

Take Time for the Health Assessment: \$150!

By Pr. Larry Strenge, Director for Evangelical Mission

If you are a part of the ELCA Board of Pensions' (BOP) health care plan (HCP), it is time to take the 20-minute questionnaire called the "Mayo Clinic's Health Assessment", or simply the Health Assessment (HA). You'll find the HA on the Embody Health website: www20.mayoclinicembodyhealth.com/login/index.cfm?redirect=1

If you have been part of the BOP's HCP for the past few years, you know there are incentives to take the HA: **health and money!** (If you are not aware of the HA and what it can do for you and our synod, please read on.)

Since it is after Christmas and many of us have either pounds to shed or bills to pay – or church budgets that are looking for a few more dollars in 2011 – I'm going to nudge you...well, ok, urge you...to take the HA for these two reasons: 1) your health and 2) for some extra money in your own pocket or your congregation/ministry setting pocket. Here's why I'm so excited this year...

Let's start with the money incentive: **Take the HA and you receive \$150.** Simple as that. \$150. Right now. No waiting. This is not a trick! You really do receive \$150 in wellness dollars right now! Real dollars to pay for any health care need you have in 2011. Doctor bills, prescription costs, anything with a medical bill attached to it. You don't have to do anything except go through the questions while you sit in front of your computer screen for 15-20 minutes (average time to take the HA if you already have an account at Embody Health) or 30 minutes for new registers. Have your HCP card with you when you go to the website. When you are finished, you will have \$150 in your wellness account. (If you have a spouse on the HCP, s/he receives \$150 when s/he finishes, i.e. total \$300). Please note: you do not need any numbers from your doctor to take the HA. I'll say more below under health incentive.

There is more money incentive. Once you take the HA, you start toward a goal of 300 points in your Embody Health account. When you reach that 300 points, you receive ANOTHER \$300! Total \$450! (Again, if you have a spouse on the HCP, that's \$900 total.) Worth it? I hope you think so. ☺ I'll let you examine the best way for you to get the other 300 points. There are LOTS of ways. The "Go Challenge" is one way. But that gets into the health incentive. Back to money!

For your ministry setting – congregation or partner in ministry location (e.g., Gustavus Adolphus, Bible camps) – your HCP costs 2% less when we have 65% of our rostered leaders, spouses, and others who are on the HCP take the HA! That's right, 2% discount across the entire SW MN Synod! Last year that saved us more than \$53,000 at the ministry setting level! Your local ministry setting saved 2%! Real money for more mission and ministry! Let's get to that 65% ASAP! (Our goal is to be the first synod to make it! Northern Wisconsin has put on a BIG push...let's be #1!)

This year the BOP has added another incentive! When we have 65% completion of the HCP, the SW MN Synod receives a 1% check. That is estimated to be about \$26,500! The \$\$\$ is for a Wellness Ministry. We'll find LOTS of ways to use the \$26,000 to promote better health among our leaders.

Enough about the money incentive. Let's examine briefly the health incentive. For your health, the HA is a great tool. It will enter you into a world of healthy ideas. And, if your health is anywhere from healthy to needing some help, this is a tool to help you. I have heard numerous stories of persons who discovered something that needed treatment because these persons took the HA. The BOP will be publishing those stories more and more. I'd like to believe that, through the "Go Challenge" or one of the other activities you do to earn the 300 points (\$300...see above), health will be improved and life will be more enjoyable as we serve in God's Kin-dom. (see Eph 2:10)

To take the HA you don't need to have your numbers (cholesterol, blood pressure) but I'd encourage you to get them. You can put estimates in the HA and you will be able to finish in 20 minutes. But you may want to schedule a doctor's appointment and have an exam and a blood test (lipid test gives you all you need).

So, please, take the HA. Do it today or make an appointment on your calendar for health and money. By the time you read this I hope to have started getting us to the 65%! Please join me and your sisters and brothers as we serve the Gospel.

If you have any questions about the HA, please contact me at larry.strenge@elca.org or Sara Johnson at sara.johnson@swmnelca.org and we'll try to help you find answers to HA questions.