionnaires about their diet, lifestyle, and health every two years, and about their religious service attendance every four years. The study found women who attended religious services once per week or more had decreased risk of both cardiovascular mortality (27%) and cancer mortality (21%).

The study was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Health and also included lead author Shanshan Li, postdoctoral researcher in epidemiology, Meir Stampfer, professor of epidemiology and nutrition; and David R. Williams, Florence Sprague Norman, and Laura Smart Norman, Professors of Public Health.

**As pastors of twenty-seven local congregations, we agree there is something that can be said about the connection between spirituality and health.** Without a doubt spiritual issues like anger, unforgiveness, and anxiety to name a few, can manifest into medical realities like suicide, depression, ulcers, and hypertension. Interestingly, the Bible documents at least thirty-one individual healing accounts performed by Christ.

While we believe healing is for today, we also believe that disease prevention is for today. Please prayerfully consider this case study and how this information may be applied. We have attached an article of this study for your reference.

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Your Servants in Christ,

Reverend Eric Byrom, Mansfield Grace Fellowship  
Reverend Ted Howard, Apostolic Holiness  
Reverend Les Farley, My Father's House  
Reverend Randy Raynes, Mansfield Fellowship Baptist  
Reverend El Akuchie, Richland Community Prayer Network  
Reverend James Streib, Fusion Church  
Reverend Darrin Thurber, Mansfield Seventh Day Adventist  
Reverend Jerry Laudermilk, Abundant Life Tabernacle  
Reverend William Crank, Cornerstone Free Will Baptist  
Reverend Brian Phillips, Stiving Road Freewill Baptist  
Reverend Chris Thomas, Diamond Hills Baptist  
Reverend John Wildman, Lexington Church of the Nazarene  
Reverend Mike Stine, Clear Fork Alliance  
Reverend DeWayne Smith, Main Street United Methodist  
Reverend Mike Workman, Caeserea Baptist  
Reverend Russell Stanford, All Believers' in Christ  
Reverend Robert Kurtz, Mansfield Baptist Temple  
Reverend Bruce Copley, Faith Chapel  
Reverend Doug Tackett, Taylortown Community  
Rabbi William Halbrook, Sar Shalom Messianic  
Reverend Henry Bradley, New Community Temple COG  
Reverend Sylvester Ginn, Hesed Agape Fellowship  
Reverend Patrick Bailey, North Bend Church of Brethren  
Reverend Gary Lambert, Belmont Ave. Community Church  
Reverend Les Vnasdale, Cornerstone Grace Brethren  
Reverend Dallas Waggle, Lucas Foursquare Gospel  
Reverend James Marshall, Ganges Community Church

“Frequent religious service attendance linked with decreased mortality risk among women,” May 16, 2016 press release by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 677 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, 617.495.1000, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/religious-service-attendance-womens-mortality-risk/>

11/02/2016 Frequent religious service attendance linked with decreased mortality risk among women | News | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

**News**  
Frequent religious service attendance linked with decreased mortality risk among women



For immediate release: Monday, May 16, 2016

Boston, MA – Women who attended religious services more than once per week were more than 30% less likely to die during a 16-year follow-up than women who never attended, according to a study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Frequent attendees also had significantly lower risk both from cardiovascular- and cancer-related mortality.

The study was published online May 16, 2016 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

“Our results suggest that there may be something important about religious service attendance beyond solitary spirituality,” said [Tyler VanderWeele](#), professor of epidemiology at Harvard Chan School and senior author of the study. “Part of the benefit seems to be that attending religious services increases social support, discourages [smoking](#), decreases [depression](#), and helps people develop a more optimistic or hopeful outlook on life.”

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/religious-service-attendance-womens-mortality-risk/>

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