



Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More 2017 North Carolina Annual Report



About Faithful Families

Faith-based organizations offer particular resources to help implement and sustain community-level changes that can have long-term impact, particularly in communities affected by health disparities or lacking access to crucial public health resources. Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More (Faithful Families) is a practice-tested health promotion intervention that promotes healthy eating and physical activity in communities of faith through a nine-lesson curriculum. Additionally, Faithful Families facilitators work with each faith community to help them adopt environmental supports for healthy eating and physical activity.

In North Carolina, Faithful Families is co-led by health educators from either NC Cooperative Extension (EFNEP Program Associates or Family and Consumer Science Agents) and/or health department staff and trained lay leaders (non-clergy members) in the congregation. Lay leaders from the faith community bring the spiritual elements, through discussion questions and activity prompts, into each lesson. Much of the work of Faithful Families has focused on African-American churches. However the program materials have been translated into Spanish and have been piloted with successful intervention within a large mosque that represents numerous ethnic and racial minorities. The program is open to any religious tradition, but facilitators are encouraged to focus on communities that experience the greatest disparities in health, including minority and low-income communities.

The program was developed in 2007 and is a partnership between the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NCDPH) and North Carolina State University Extension. In addition to this state level partnership, the program offers a unique opportunity for partnership at the local level between health departments and local extension offices. In addition to being implemented in North Carolina, Faithful Families has been adopted as a recommended program in the SNAP-Ed Connection and has been implemented by twenty other states.

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Faithful Families has been certified as a practice-tested intervention by the Center for Training and Research Translation at UNC–Chapel Hill. Additionally, Faithful Families was designated as the Signature Project for the SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Regional Center of Excellence–Southern Region, leading to its adoption in Florida, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Faithful Families was also recognized nationally by an invitation to a *Let's Move* Faith and Community Partners Meeting at the White House on March 7, 2013. Evaluation tools include pre-and post-participant surveys and a faith community assessment that measures changes in the faith community environment at the beginning and end of the year of implementation.

Faithful Families includes a curriculum with nine-weeks of nutrition and physical activity educational classes for adults. Each lesson includes scripted social media prompts to help facilitators encourage recruitment, retention, and engagement. To facilitate the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental changes, there is also a Planning Guide for Faithful Families, which includes step-by-step guidance to create a health committee and implement and evaluate community-wide changes. Also, farmers' market and grocery store tour guides have been created to complement the nine-lesson series. In 2017, Faithful Families Chronic Disease Lessons were written and launched as an additional four-lesson series for the program, focusing on heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and pre-diabetes.



Through our partnership with NCDPH's CDC-funded Obesity, Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Stroke Prevention (ODHDSP) project, we have tracked the implementation of policy, systems, and environmental changes in five regions of North Carolina through Faithful Families. Since 2012, **41** faith communities have participated in Faithful Families through this partnership. Of those:

41% (17 of 41) faith communities have implemented nutrition and beverage standards (ex: serve water, healthy food policies) affecting 2,216 individuals.





44% (18 of 41) faith communities now promote physical activity through signage, policies and shared use/joint use agreements affecting 2,508 individuals.

Additionally, in 2017, Faithful Families led to **16** policy and environmental changes in faith communities across North Carolina. These include changes such as establishing policies to serve water at all events, re-paving the parking lot to serve as a walking track, establishing guidelines that all meals offered at the faith community must be healthy, establishing physical activity breaks for all meetings, opening up spaces for physical activity on faith community grounds for community usage ("shared use"), and establishing community gardens.

Improving Health

In North Carolina, Faithful Families is implemented through local partnerships, led this reporting period by NC Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Science Agents and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Assistants along with local health department staff. Combined, these facilitators have worked with **197** people. **73%** of participants were African-American, **24%** of participants were white, and the average age of participants was **61**.

Faithful Families Makes a Real Difference

-  **78%** of participants now practice better **food resource management**.
-  **93%** of participants improved **dietary intake**.
-  **49%** of participants have improved their **daily physical activity**.
-  **67%** of participants have improved their **food safety practices**.

Site Visits with Faithful Families

Faithful Families state staff conducted site visits in ten counties across North Carolina and interviewed fourteen participants, Lay Leaders, facilitators, and regional coordinators to gather key insights from their program experience. We found that participation in Faithful Families is driven by both personal and community need for chronic disease prevention efforts. Our interviewees voiced concerns about the high prevalence of preventable health conditions in their communities and were anxious to help each other lead healthier lives. Faithful Families was the right fit for their needs because it gave them the opportunity to offer resources and support in their particular faith setting, a place where they felt safe to openly share their personal health challenges. It was also the setting where they could receive essential support from fellow members, faith leaders, and Lay Leaders to help sustain healthy lifestyle changes.

The benefits of participating in the program's nine-lesson curriculum were evident and appreciated by participants, Lay Leaders, and facilitators. Many interviewees shared that the program gave them the opportunity to learn and practice new skills that they could easily incorporate into

their daily routine. They also praised program facilitators for their body of knowledge, openness to share information and resources, and their attentiveness to the community's needs, such as adapting recipes for dietary needs. Lay Leaders and participants were thankful for the community-level changes that resulted from the program, such as the congregation providing less fried foods while offering more baked foods and fresh vegetables, always having water available, offering unsweetened beverages at events, and implementing blood pressure monitoring stations for all members to use. In addition to supporting the health of their congregation, participation in Faithful Families has given faith communities the opportunity to reach beyond their walls to support the health of the broader community. The majority of faith communities have mapped out walking trails around their facility for the community to use, and they have installed signage to encourage physical activity and trail use. One faith community also received a mini-grant to create a community garden, from which they donated fresh produce to local families and non-profit organizations.

Moving More with Bike Fixtations

Faithful Families, with support from NCDPH, awarded Bike Fixtations to 15 faith communities that demonstrated a compelling commitment to increase physical activity in their surrounding community. Bike Fixtations (Fixtations) are outdoor self-service bike repair stations that can be used to inflate tires or to repair a flat. The faith communities that received an award installed the Fixtation in areas that were frequented by community members and near safe areas for physical activity, such as walking and biking trails, playgrounds, and community parks. Bethany United Methodist Church in Albemarle County chose to install the Fixtation directly across from a gas station, which is near a popular biking trail and is also used as a pit stop for cyclists traveling from other cities. For the faith communities that received the award, the Fixtation has become an asset not only for their congregation but also for their broader community. Many shared that their community members appreciated being able to fill their tires and do minor repairs on their own at no cost. In Columbus County, New Hope Baptist Church shared that community members used the Fixtation to safely participate in local community biking events. In Durham County, Oak Church shared that in addition to cyclists, families pushing strollers have also stopped to inflate their tires, and this has encouraged more families to frequent that area.

In addition to offering cyclists a simple way to repair their equipment, the Fixtation has helped communities start conversations about the importance of physical activity and developing walkable environments. The Southside

Community Church in Forsyth County, Messiah United Methodist Church in Catawba County, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Pasquotank County have held community events to promote the benefits of cycling to youth and provide workshops on how to use the Fixtation to properly maintain bicycles and scooters. Messiah United Methodist Church has also invited local law enforcement and bike shop owners to use the Fixtation as a tool to demonstrate bike safety and basic repair skills. For Grier Heights Presbyterian Church in Mecklenburg County, the Fixtation has become the main focus of the community's newly developed health and wellness program, which includes a new mobile 'Earn-a-Bike' program and other cycling-related services. Their Fixtation was installed near a busy intersection and has attracted interest and questions from the community. The Fixtation has brought people together around common goals to revitalize the community and to encourage each other to live healthier together. For the faith communities that received a Fixtation, they are excited to see how this resource will continue to positively impact their community. By continuing to share the Fixtation during events, installing signage, and in various forms of media and communication, they will continue to encourage their community to use this tool as a catalyst for healthy changes.



www.pedbikemages.org/Dan Burden



Local Successes

The goal of Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More is to support healthy eating and physical activity by partnering with communities of faith. Numbers don't tell the whole story. Faithful Families facilitators and participants tell how Faithful Families has helped faith communities to improve their overall health by eating smart and moving more.

Edgecombe County

In Edgecombe County, six faith communities partnered with the Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC) to implement the Faithful Families program. Through this partnership, members from St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church, Leggett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, St. Mark AME Church, St. Augusta Free Will Baptist Church, and St. James Baptist Church have all completed the curriculum. Participants from the congregations shared that they have started to cook healthier meals at home, drink more water throughout the day, and incorporate walking into their daily routine. The DEPC Communities Coordinator and Shayla Hayes, Region 9 Worksite/Faith Coordinator from the Obesity, Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke Project (ODHDSP) are also working with each congregation to implement policy and environmental changes that support healthy eating, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention. Each faith community has adopted healthy food and physical activity policies for their congregation. Through the ODHDSP project, they have also received healthy cooking kits to help them cook and serve healthy meals during church events. Several churches plan to have their church grounds measured for walking trails and will install signage to promote the trails to the broader community. St. James Missionary Baptist Church and Leggett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church have also established health observance Sundays, which gives them the opportunity to discuss various health-related topics with their congregation once a month during Sunday worship service. Each faith community is working to establish or enhance their health ministries to continue these health promotion efforts.

Wilkes County

Danner's Chapel Church in Wilkes County partnered with Katie Wagoner, Faithful Families Facilitator from the Health Foundation of Wilkes, to implement Faithful Families. In addition to members from the congregation, several of the pastor's co-workers attended nine classes. Despite initial hesitation from some participants, the group soon became engaged in asking questions about the lesson materials and participating in group discussions. During the *Making Smart Drink Choices* lesson, Katie led the class in an activity to examine the amount of sugar in popular beverages. Participants passed around beverage bottles that contained the amount of sugar used in that particular drink. After seeing how much sugar was being consumed from beverages, the pastor challenged his congregation and co-workers to take small steps to decrease the amount of sugar in their diet, starting with skipping adding sugar to their morning coffee. Within one month, the pastor's co-workers had all stopped adding sugar to their coffee. Five months later, the pastor and several members of the congregation had given up foods and beverages with added sugars.

Macon County

While participating in the Diabetes Prevention Program at East Franklin Baptist Church in Macon County, a member of the congregation heard about Faithful Families and thought it would be the perfect program to help her congregation continue their healthy living journey. With support from two Lay Leaders from the congregation, Lyndsey Henderson, the Community Health Promotions Coordinator at the Macon County Public Health, began facilitating the nine-lesson curriculum in August 2017. The participants were mostly older adults who were also concerned about preventing and managing chronic disease conditions. The Lay Leaders took great care in modifying physical activity breaks and recipes to accommodate the group's needs. For instance, they adapted recipes to contain no salt, instead using homemade spice blends. Twelve participants regularly attended the classes, and they were excited to improve their healthy by trying new recipes and incorporating walking into their daily routine. For instance, participants shared that they were getting more exercise by making sure to stand up and take a walk while talking on the phone. East Franklin Baptist Church has also made changes to support their community's health, such as making sure that bottled water is always available in their refrigerator and providing healthy food choices for community events. Moving forward, the church will be working to install walking signage around the facility to encourage their community to move more.



Johnston County

Pastor Joey Yow from Four Oaks United Methodist Church in Johnston County was interested in building congregational interest in healthy eating and active living. With that in mind, he invited Kimetha Fulwood, Health Educator with the Johnston County Public Health Department to implement Faithful Families, and the congregation responded enthusiastically about participating in the program. Participants shared that the curriculum encouraged them to make some lifestyle changes, such as planning healthier meals ahead of time, choosing more nutritious foods, and engaging in more daily physical activity. By the end of the nine-lesson curriculum, participants were thinking about changes that their congregation could make to help their community to live healthier. Since the conclusion of the program, the congregation has provided members with resources on chronic disease prevention, installed exercise equipment that could be used by all church members, and worked with the town of Four Oaks to establish a walking route that connects the church to downtown. The church has also established policies to offer water, fruits, and vegetables at all church events.





Partnership and Training

On December 13–14, 2017, we held the first in-person Faithful Families National Training in Raleigh, NC for our national partners. Five new partnering states joined the Faithful Families national partnership, and we had representatives from thirteen states across the U.S. The training started with activities that helped participants to think about the strengths and assets that their organizations or programs bring to work with faith communities. Drawing on these strengths, they reflected on some of the challenges they might face in working with religious organizations and brainstormed how their assets could inform or help them to overcome those challenges. We heard from partners who have implemented Faithful Families in North Carolina, Illinois, and Florida, including Shanicka Porter with Mount Peace Baptist Church in Raleigh, Lacey Corrick, with Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) at the University of Florida, and Reverend James Kenady, with the University of Illinois at Chicago's Partnership for Health Promotion. Dr. Jason Bocarro and Dr. Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, both of NC State, shared success stories and ideas about how faith communities could promote access to healthy foods and places to be active, troubleshooting with participants about some potential roadblocks to this work. A highlight of the training was hearing Dr. Gary

Gunderson discuss the "leading causes of life," encouraging the participants to think about how they could promote life, health, flourishing, and assets—rather than focusing on communities and families as diseases, problems, or "issues" to solve. The talk was a fitting way to end our training, as we spent two days talking with participants about how this work is about the process of building relationships, establishing trust, understanding assets, and partnership with communities of faith. To continue to support new national partners, the Faithful Families team offers yearly in-person trainings, quarterly national calls, quarterly webinars, and quarterly newsletters.



For more information visit FaithfulFamiliesESMM.org

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