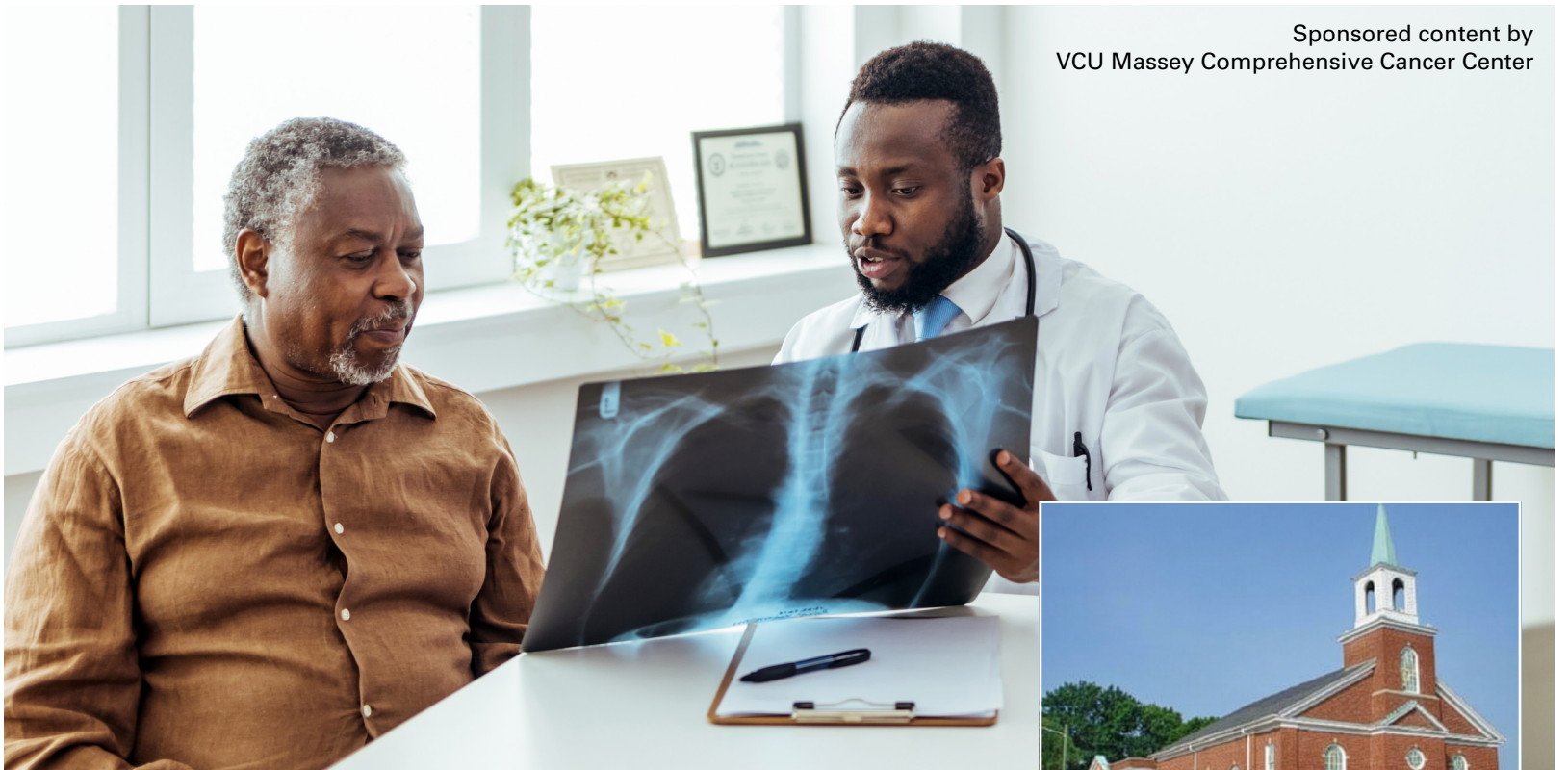


KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

VCU Massey Spurs Local Church to Raise Awareness About Lung Cancer



Faith leaders throughout Virginia serve as trusted sources of information for their communities. This was especially true during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Rev. Lorae Ponder, Minister for Community Engagement at Mount Tabor Baptist Church, and her husband Dr. Herbert L. Ponder, Pastor at Mount Tabor since 1994, sought a community to lean on for facts during an uncertain time.

The Ponders found that community in the Facts and Faith Fridays initiative, a partnership between VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and the African American faith-based community which started in 2020 to provide faith leaders with accurate information as ambassadors for their communities.

“A safe space to come in and find out factual information,” Rev. Lorae said. “The Massey team doesn’t look at faith and science as adversaries, but more like partners.”

Through the connection to VCU Massey, the Ponders learned about the Massey Equity in Lung Cancer Screening Excellence (ENGAGE) Award, a grant in collaboration with LUNGevity to support innovative community outreach projects that promote lung cancer education and screening. Mount Tabor Baptist Church was honored as one of the recipients of this award, supporting their community outreach efforts to increase awareness around lung cancer.



“The community is critical for screening and awareness,” Robert A. Winn, M.D. director and Lipman Chair in Oncology at VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, said. **“We’ve improved lung cancer survival by 15% in a matter of a couple years because the miracle medicines are becoming miracle opportunities for people in our community.”**

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in the United States, with rates even higher in Virginia and in Massey’s catchment area. Rev. Lorae had seen many in her own community impacted by lung cancer, which led Mount Tabor Baptist Church to help form the RVA Breathe Team in partnership with the Community Incorporated Development (CID) and Capital Area Health Network (CAHN) to promote early screenings and detection of lung cancer.

“The health issues in our community are so large,” Rev. Lorae said. “There’s so many. Anything that we can do to mitigate that, we tend to do it.”

Ponder says VCU Massey’s vision as a community-focused cancer center has given her community knowledge, which has turned into the power to keep people healthy.

“The willingness for Massey to share that knowledge has been huge for us as a church and for the community,” Ponder said. “I have never witnessed a cancer center or medical facility embrace the community in this way. It’s just been a godsend for us.”



Scan the QR code or visit vcumassey.org/lungcancer to learn more.

