



## Take One **Small Step** Toward **Better Health**

*“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!”*

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

As Christians, Lent draws our attention to food. We gather at the table for communion and soup suppers. Many of us fast or give up certain foods as a symbol of Jesus’ sacrifice for us.

**This Lent, choose to establish a faithful, food-related change using the Make or Break wellness activity.** Start by selecting a healthy eating habit to make or an unhealthy habit to break. You’ll use a prayer practice called “unbinding” to invite God to walk with you. Then, follow a finger labyrinth through the ELCA Wholeness Wheel to prayerfully commit to your habit change.

Portico Benefit Services originally developed the Make or Break activity for rostered and lay leaders. We’ve created this special Lenten version of the activity for families, faith groups, and congregations. Share it with others. Support one another. Take a step toward better health together.

The Lenten season leads us to the promise of renewal. Together in faith, discover how one new habit can help you grow more fully into the child of God you were created to be.

*That you may be well!*

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As an ELCA ministry, Portico Benefit Services offers health, flexible spending, retirement, disability, and survivor plans to help rostered leaders and lay employees strengthen their well-being. By living well as whole people of God, we believe we can better enhance the lives of others.



## What If You **Changed** **Just One Thing Eat?** About the Way You **Eat?**

One small step leads to another. Stick with it, and you discover a rhythm. Over time, an intentional choice turns into a hardwired, healthy eating habit.

This Lent, use the Make or Break wellness activity to prayerfully make a good healthy eating habit or break a bad one. Experience how one change can improve your health and, in turn, deepen your ability to live out your faith.

### Using this Lenten activity, you'll:

- **Choose your habit.** Pick one habit from the list that you don't already practice. Ask yourself: *Why this habit?* Be clear. Write down your reasons or tell someone.
- **Consider what holds you back.** Use the spiritual practice of unbinding to release the barriers that prevent you from making a healthy change.
- **Visualize the change.** Prayerfully walk your habit through the Wholeness Wheel finger labyrinth. Consider what you might need to adjust in different dimensions of your life.
- **Practice your habit.** Faithfully follow your habit as best you can during Lent. Visit [PorticoBenefits.org/wellness](http://PorticoBenefits.org/wellness) for articles and ideas to help you. Rest on the Sabbath. If you fall off track, walk the finger labyrinth and start again.
- **Celebrate!** Come Easter, praise God for giving you strength to make a change. Rejoice in the gift of abundant life. Consider your next step on the journey to living well in Christ.

## CHOOSE ONE FOR LENT

# MAKE A HABIT



### EAT PRAYERFULLY

Give thanks before each meal. Eat at a table, not in the car, at the computer or TV. Chew thoroughly. Pause to savor colors, flavors, smells. Print instructions at [PorticoBenefits.org/wellness](http://PorticoBenefits.org/wellness).

WHY? Slowing down during meals can promote gratitude, discovery, relaxation, and potentially even weight loss.



### TRACK WHAT YOU CONSUME

Keep a record of everything you eat and drink during the day. Log portion size, calories, and nutritional content. Use a food diary, website, app, or other tool you choose.

WHY? By listing exactly what you eat, you can spot problem areas and stay accountable to goals.



### FILL HALF YOUR PLATE WITH PRODUCE

Give fruits and vegetables the starring role at your main meal of the day.

WHY? You'll be closer to meeting the USDA's recommended five or more daily servings.



### FUEL UP WITH A HEALTHY BREAKFAST

Start your day with a variety of whole grains, low-fat protein, low-fat dairy, fruits, or vegetables.

WHY? Eating breakfast can help you manage your weight and avoid overeating later in the day.

# BREAK A HABIT



### QUIT PROCESSED FOODS

Eat fresh or frozen food in its natural state. Plan meals in advance. Avoid the middle of the grocery store where many convenience foods are shelved.

WHY? Processed foods are often loaded with fat, sugar, calories, and salt — with few vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, or other nutrients.



### DITCH UNHEALTHY SNACKS

Reach for fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, or low-fat dairy products. Eliminate other snacks.

WHY? Typical commercial snacks often contain lots of calories but little nutritional value.



### GO SUGAR-FREE

Eliminate foods with more than a tiny amount of added sugar — desserts, condiments, sweetened drinks, etc. If you want something sweet, eat fresh fruit.

WHY? Refined sugar has calories but no nutritional value. Yet it's increasingly part of the American diet, and a contributor to the increase in obesity.



### NO UNHEALTHY BEVERAGES

Don't drink soda, sports drinks, or other sweetened beverages. Make water your beverage of choice.

WHY? Liquid calories can add up quickly without providing much nutritional value.



# Prepare for Change

with the **Spiritual Practice** of **Unbinding**

Change can be difficult. Memories, messages, and patterns of behavior can bind us — making us feel unable to live the whole, healthy life that God intended for us.

## Suggested materials:

- Comfortable place
- Candle
- Strips of cloth
- Marker
- *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

As you enter into the Lenten Make or Break activity, use this spiritual practice to help you identify and confess the personal barriers that are binding you — those things over which you have felt powerless. This practice may help you seek God's strength, guidance, love, and grace as you engage in a lasting change.

1. Begin with a breath prayer.
2. Consider what causes you to feel bound.
3. Write it on a strip of cloth.
4. Wrap the cloth around your hand.
5. Read the scripture of how Jesus raised Lazarus to life.

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." — *John 11:38-44*

6. Say this prayer.

Lord you are a God who makes all things new. Make new in my life the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that get in the way of being who you have created me to be. Free me from what haunts my relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, an eating habit). Strengthen me, unbind me from the messages that try to control me. Walk with me, help me to live whole, and to care for your gifts of body, mind, and spirit. Amen.

7. Optionally, sing or read *I Bind unto Myself Today*, ELW 450, stanza 4.
8. When you feel ready, unbind the cloth from around your hand.
9. Keep the cloth during Lent as a symbol of your intention to live unbound.

# Walk Your Habit Through the Wholeness Wheel **Labyrinth**

**Sit comfortably in a quiet place.** Breathe deeply. Let go of tension in the shoulders, forehead, chest. If you wish, light a candle.

**Place your finger at the entrance to the labyrinth.** Pause and invite Christ to walk with you.

**Move your finger slowly along the path.** Prayerfully consider how you'll practice your habit in each dimension of well-being. Pause to wrestle with difficult steps and embrace easy ones.

**Rest in the center.** Reflect with an open heart and mind on what God is nudging you to embrace on your journey to living well in Christ. Ask for what you need.

**Return slowly on the same path.** Affirm the steps you'll take to sustain your healthy eating habit.

