



# Bridging the Gap: Public Health & Faith



*The National Brain Health Center for African-Americans is a program of The Balm In Gilead*

*Funded By A Cooperative Agreement Of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Brain Initiative*



# Overview

- History & Mission of The Balm In Gilead
- National Brain Health Center for African Americans
- Health & Our Faith
- A Faith-approach to Caregiving
- Memory Sunday - Mobilizing the Faith Community to Address Alzheimer's and Caregiving



# History & Mission of The Balm In Gilead

Celebrating 28 years of service, the mission of The Balm In Gilead is to prevent diseases and to improve the health status of people of the African Diaspora by providing support to faith and other institutions in areas of program design, implementation and evaluation which strengthens their capacity to deliver programs and services that contribute to the elimination of health disparities

# The National Brain Health Center for African Americans



## OBJECTIVES #1

Raise awareness of the issues affecting cognitive health among African Americans *via* the capacity development of African Americans congregations to become an integral partner in prevention, disease management, caregiving and engagement in clinical studies





# The National Brain Health Center for African Americans

## OBJECTIVES #2

Train health professionals regarding issues affecting cognitive health among African Americans via a partnership with the **National Black Nurses Association** and **National Medical Association**.





# Health & Our Faith

There is a profound relationship between faith and health, particularly in the African-American population. Studies have found that African-Americans are one of the most “religious” racial and ethnic groups in the US.

Through our partnerships and relationships with churches and faith institutions across the country we have developed and implemented evidence-based programs aimed at helping organizations understand the vital role of faith for African-Americans and how to use this dynamic to address a variety of health disparities, social determinants of health, and health literacy.

# Health & Our Faith

## African Americans and Religion

- Nearly eight in ten (79%) say religion is very important in their lives, compared to 56% among the general US population.
- More than half of African-Americans (53%) report attending religious services at least once a week, compared to 39% of the general population
- More than three quarters (76%) say they pray on at least a daily basis, compared to 58% of the general population

# Health & Our Faith

## Specific Influences of Religion on Health of African American

Research shows that religion impacts health seeking behaviors and overall health outcomes in African Americans. For example:

- In a study of religious beliefs and the utilization of cancer care among African-American cancer survivors (Hamilton, JB), results showed that:
  - Religious beliefs and practices positively influenced attitudes toward their illness and the ability to endure treatment.
  - Participants believed that God: (1) has the ability to heal and cure, (2) controls their lives and their survival; and (3) promises health and prosperity.
  - Prayer served as a source of strength and encouragement



# Health & Our Faith

## Overall Influence of Religion & Spirituality on Health

- Studies have found that some aspects of religion and spirituality can enhance overall well-being; reduce levels of depression and psychological distress; improve cognitive functioning; reduce stress; and decrease morbidity and mortality
- Various aspects of religious involvement, such as sermons, prayer, scriptural reading, singing and philosophical discussion have been found to induce optimism and happiness in patients, which in turn helps to protect them from cognitive decline

# Health & Our Faith

## Influence of Religion & Spirituality on Health Outcomes for Dementia Patients and Caregivers

A review of literature on elderly patients with dementia found studies showed the following:

- Cognitive and behavioral aspects of dementia, appear to progress more slowly in patients with a high level of religious belief and those who participated in frequent religious practices, compared to those with limited participation
- Prayer strengthens frontal circuits trains episodic memory, improves introspection and attention, which are all associated with better mental health



# Faith Approaches to Caregiving

- Caregivers are your patients too
- Be fully present and connected
- Take a “Spiritual History”
  - HOPE Tool
  - FICA (not taxes 😊)

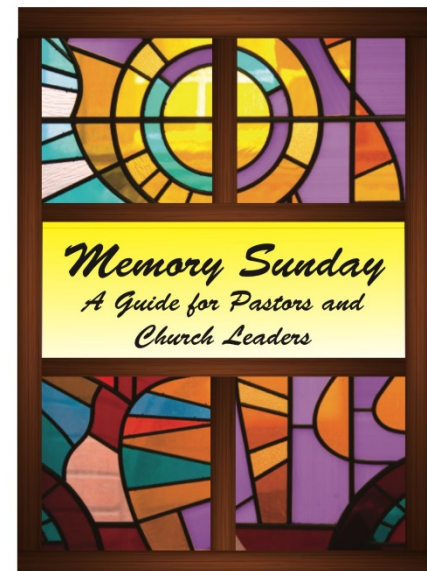
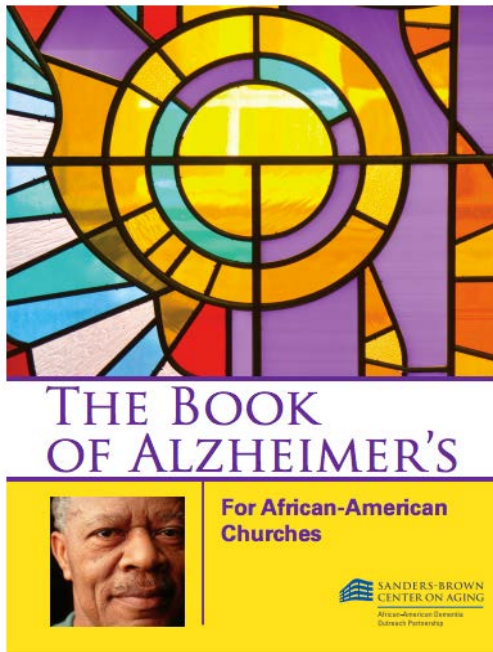


# MEMORY SUNDAY

## Sunday, June 11, 2017



A Designated  
Sunday to Bring  
Alzheimer's and  
Caregiving  
Awareness to Over  
5 million African  
Americans



*In partnership with the Sanders Brown Center of the Aging of the University of Kentucky*



# Memory Sunday: a Mobilization Campaign

- **Memory Sunday** promotes national mobilization and education of faith communities to take a greater role in increasing the awareness and understanding of Alzheimer's and supporting persons living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers
- The goal of **Memory Sunday** is to utilize the influence and impact of every African American pulpit to engage in activities that contribute to Alzheimer's prevention, treatment and care and provide compassionate support to those who are living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers
- The Balm In Gilead will register churches and faith-based organizations across the country to participate starting April 1<sup>st</sup> @ [www.balmingilead.org/memorysunday](http://www.balmingilead.org/memorysunday)



# Healthy Churches 2020 National Conference

November 14-17, 2017  
Westin Hilton Head Island Resort



[www.balmingilead.org](http://www.balmingilead.org)





**Continue the conversation with us!**



National Brain Health Center for  
African Americans



@brainhealthaa

**Visit our website and submit your local  
Cognitive Health events!**

<http://brainhealthcenterforafricanamericans.org>