

MISSION STATEMENT: THE ADVOCATE WELLNESS CENTER



The Advocate Wellness Center strives to nourish a vigorous culture of healing at The Church of the Advocate. The Advocate has played a historic role in the African-American liberation movement and in the struggle for peace amongst humankind throughout the world. This profoundly necessary initiative is inspired by our deep love and commitment to the struggles of the people we serve. The Wellness Center hopes to continue the Advocate's historic work of bearing witness to their resiliency. Ours is a community under siege and so we must develop a broader strategy that is appropriately responsive to the crisis at hand. In the words of Reverend Renee McKenzie, "Loving the Church of the Advocate is not a very difficult task. One only needs to love the people and love the Lord. This is who we are."

Our initial intention in the process of envisioning The Advocate Wellness Center was to build onto the existing foundation of services already offered by the Church to the residents of North Philadelphia and the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. However, we also seek to create new services informed by a faith-based approach to addressing trauma in our community, which is the result of living, for centuries, under a white supremacist society. Accordingly, we are hoping to develop a repertoire of programs and activities that will inspire community, conversation, and creativity. In addition to augmenting counseling services and support groups, we plan to expand arts programming, offer educational workshops on a variety of topics—including parenting, meditation, pre-natal care, sickle-cell anemia, bereavement, nutrition, stress management, and general wellness—strengthen our exercise program, encourage interest in philosophy, culture, and politics, and continue the work of advancing humanity as children of God. We are guided by the creative spirit of the black radical tradition and welcome the rebirth of our civilization, which is signaled by a renaissance in thought, practice, art, and spiritual renewal.

We will offer two eight-week sessions with modules and workshops developed by facilitators in close dialogue with the Reverend Renee McKenzie and the Wellness Center Advisory Committee. The rationale for the program is guided by the most current theories of trauma-informed practice and takes seriously the science of healing. When patrons initially come to the Wellness Center, they will meet with an intake coordinator who will greet them and guide them through the Wellness Center's philosophy and direct them to activities that fit with their personal aspirations for achieving wholeness and wellness. Patrons will be able to select from a number of pathways; however, we will also offer the flexibility of adjusting the schedule of activities to people's needs, commitments, and interests.