

Spirit, MIND- AND BODY

KENDALL MARTIN

A LEGACY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

St. James the Less, Ashland, is a church with a dedication to health and wellness. Since 2006, its free clinic has provided those in need with health care, medications and more. And in March 2014, the congregation introduced a new event, “Designing Wellness: An Integrative Approach to Health.”

Today, that event serves as the lasting legacy of the Rev. Dr. David T. Anderson, the rector of St. James the Less, who died of cancer in May 2014. Inspired by Anderson’s time at the Commonweal Retreat, a nonprofit health and environmental research institute in Bolinas, Calif., the Designing Wellness event made connections between faith, spirit and wellness.

In a Spring 2014 interview, Anderson explained the inspiration behind the wellness event. “The Commonweal Retreat experience for my wife and me was so very important for our continuing to understand how we can maximize the potential for healing,” he said. “It included specific attention to the body, mind and spirit by exploring in areas of specialized yoga practices, dietary adjustments, emotional support in small groups, tapping into intuition and imagination as fields of play and release, and being in the company of those who ‘get’ living with chronic illness and stay on the cutting edge of what is out there to pursue for healing and for cure.”

So as the congregation constructed the wellness event at St. James the

Less, “we recognized the many different aspects within a human being that are essential for living with intentional attention to wholeness and seeking wellness,” Anderson said. “Our workshops pulled in some, but certainly not all, of those areas.”

The event attracted over 60 from the parish and the community of Ashland. The Very Rev. David Mark Cooper, priest associate at St. James’s, Richmond, gave the keynote address on the meaning of health. Workshops were offered on yoga breathing, cultivating energy as we age, journaling and more. The day concluded with a sermon by the Rev. Charles Joy, supply priest at St. James the Less, who drew the connection between health and life.

Bobbie Street is a St. James the Less parishioner, and one of the planners of the event. “David seeded many new ministries at St. James the Less,” said Street. “The wellness ministry took shape and became a solid entity with his strong support.”

She added, “David didn’t like being thought of as a man with an illness. He went forth each day with the mission of celebrating life. He lived fully and vigorously, preaching his last sermon just days before his death. The wellness ministry at St. James the Less will go forth and flourish, honoring David’s commitment to the sacred integration of body, mind and spirit.” The congregation has a second Defining Wellness event planned for Oct. 18. +

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