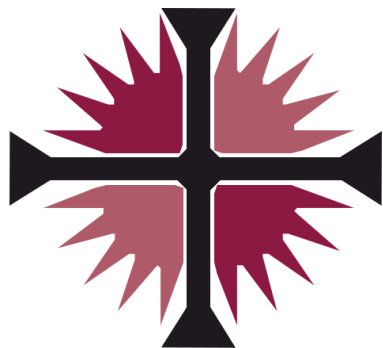




Partners in
HEALTH
and
WHOLENESS
AN INITIATIVE OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PHW Quarterly Newsletter: April 8, 2026

Dear {{FirstName or 'Friend'}},

As we enter the season of Eastertide—a time of rejoicing and celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus—we also acknowledge the tension of living amid deep uncertainty. From unpredictable weather and rising gas prices to ongoing conflict and “wars and rumors of war,” our world can feel unsettled. Yet through the power of resurrection, we are invited to hold space for grief while refusing to accept despair as final.

In this newsletter, we highlight how one of our Abundant Life faith communities is responding to unaddressed trauma, share resources to help those experiencing lingering effects adapt to the recent time change, and offer guidance to help congregations approach Mental Health Awareness Month with intention. At a time when so much around us encourages division, we also spotlight how one of our contractors is working to reduce mental health stigma within Spanish-speaking congregations.

Although registration has reached capacity, we look forward to continuing the conversation as we gather for our first Faith and Mental Health Summit of 2026, [*From Dust to Dust: Faith and Mental Health through Every Life Stage*](#).

Easter Blessings,
Rev. Dr. Arlecia Simmons
Associate Director, Eastern NC
Partners in Health and Wholeness

Mental Health
Awareness Month



May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

Each May, Mental Health Awareness month invites us to pay closer attention to the realities of mental and emotional wellbeing. For people of faith, this is not a separate concern from our spiritual lives, it is central to it. We believe in a God who created us as integrated beings, where mind, body, and spirit are inextricably connected. Behavioral health—how we think, feel, act, and connect with others—is essential to what it means to be healthy and whole. To tend to mental health, then, is to tend to the whole person. When faith communities choose to observe this month with intention, they step into their calling to become places of healing, honesty, and hope—communities that embody care in ways that are both deeply spiritual and profoundly practical.

Join the Conversation

- Preach a sermon that names mental health
- Include mental health themes in prayers and worship
- Share a testimony or story
- Add a brief “mental health moment” in worship or announcements
- Incorporate mental health content into newsletters or social media

Make Support Visible

- Create and share a mental health resource list
- Post crisis numbers (like 988) in visible spaces

Create Spaces of Care

- Plan a Mental Health Sunday
- Start a support group (e.g., caregivers, grief, youth, recovery)

Equip Your Community

- Host a workshop with a local mental health provider
- Offer a Mental Health First Aid training

Visit [NAMI](#) and [SAMHSA](#) for other Mental Health Awareness month resources

Mental Health Awareness Month is not just about a moment, it’s about momentum. Each step, no matter how small, helps shape a community where people are known, supported, and able to flourish.

Free Mental Health First Aid Trainings in N.C.

- St. Matthews UMC will host an [Adult Mental Health First Aid](#) training on Tuesday, May 26, at 202 Hope Mills Rd, Fayetteville, NC. To register for the day-long training, email mskipper@nccumc.org.
- Trillium Learning Resources offers three delivery options for Mental Health First Aid training in 46 counties. Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches adults how to assist young people experiencing a mental health challenge, and Adult Mental Health First Aid teaches Adults how to help adults

experiencing a mental health challenge. For more information on free trainings that can be presented to your congregations, contact www.TrilliumHealthResources.org

Upcoming Events



From Dust to Dust: A Faith and Mental Health Summit

Thursday, April 16, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Thornes Chapel Baptist Church

1624 Windsor Dr., Rocky Mount

Every stage of life carries its own joys, struggles, and needs and mental health is deeply intertwined with each phase. This summit is a gathering for those who believe caring for the mind, body, and spirit is not only necessary, but sacred.

We are excited to bring together clergy, lay leaders, mental health providers, community organizers, and those who care about mental health for a full day of learning, connection, and renewal. Hear from expert speakers discussing a range of topics from youth mental health and loneliness to menopause and dementia care. Attendees will gain practical tools, trauma-informed knowledge, and a renewed sense of energy to bring back to your communities to strengthen this work with greater depth and purpose.

We look forward to being together with those who have registered for a meaningful and restorative gathering. **Explore the schedule to see what's planned for the day.**

Event Details

HOW TO STAY *Regulated* IN A Dysregulated WORLD



ONLINE WEBINAR FEATURING

DR. SHERRONDA BANKS

Owner & Clinical Director
Intentional Steps Counseling Services

TUESDAY, MAY 5 | 1 - 2 PM

[How to Stay Regulated in a Dysregulated World](#)

Tuesday, May 5, 1 - 2 p.m.
Online

When the world feels chaotic and overwhelming, regulation becomes resistance and preservation becomes power.

Join Partners in Health and Wholeness for a webinar featuring speaker Dr. Sherronda Banks, DSW, LCSW, LISW-CP, therapist, speaker, and founder of Intentional Steps Counseling Services, PLLC, for an honest conversation about what it means to protect your peace in a dysregulated world. Drawing from her Radical Preservation™ framework and more than two decades of culturally responsive clinical work, Dr. Banks will offer a bold and innovative approach to sustainable well-being, one that centers rest, boundaries, identity, and intentional self-care.

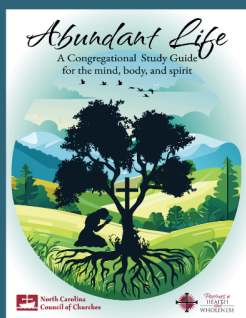
Register Now

Resource Spotlight

Abundant Life

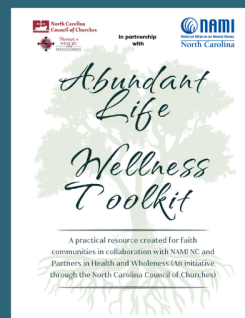
RESOURCES

Study Guide



Nurturing
MIND.
BODY.
SPIRIT.

Wellness Toolkit



Our Abundant Life [Study Guide](#) and [Wellness Toolkit](#) work together to help congregations embrace a holistic approach of well-being, one that is grounded in faith and expressed through action. The Study Guide invites communities into reflection, scripture, and meaningful conversation around mental, physical, and spiritual health, while the Wellness Toolkit builds on that foundation with practical strategies and tools to foster wellness, resilience, and holistic care in their communities. Together, they equip faith communities to build environments where mental health is honored, connection is deepened, and abundant life can truly flourish.

More to Explore



Rev. Melanie Melton

Abundant Life spotlight



National Minority Health Month - Abundant Life Spotlight

Although April is designated National Minority Health Month (NMHM), PHW is dedicated year-round to advocating for health and wellness in diverse congregations across the state. Congregations like Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church in Aulander, N.C., are among the congregations partnering with us to address minority health through our Abundant Life initiative.

Although snow delayed a training on Jan. 31, 2026, Mount Hermon didn't let a snow day deter its efforts to bring mental health training to its members and participants from the

West Roanoke Missionary Baptist Association. Pastor Alma O. Lucas and Mount Hebron partnered with licensed clinician Melanie Melton, M.A., LMFT, Th.M., M.Div., to curate two Winter 2026 mental health training sessions to educate faith leaders and community members on understanding trauma. Meton, who is also an ordained minister, shared why such Abundant Life initiative events matter:

"Becoming a trauma-informed congregation is imperative. It shatters stigma and normalizes the lived experiences of the Body of Christ. To be *koinonia*—as seen in the book of Acts—means bringing our whole selves to the community. This includes our grief, trauma, and mental health struggles. By integrating faith, along with welcoming licensed clinicians alongside our ministry, we allow the church to support one another in ways that are safe, soft, and intentional."

"When we find the courage to share our traumatic experiences, loss, pains, and testimonies in a safe trauma-informed space, the church becomes a 'healthy hospital.' We realize we are more alike than different. In this space, we ensure no one walks alone, fostering a community where the healing and wellness afforded to us through Jesus becomes a shared reality."



How to Get Adjusted to Daylight Saving Time

A successful time change transition involves shifting routines incrementally.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Make gradual sleep adjustments. Instead of making a one-hour change overnight, start several days before the official time change.
 - Manage your light and environment. Light can play a powerful role in regulating circadian rhythm. Some ways of doing this include: Embrace the morning sun; Dim the lights in the evening; Ensure the bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet; Limit blue light before bed by avoiding phone screens and televisions.
 - Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the afternoon and evening.
-



Fiorella Horna

COLLABORATOR *spotlight*

Collaborator Spotlight: Fiorella Horna

PHW has had the great privilege and joy of partnering with Fiorella Horna, an experienced and passionate public health worker and advocate. Fiorella has served alongside the PHW team as a liaison to four Spanish-speaking churches in North Carolina that were accepted into the Abundant Life cohort, supporting them in prioritizing mental and behavioral health more deeply within their local contexts.

Through her expertise and care, Fiorella has journeyed with these four faith communities, ensuring language access and cultural competency as they assessed their strengths and needs and developed initiatives to support the mental health and healing of their surrounding communities. She also helped facilitate partnerships among these churches, creating space for congregations to identify shared themes and envision creative, collective solutions as Spanish-speaking faith communities.

We are so grateful for Fiorella's time, her joy, and her dedication to ensuring that local Spanish-speaking faith communities have access to care and support—particularly in mental and behavioral health.

Events from Our Friends

Faith and Harm Reduction Workshop

Friday, May 8, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

John Calvin Presbyterian Church

1620 Brenner Avenue, Salisbury

Join Partners in Health and Wholeness alongside Rowan County Public Health H.O.P.E. 4 Rowan in Salisbury at John Calvin Presbyterian Church for a faith and harm reduction workshop. During this workshop, participants will learn about harm reduction principles, practical ways to support individuals and families affected by substance use, and how spiritually grounded approaches can promote healing, dignity, and hope. The evening will include an inspirational message, shared learning, and meaningful conversations across sectors of the community. [Register here.](#)

Request a Presentation: Understanding Dementia with Lewy Bodies

Invite Erin C. Campbell, MS, MSc to your church or community group for a presentation on Dementia Basics: An Introduction to Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB). Erin, who cared for her mother until her death from DLB, is now pursuing a Neuroscience PhD and works to educate patients, caregivers, and the public about Lewy body dementias. Her session covers the different types of Lewy body disease, key symptoms and diagnostic criteria, available resources for support, and current treatments and clinical trials, providing practical, compassionate guidance for anyone affected or interested in understanding this complex condition. Email campbellwritingandediting@gmail.com to request a presentation.

Submit an Event

Hosting a mental health event in North Carolina that you'd like to share with others?

Submit it for consideration in our quarterly newsletter by [clicking here](#).

Reach Out to Us!

Want to learn more or get involved? Reach out to our Partners in Health & Wholeness team. We'd love to connect, answer your questions, and explore ways to support your work in faith, mental health, and well-being.

- Carrilea Hall, Senior Associate Director, Western NC | carrilea@ncchurches.org
- Arlecia Simmons, Associate Director, Eastern NC | arlecia@ncchurches.org
- Meredith Rawls, Northeast Regional Coordinator | meredith@ncchurches.org
- Donna Parks Hill, Community Health Associate Director | donna@ncchurches.org

For questions about Opioid Workshops or work in harm reduction, contact Donna Parks Hill.

{{Disclaimer}}

NC Council of Churches
27 Horne Street
Raleigh, NC 27607
United States

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please
(Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).