

# Smart and Connected Churches for Promoting Health in Disadvantaged Populations

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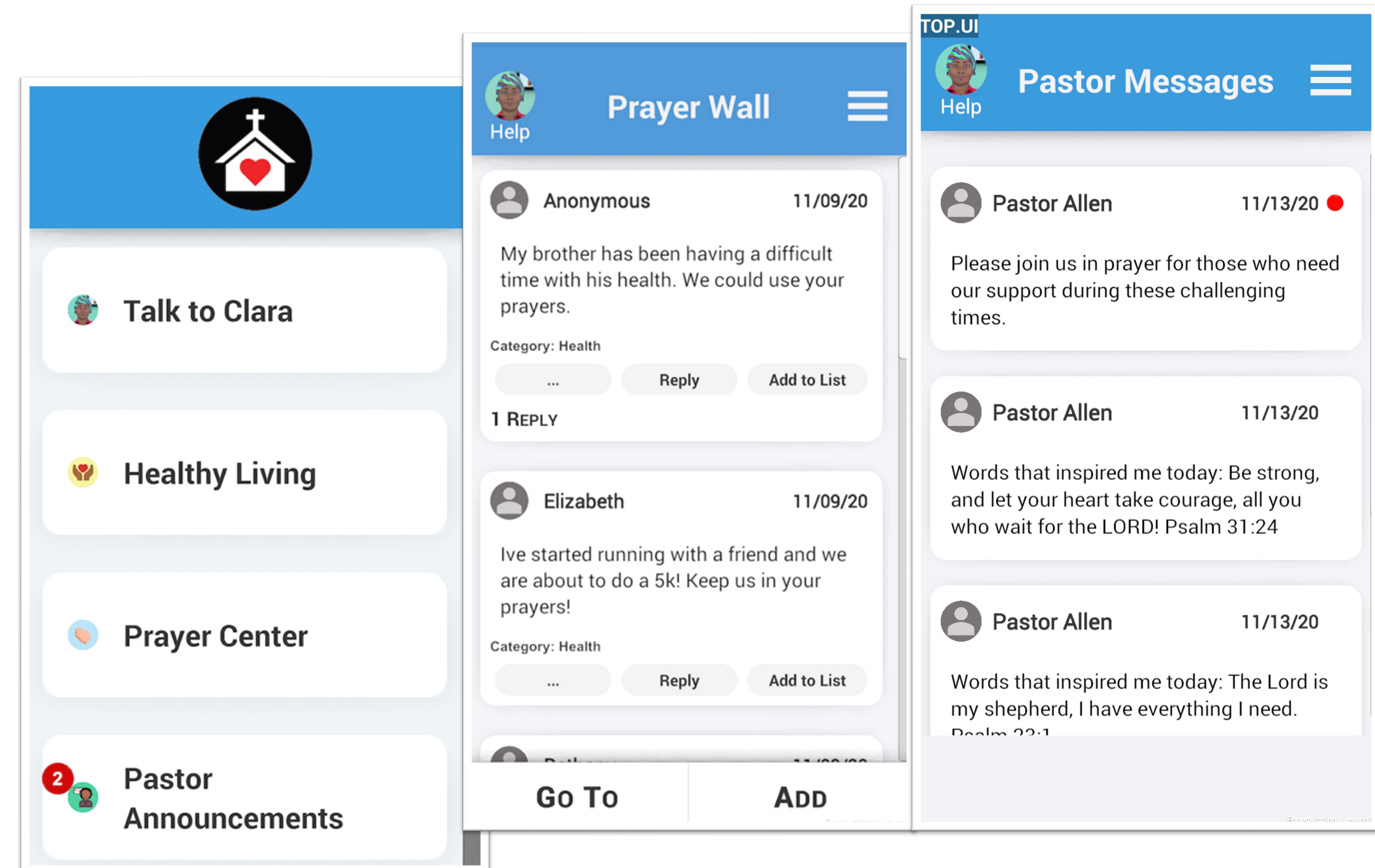


## Project Challenge

Improve health and wellness for members of predominately African American churches in the Boston area. African Americans struggle significantly more with many health behaviors (e.g., smoking, physical activity) and have significantly higher rates of many chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes, hypertension), compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

## Intellectual Merit

Explored: use of embodied conversational agents on smartphones for health promotion; cultural (spiritual) tailoring of health promotion dialog and messaging; engagement mechanisms that leverage the strong social support networks in churches.



## Major Outcomes/Progress

Developed and evaluated methods for community-based tailoring of health promotion messages. Conducted studies to evaluate a variety of engagement mechanisms for health promotion smartphone apps. Conducted study to determine tasks that users prefer to conduct with conversational agents vs. conventional GUIs.



## Broader Impact

Immediate health impact for the 20,000 members of the 30 churches in the Black Ministerial Alliance of Boston. The technologies can be rapidly disseminated to other church communities in the US, as well as other social support networks, such as within businesses and social organizations.

## Future Goals

Complete summative evaluation of app to determine impact on five health behaviors—physical activity, nutrition, healthy hydration, mental health stigma, and domestic violence awareness—as well as ability to keep users engaged.

