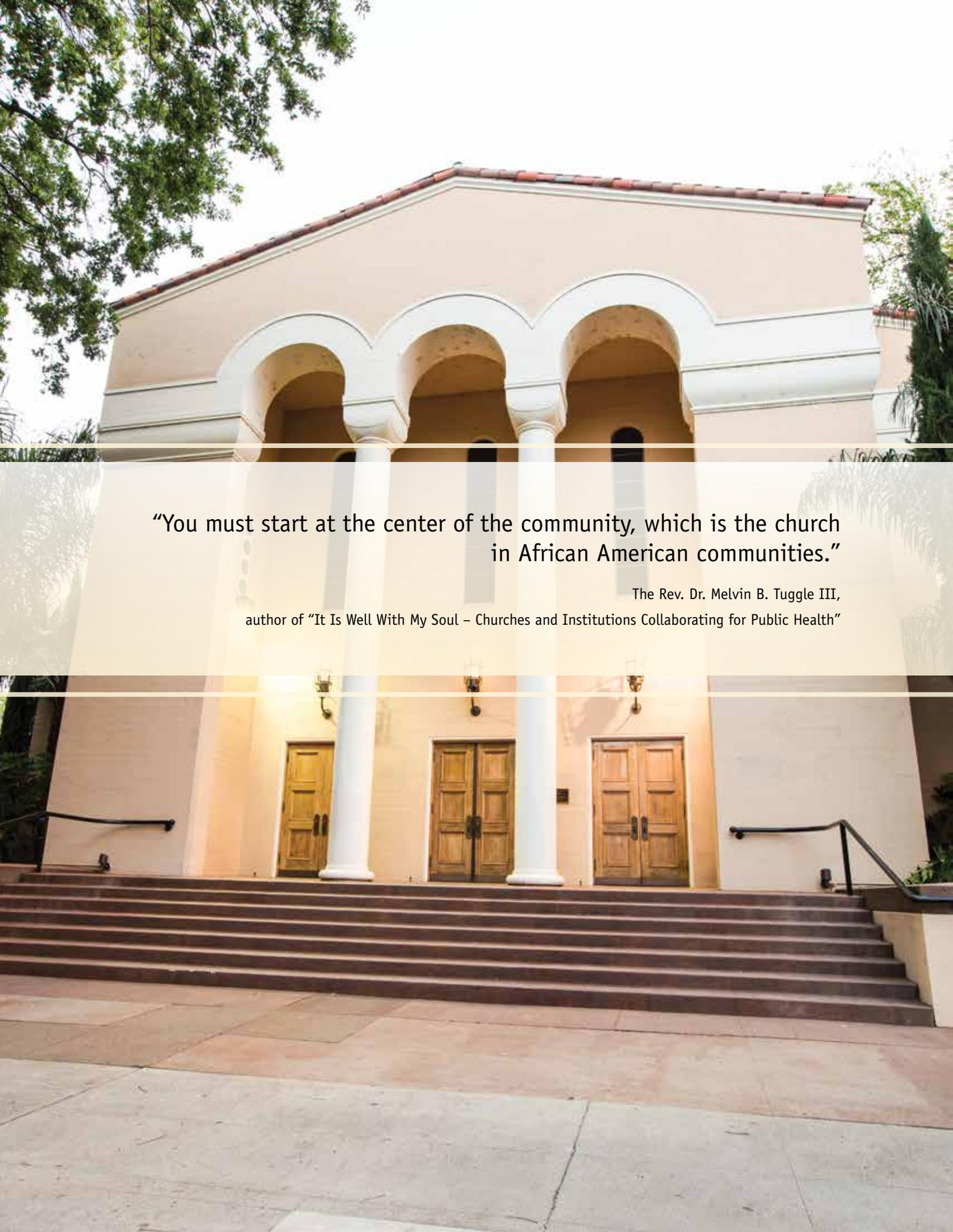


# Body & Soul

A Celebration of Healthy Eating & Living



A GUIDE FOR YOUR CHURCH



“You must start at the center of the community, which is the church  
in African American communities.”

The Rev. Dr. Melvin B. Tuggle III,  
author of “It Is Well With My Soul – Churches and Institutions Collaborating for Public Health”

# Introduction

## **PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE**

Body & Soul is an evidence-based health and wellness program developed for African American churches. The program empowers church members to eat a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables every day for better health. Churches that embrace Body & Soul help their members take care of their bodies as well as their spirits. Body & Soul works by combining:

- Pastoral leadership
- Educational activities
- A church environment that supports healthy eating
- Peer counseling

This guide explains how to run the program in your church. It tells how to create a Body & Soul program to fit your congregation. It also has tools and handouts to get started, and resources for more information.

## **WHY BODY & SOUL — THE POWER OF PREVENTION**

African Americans are at higher risk for many serious and often fatal diseases. These include high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. African Americans are also more likely to suffer serious health problems and die from these diseases.

What can you do to lower your risk for disease?

A diet rich in fruits and vegetables promotes good health and lowers the risk for these illnesses. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables may be one of the easiest things you can do to improve your health.

## **THE BENEFITS OF BODY & SOUL TO YOUR CHURCH**

Body & Soul churches embrace and celebrate good health through healthy eating. Your congregation will:

- Learn how health and spirituality are connected.
- Feel empowered to take charge of their health.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables every day.
- Live healthier in other ways, such as eating less fat and getting more physical activity.
- Gain access to vital health information at the church.

For more than 10 years, African American churches around the country have used this program. They have generously shared their ideas, tips, and success stories. Their experiences have helped other churches start strong programs. Once Body & Soul is thriving in your church, please share what you learned with other churches.

# Body & Soul: the four pillars

“The African American community is in crisis. We are at the top of the charts for chronic disease.”

Body & Soul Church Coordinator, California

A Body & Soul program is made up of four parts. We call these parts “pillars” because they are like the pillars of a church. Just as a church building needs support on all four sides, a successful Body & Soul program needs all four of its “pillars” to be active and strong. **All four pillars must be in place to build an effective Body & Soul program.**

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF BODY & SOUL ARE:



### 1. A pastor who is committed and involved

As the church’s spiritual and organizational leader, the pastor’s support of the program is vital. The more actively involved the pastor is, the better.



### 2. Church activities that promote healthy eating

Church gatherings and workshops teach both information and skills that encourage a healthy diet. A Body & Soul Planning Team plans and carries out the program’s activities.



### 3. A church environment that promotes healthy eating

It is important to surround the congregation with healthy choices at meals and other church functions. This shows church members how simple it is to make eating more fruits and vegetables part of their daily lives.



### 4. Peer counseling that motivates church members to eat a healthy diet

One-on-one support helps church members take more control over their health.

## BRINGING BODY & SOUL TO YOUR CHURCH

This section tells how to build your Body & Soul program around the program's four "pillars." It goes on to offer tips for customizing Body & Soul to your congregation. And, finally, it offers ideas on how to keep your Body & Soul program running well over time.

### PILLAR ONE:

## A pastor who is committed & involved

Be sure to get the pastor's support up front. As the leader of the church, the pastor's support sends a clear message to the congregation. It shows that the program is in keeping with the mission of the church. And it helps church members see the link between physical health and spiritual well being. The pastor can:

- Launch the Body & Soul program at a kick-off event. Sign "The Church's Commitment to Good Health" pledge. Affirm the pledge before the congregation. (A sample pledge is included in Appendix B.)
- Be a role model for the congregation by eating more fruits and vegetables every day.

The first step in starting Body & Soul is getting the pastor's blessing for the program. Plan how the pastor will be involved. Confirm activities early because pastors' schedules fill up quickly. The pastor should appoint the Program Coordinator. He or she may also make suggestions about who should be on the Planning Team. The more the pastor is involved the better.

- Deliver inspirational messages about the link between good health and spirituality. Include Bible verses that refer to healthy eating and living in sermons, church bulletins, and newsletters.
- Ask that more fruits and vegetables be served at church functions to help create a healthy church setting.
- Start a "Body & Soul Sunday" where the church focuses on health once a month.
- Recognize the Body & Soul Planning Team.
- Praise the church members who have improved their eating habits.

