

# Parish Nurse Newsletter



Fall 2012



THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

**Mercy Forever**

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## Mission Statement

The *Parish Nurse Newsletter* serves to:

- create a bond between parish nurses and the staff of LCMS Health Ministries
- report creative programs developed in the field
- inform parish nurses of resources available from various sources and encourage them in their vocation.

## Message from Marcy

Perhaps you have seen the PBS episode of “Religion and Health” that provided an overview of parish nursing and the benefits it has for the health of individuals and congregations. It triggered some discussion among LCMS parish nurses as it showed parish nurses in both familiar and unfamiliar roles. The PBS segment shared the value that many clergy place on parish nursing, but did not differentiate their roles.

We are all familiar with the physician/nurse team in health care. Medical care and nursing care are related — but different. Today nurses are in many and diverse roles within the healthcare system, but there is a difference in the education, licensure and focus for each profession. Nevertheless, they work together for the well-being of the patient.

The pastor/parish nurse team is similar as we consider congregational health. Pastoral care and parish nursing care are similar — but different. Pastors and parish nurses can pray with the congregant, share Scripture, have a ministry of presence and numerous other things, but there is a difference. It is the parish nurse who has the expertise in health and the license to speak with authority on issues related to health and wellness. It is the pastor who has the education, credentials and authority of the office of the public ministry — Word and Sacraments. The pastor and the parish nurse work together for the health and well-being of the congregant and congregation.

In this issue you will find items written by parish nurses and others that share ideas and resources for promoting health. You will also find a letter from a parish pastor who describes their team approach to care. Lastly, you will find updates and overviews of various conferences and activities of interest to parish nurses.

In the healing Christ,  
Marcia (Marcy) Schnorr, RN, EdD  
Coordinator, Parish Nursing  
LCMS Health Ministries

**Give Now**



## Pastor's Perspective

BY REV. JOSHUA H. JONES  
PASTOR, BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Every year when we start preparing our budget for the upcoming year I get to explain parish nursing to our leadership. Usually at least one or two people ask, "So what does our parish nurse do? I've never seen her before." I assure them that it is probably a good thing that they don't know who she is because it means they and their loved ones have been healthy! But more and more, I am not the only one who can explain what our parish nurse, Marilyn Swain, actually does because more and more people cross paths with her and can explain how she ministered to them and their families. To further help people become familiar with our parish nurse and her ministry, Marilyn usually worships in our congregation about once a year and we tell our members about what she does.

Parish nursing was already in place when I arrived at our congregation and I honestly did not know much about it. But it became clear very quickly that parish nursing was a blessing not only for the members of our congregation but also for me.

Our parish nurse is a member of one of our sister congregations in Hot Springs, S.D. She commutes to Rapid City, S.D., once a week, which takes her a little more than an hour. Then she spends the day visiting various people in our congregation. She always stops to visit people who are in the hospital because of illness or surgery. Then she spends the rest of the day visiting other homebound members of our congregation or others who need a smiling face, and a tender heart to care for them and uplift them. It should go without saying that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation for all she does.



The LCMS district representatives for Parish Nursing meet annually. Pictured here are those who were able to attend the Annual Concordia Conference for Parish Nurses in 2012. LCMS parish nurses serve their congregations, communities and the world. Administratively, parish nursing is part of LCMS Health Ministries.

# What does our parish nurse do?

The nature of her visits is quite similar to my own. She listens carefully. She gets to know each person and his or her family. In many ways she is just being a good friend. But she offers much more. Because of her training in nursing she is able to identify when there are potential medical issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. In her role at Bethlehem she does not treat medical conditions herself. She does, however, provide resources for wellness and even suggests referrals when necessary. From time to time, Marilyn may go along with our members to doctor appointments which can be extremely helpful in cases where family members are not able to be present.

Not only does Marilyn have a vast knowledge base regarding what may be available to our members in the community, but she is able to share the love of Jesus with our members. She does a good job of using law and gospel appropriately. Moreover, she always has a devotion and prayer with each person she visits. For many of our chronically ill members she has developed long and lasting friendships. And whenever one of our members passes on to glory, she does whatever she can to rearrange her schedule to be at the funeral service. Of course, her ministry goes beyond funerals. She is also involved in grief counseling.

At some point during the day of Marilyn's visit, we either talk in person or on the phone if necessary to go over who else she should visit and also for her to give me an update regarding the people she has seen recently. Whatever we need at Bethlehem, Marilyn is always more than willing to help in any way she can. As I said, much of her ministry is similar to my own. Of course, the chief difference is her ministry does not involve the sacraments.

Parish nursing ministry has been a wonderful blessing to our congregation and to me as a pastor (even personally). Her knowledge of the medical field, especially regarding Medicare and when our elderly members need to consider moving out of their homes has been a wonderful supplement to caring for the whole person in our ministry. I certainly do not look forward to the day she decides to "retire" again!

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LCMS Health Ministries  
Attn: Parish Nurse Newsletter  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122

## News Welcomed!

We want to know what you're up to, what issues you are facing, and what programs are working in your congregation or agency! We welcome story suggestions, questions, short articles or photographs that highlight achievements in parish nursing. If you have news you'd like to share, contact Dr. Marcia Schnorr at [marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com](mailto:marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com) or 815-562-6823.

*Please note: Editorial staff reserve the right to edit or decline articles.*



Marcy Schnorr, RN, EdD, coordinator for Parish Nursing, LCMS Health Ministries, shared on "Can You Hear God Sing?" as the keynote speaker at the 20th Annual Concordia Conference for Parish Nurses held at Concordia University Wisconsin, May 28-June 1, 2012.

# Walking With Purpose: Hope Lutheran Church, Plant City, Florida

BY JOYCE VAN MATRE, RN, BS  
FLORIDA/GEORGIA DISTRICT PARISH NURSE REPRESENTATIVE

For the last nine years, Hope Lutheran Church has captured a way to:

- See the world
- Serve our Lord
- Savor healthy rewards

Okay, that's a little dramatic, but it got your attention, right? What we do as a group could not be accomplished individually: we need each other, combining our efforts. Since God made each of us differently, we all have different strengths and weaknesses, perform at different levels, and enjoy a variety of ways to exercise. The main objective is to MOVE the body daily whether it is walking, running, skating, gardening, playing volleyball jumping rope, swimming, vigorous housecleaning, lifting weights or whatever one chooses to do. Every 15 minutes equals 1 mile. The children are encouraged to participate, and to make it more fun for them, we have a geographical question in the bulletin about the country we are visiting requiring them to meet at the map after church to find the answer. Of course there are small prizes for each of them if they can answer the question correctly!

The first year, we hung a United States Map on a wall in church and headed for the state of Washington. The adults challenged the youth to see who could get there first. Two teams competed: the Roadrunners and the Coyotes took the challenge. As the team out in front made it to Washington, down to California and headed back towards Florida, the other team was limping along still heading for Washington. "WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?" Yes, He would turn around and lovingly go back to get the others and bring them home. So that's what we did. Since then, our "walks" have expanded to far-away places such as Jerusalem (2005), Kyrgyzstan (2006), Baghdad, Iraq (2007), Hyderabad, India (2008) and Around the World (well almost) in 2009. We actually only made it to Baghdad by Easter. Since our Pastor's son was stationed there, we stayed for the summer, fall, and Christmastime, 2009. Then, we headed back to Plant City and arrived before Easter, 2010. A year later we were off to Nairobi, Kenya and down the Eastern Coast of Africa to Pretoria, South Africa (2011).

What do we mean by "Seeing the World"? In preparation for our journey and our desire to stay safe, we check with the Center for Disease Control to get the latest updates on disease prevention and necessary vaccines and medications as a precautionary. We scan Wikipedia for geographical highlights, agricultural interests, population and special celebrations.

Well that sounds interesting, but how do we "Serve the Lord" by doing a virtual trip? Our Pastor, Dean Pfeffer, and his wife, Liz, went on a short term mission trip to Bishek, Kyrgyzstan, so we "followed" along, learning more about the country and the work of missionaries there. In 2008, they did another short term mission trip to Hyderabad, India. So, we again "followed" along, praying for their safety and a successful trip, telling the people about Jesus. In other trips, I have contacted missionaries at our destination to let them know what we were doing, and ask them to tell us about their lives in a different land.

As we trek across our World, I encourage everyone to write out Bible verses to place on the map to gain strength through the Word, and to allow God to work

through this exercise in each one of us. This year, the map was covered in 3x5 cards with Scripture written on them. These cards will go in hospital bags for our members or for shut-in visits. So, we serve our Lord in as many ways as we can, using His words to teach and encourage those in need. Isn't that what *all* Parish Nurses do?

'Ok, but I'm confused about what "Savor health rewards" means,' you say. The first couple of years, our congregation was amazed at their health rewards: controlled blood pressure, lower cholesterol, pulse rates closer to normal, lower glucose levels, more acceptable A1C levels and weight loss. Because the body is stronger and in better shape, it can fight back against diseases such as arthritis and cancer. Endurance is better. Muscle strength is improved, leading to less muscle strain and more back support too.

We know that our bodies are like tents that wear out, but we also know that they are a temple of the Holy Spirit. So, as we age, we give thanks to God every day and "savor" the healthy rewards with which God has blessed us.

## 2012 Walk to Australia

This year we decided to go "down under" to the outback of Australia, covering another continent of our world. Thanks to Marcy Schnorr and the LPNI, we were able to make contact with Rev. Robert and Lynette Wiebusch in Adelaide, Australia. Lynette is the parish nurse leader there, covering much territory teaching and encouraging other nurses to serve as parish nurses. They were very gracious in communicating with these crazy Lutherans who thought they could walk on water all the way to Australia! We emailed our progress and pictures of our bulletin board in the narthex and the World Map in the sanctuary. We were excited!

Too excited. We were almost to Sydney by Ash Wednesday. Whoa!

We had 2 choices: either "explore" more of Australia, see the Outback, visit the Wiebusch family, or trek back across the oceans to Florida to relish the sunshine and beaches, celebrating Easter Sunday at Hope. We took a vote and the congregation voted to return home for Easter. And so, we checked into Plant City on Easter with 402 "extra" miles. We had 18,700 total miles round trip. Sunrise Service was glorious!

My plan was to gather memorabilia promoting Plant City and offer items from our church such as a tee shirt, cook book and our family directory. Since Plant City is agricultural and we were unable to send some famous strawberries, I chose to send Strawberry Fruity Snacks instead. We have a booth at the Strawberry Festival every year and sell Boiled Peanuts, another food we could not ship, so I enclosed bags of salted peanuts instead. There is a picture of some of the items we enclosed in our gift box.

Every day I thank God that our church family has allowed me to serve our Lord as a parish nurse. It would not be possible without our Pastor's leadership and willingness to allow me to follow through with this ministry. I know that I am "planted" where God wants me to be. Besides a very strong health ministry, we are blessed with many other talents at Hope. The God-given talents of our members are illuminated throughout our campus with many different ministries. Various gifts of art and music, exceptional Vacation Bible School activities and events and outreach to many people who are unchurched through meals, Stephen Ministry and GriefShare; these are just a few of the programs we are privileged to offer.

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# Ministry *With* and *To* Those With Disabilities and Their Families

BY MONA FUERSTENAU  
CHAIR, LCMS DISABILITY TASK FORCE  
MINISTRY CONSULTANT BETHESDA LUTHERAN COMMUNITIES

As the parent of a young man with multiple developmental disabilities, the chairperson of both the LCMS NW District Disability Awareness task force and the LCMS national Disability Task Force and a ministry consultant for Bethesda Lutheran Communities, I am so pleased to be sharing my story with you. Intersections with parish nurses occur along this journey, as do points where parish nursing would have been a welcome addition. I have long believed that parish nurses are a vital link with, to, by, and for those with disability and their church communities. So let us begin.

Once upon a time there was a young family to whom was born a child with developmental disabilities. In the first months of rounds of doctors and tests and attempts at diagnosis, those in our church family whose support helped us the most were those who offered hugs, food, opportunities for fun with our other child, respite time for the caregiving parents, conversations about topics OTHER THAN disability and those who refrained from platitudes and unsolicited advice. Our parish nurse was an island of calm, acceptance, resources and caring.

As months rolled by and the rounds of multiple weekly therapy appointments and doctor visits became routine, the needs of our family remained the same. Hugs, food, fun, respite, distraction, acceptance. Many in the church family moved on to other crisis needs or back to their own life issues. The stress within the family had fewer outlets for expression or relief and began to take a toll. The marriage relationship suffered. The family began to be more isolated from congregational life and community. Although unavailable during this time frame, a parish nurse would have been a welcome blessing by offering resources for emotional and mental health as well as physical wellness for all the members of the family. In retrospect, a referral to Stephen Ministry might also have been well received.

Ten years passed. The child was included in regular children's programs with support as needed by his mom. The older child participated in "Sib Shops," a wonderful resource recommended by our parish nurse for siblings of all ages of those with disabilities. She was successful in school, youth events and socially. Involvement in congregational life for the family unit was now limited to worship services. The marriage was now in serious trouble.

Two years later I became a single parent after 20 years of marriage. The reported divorce rates in families with a child with a disability vary, but are high. Could it be reduced with better empathy and support along the way? Respite is the number one need identified by caregivers, regardless of who they are caring for.

My son journeyed through confirmation with a mentor to assist him. He is now an equal participant in youth and young adult activities and events, even the national youth gathering in New Orleans. His church friends accept him as he is and care about his success.

The research shows across-the-board benefit in mind, body and spirit from participation in spiritual practices and a sense of belonging in a community of believers. The percentage of those with intellectual and developmental disability and their families who desire to participate in church attendance and congregational life is no different than that of the general public. The number that actually DO attend, feel welcome, and have meaningful participation, unfortunately, is much lower. As a young adult, my son's gifts enhance the life of the church. He teaches valuable lessons in perspective and patience and perseverance. His smile brightens the day and his worship is unabashed praise for his Savior. Adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are eager for the opportunities that my son has. Look around your community for this underserved population. Reach out to meet a real, felt need and open the door for the opportunity to share the Gospel. And pay special attention to those in your midst as you minister TO and WITH those with disabilities and their families!

For resources please visit the following web sites or contact Mona at [Mona.fuerstenau@mailblc.org](mailto:Mona.fuerstenau@mailblc.org).

#### Web Resources:

- LCMS Disability Ministries: [www.lcms.org/disability](http://www.lcms.org/disability)
- LCMS Northwest District Disabilities Awareness Task Force: [www.nowlcms.org/congregational\\_services/Disabilities.aspx](http://www.nowlcms.org/congregational_services/Disabilities.aspx)
- Bethesda Lutheran Communities: [www.bethesdalutherancommunities.org](http://www.bethesdalutherancommunities.org), click on "Faith Supports"

## Creating Healthy Habits in Children

BY CYNTHIA RUTAN, RN  
NORTHWEST DISTRICT PARISH NURSE REPRESENTATIVE

Creating healthy habits in children can go a long way in fighting childhood obesity. Last fall I attended a full day conference highlighting a program called "5-2-1-0 — Let's Go" and was inspired to try to fit this concept into my parish health ministry role by working with our elementary school at our church.

"Let's Go" is a nationally recognized childhood obesity prevention program designed to promote health lifestyle choices for children and families. It first was implemented in greater Portland, Maine and has spread throughout the country.

5-2-1-0 stands for:

- 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day
- 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
- 1 hour or more of physical activity a day
- 0 sugary drinks with more water and low fat milk

I first introduced this concept on a low key with our elementary P.E. classes by working with the kids to increase awareness of the many ways they can get exercise. We mapped a mile around our campus and I led them on walk/run/jog trips during their P.E. The walking was integrated

into our Walk to Jerusalem totals after the holidays during Lent, helping us reach the goal. The summer program in our childcare will be continuing activity with bike day and walks.

It's warmer outside and it's garden planting time now. This provides a great opportunity to introduce new ways to inspire the kids and parents to try new vegetables and herbs. We are hanging our "gardens" on the fence around our child care playground, and the summer will hopefully yield lots of opportunity for cherry tomatoes, tiny carrots, little yellow cucumbers, herbs and more. The shoe bags are inexpensive and can be used in apartment living as well as homes without garden space, so it is encouraging learning and healthy lifestyles in a new way ... and helping find a way to get kids away from the computer and T.V. — fulfilling the "2" portion of the focus toward healthier kids-healthier communities. My 92 year old mom has strawberries and tomatoes and more on her tiny deck, and the preschool age great grandkids are very

interested in helping and watching things grow, and they "taste a lot better than the ones we get at the store", says the five year old! When school resumes in the fall, I will again do height and weight and compute BMI to see if the year has created a change in our school students.

The family is the primary unit that ensures the health of a child. Diet, exercise, screen time and sugar free drink choices are a great start. For more information, go to [www.healthynh.com](http://www.healthynh.com) and click on the 5-2-1-0 logo.

I hope this will give you another angle on creating new ways to promote healthy lifestyles in your faith communities. The 5-2-1-0 web site has programs for a variety of settings including schools, after school, early childhood, healthcare facilities, workplace, community and food service. There are also resources for parents and a list of research sources pertinent to "Let's Go!" and the 5-2-1-0 message.

Happy health! Happy gardening!

## Ever Laughing Life!

BY DR. RICH BIMLER  
AMBASSADOR OF HEALTH, HOPE, AND AGING (AH-HA!)  
LUTHERAN LIFE COMMUNITIES

**W**e live on this side of the Resurrection! The Lord is Risen ... in Deed! We know how it all turns out. Therefore, we celebrate life in the Lord as we laugh and play and serve others, knowing that all is well !

Yes, all is well, because the Lord has made us Well, in Him! All is well, even when we do not look like it or feel like it or even act like it, because the Lord has done it all! Now that's something to celebrate, every day!

Christ's Resurrection has freed us to live an "ever laughing life!" In the midst of all of our pains and problems and pouts, we go about each day with a smile on our face and a laugh in our heart and in our voice. We laugh, not because everything is fine and dandy, but rather we laugh because even though things are not fine and dandy, the Lord still loves and forgives us, totally!

Perhaps we take W. C. Field's advice too seriously. He said, "When you get up every morning, smile and laugh ... and get it over with!" No way, Mr. Fields, we rise every morning with a smile on our face and an "AH-HA!" in our hearts because we know, in faith, that the Lord is with us ... always!

An ever laughing life allows us to proclaim to those around us that we have not forgotten the Resurrection, but rather that we have remembered it. Perhaps when we take ourselves too seriously it is because we feel that the Lord has forgotten us. Perhaps those young and old around us sometime think



that the Lord has forsaken them. It is at these moments that we are nudged by the Spirit to point others to the Cross and the Empty Tomb and to His Promise we have in our Baptism.

Parish nurses are blessed and equipped to bring a smile, a hug, a listening ear, a word of comfort, and even a hearty laugh to those they serve. An Ever Laughing life is not a life of only guffaws and chuckles. An Ever Laughing Life is one that acknowledges that even in the midst of tears and toils and troubles, our Lord is still there, showing us ever lasting life!

We are all about Wellness, in the Lord. Try this out: consider spelling WELL in this way and see what thoughts and joys the Lord brings to you:

**W – Wit.** We all have a sense of humor. Those we serve and celebrate with are waiting to hear and see God's presence through your joy and humor and reliance on the Lord! This does not mean telling jokes or laughing all the time. Rather, it means being the human being you are to someone else, bringing comforting and calming words and actions to others. And through it all, it means you and me being WITnesses in Christ to those around us.

**E – Easter!** After every good Friday in our lives, there is always an Easter, because of that first Good Friday and Easter. Remember, He is Risen — right now, today, and that is something to laugh and cheer about!

*Note: Check out [www.richancharliersources.com](http://www.richancharliersources.com) to receive "encouraging words for all who serve." Also, watch for the new book, *Joyfully Aging*, written by Rich Bimler, published by Concordia Publishing House, 2012.*

**L – Lighten up!** This is not meant as a command but rather as an affirmation. We are "Lights" to the world because of Christ! We lighten up other peoples' lives by our Light-hearted words and actions.

**L – Laugh.** Yes, laugh early and often, as we say in Chicago! We do not stop laughing because we are aging, but we grow "old" in our lives because we stop laughing!

Enjoy Ever Laughing Life in the Lord, right now, today, because Christ is alive and well and living in and through us! Laugh out loud as we remember our Baptism. All is well, not because we laugh or because everything is going well, but rather everything is Well, because the Lord is with us!

So, until further notice, celebrate everything ... and keep laughing!

## Did You Know?

### Parish Nurses are Evangelists!

Evangelism is a word that makes many people nervous. It conjures up images of the door-to-door missionaries of some religious sects that we dread seeing come to our door. We may also think of the "Bible-thumping mad man" that stands on the urban street corner or we may envision the televangelist that offers cures in exchange for cash. While these may all be considered by some to be evangelism, they are not necessarily Christ-centered and they are not people sensitive.

Evangelism is sharing the good news with others. It is being a witness. It is caring about the souls of others. It is impossible to not be a witness. The question is the focus of our witness. Parish nurses have the distinct opportunity to share Jesus as they reach out with mercy to hurting souls in the congregation, the community and the world. As we build healing relationships with others we share the love of God and the reason for our acts of mercy. Some call this "side-door evangelism" or "caring evangelism." Others just call it "Parish Nursing."

### Blood Pressure

Blood Pressure Measurements continue to be one of the skills that parish nurses use frequently. Many offer a monthly "BP Sunday" for screening or monitoring purposes. Some parish nurses are "on the agenda" at regular meetings of the seniors to offer BP checks. Some parish nurses take BPs during home visits. Checking blood pressures is a quick, easy, and easily recognized nursing skill and often the most visible activity when one is initiating parish nursing in the congregation.

I recently received an e-mail from one of our parish nurses sharing the John Hopkins Health Alert, "Measuring Blood Pressure, Two Arms Are Better Than One." This was posted in Hypertension and Stroke on May 15, 2012. This brief item advocates for taking the blood pressure in both arms as a way of noting people at risk for peripheral artery disease and cerebrovascular disease. The article advised that a difference of 15 mm Hg or more identifies a 60% greater risk for a heart attack or stroke or other significant medical conditions. When there is a difference of 15 mm Hg or more between the two readings, the person should be advised to see their physician for further evaluation.

### LPNI Annual Study Tour

Lutheran Parish Nurses International, NFP will have their annual study tour in the USA next year (May 28-June 5, 2013). The study tour will begin with the Concordia Conference for Parish Nurses at Concordia University Wisconsin. An exhibit area, "Around the World With Parish Nursing" will include a table display for each participating country. Representatives of Lutheran parish nursing in Australia, Finland, Germany, Palestine, and the USA will provide a panel discussion highlighting their unique ministries.

Following the conference, the group will depart for Saint Louis and a visit at the LCMS International Center and other Lutheran sites as well as a bit of sight-seeing. The full brochure and registration information will be on the LPNI website ([www.lpni.org](http://www.lpni.org)) by mid July.

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## Parish Nursing in Bethlehem

The Parish Nurse Team to Bethlehem (Palestine) is filled for 2012, but it is not too early to consider joining the team for 2013. Anticipated dates are November 29-December 7, 2013. The experience will include providing activities which support the parish nurse ministry with the elderly (Ajyla) in and around Bethlehem and with young couples (Ajwaz). Participants will complete their week with a pilgrimage of major sites in and around Jerusalem and Galilee. The trip is offered under the umbrella of Bright Stars of Bethlehem. Marcia Schnorr will be working with Karen and Mike Hardecopf to plan the experience. Schnorr will participate in her eighth parish nurse team to Bethlehem in 2012 (and her ninth trip to the area). The team will be escorted by Karen and Mike Hardecopf who will be making their third trip. Schnorr will not be participating on this team but will be traveling to Bethlehem later in December to participate in the Ajyal Christmas events. For more information about the 2013 trip to Bethlehem, contact [khardecopf@hiscross.org](mailto:khardecopf@hiscross.org)

Parish Nursing continues to grow in Bethlehem (Palestine). Many LCMS parish nurses have participated in one or more teams that have gone to Bethlehem to provide support through health education, health screenings and ministry of presence. We have seen it grow from serving

14 older adults at Christmas Lutheran Church to helping hundreds of people in and around Bethlehem and now north to Taybeh and Nablus. While its focus is on supporting the Palestinian Christians it does also serve Muslims in the villages. Parish nursing in Palestine is similar to parish nursing in the USA except life in Palestine makes it essential that the parish nurse is also the “senior center coordinator,” a modified home health nurse, extended family, and whatever else is needed. The parish nurse serves under the umbrella of AJYAL, which means generations — but is largely the three generations of the elderly.

High unemployment rates, lack of social security or similar pensions, lack of access to health care and no insurance available after 60 years of age, and similar circumstances make. At present, there is still only one parish nurse. She is assisted by an LPN who assists with community outreach. There is a goal to maintain and enhance AJYAL and add another parish nurse.

If you are able to make a “**Christmas in July**” donation for AJYAL in Bethlehem this will be most appreciated. Checks should be made to Bright Stars of Bethlehem with a memo to AJYAL. Send to Bright Stars of Bethlehem, PO Box 185, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0682.

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## Grief Support by Parish Nurses

BY SUE NEFF, RN, FCN

ENGLISH DISTRICT PARISH NURSE REPRESENTATIVE

When we think of grief, we think of persons whose loved ones have died. That is the most obvious event which elicits a grief response. I, however, choose to think of grief and the grief journey in a much broader context. When we experience change, we experience loss, and when we experience loss, we grieve. And our world, both globally and personally are in constant change.

Changes that are less obvious, or those that by society's standards, are not worthy of a grief response, are far more common than one would think, but still impact how we live in a powerful way. Changes such as divorce, deployment, loss of dreams and expectations, loss of health and independence or loss of a pet commonly result in grief. Even more subtle changes such as graduation, promotions and retirement can elicit a grief response.

Change includes loss, and loss leads to grief. Because I believe we need to address all grief responses, I have developed a four-week grief support group.

- **Week One: Grief Defined**

In this session, we talk about the five stages of grief and

the tangible sides of grief (how it affects each of our senses.) We also have time to share our stories.

- **Week Two: “The Fuzzy Brain Syndrome”**

In this session we talk about emotions of grief, including anger, depression and guilt.

- **Week Three: Expectations on your Grief Journey**

This session addresses what you can realistically expect, and the inner world of grief, including relief, emotional rest, dreams, roles and how they change, and regrets.

- **Week Four: Who am I now?**

In this final session, we discuss traditions, changes and purpose. We also discuss the outer world of grief, including celebrations, finances and the “to do” list.

I provide handouts, resources and thought provoking questions that can be processed between meetings.

There is no shortage of bereavement groups in the community, but I believe that I add two important components to my group: a Christian perspective and an openness to embrace all types of grief.



*Parish Nurse Newsletter* is published quarterly by:

LCMS Health Ministries  
1333 S. Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122  
800-248-1930, ext. 1375  
[www.lcms.org/health](http://www.lcms.org/health)

*Parish Nurse Newsletter* may be reprinted with acknowledgment given to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Select **Parish Nurse Newsletter** from among the “Helping People” newsletters.

## Support Groups for Healing

Kim Meyer, certified lay minister and parish nurse at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Springfield, Ill., has a long and diverse history of offering support groups to congregants and community residents. Many people find healing (although not necessarily a cure) through a well facilitated support group. Most support group attendees have a “burden” they need to share, a load they need to lighten, an issue they need help with, or an area of concern that needs to be addressed. Support groups offer many benefits which are described below:

- **Community:** The sense of belonging that quickly develops when the group participants share a common issue. It is a unique sense of community.
- **Comfort:** The safe, non-judgmental environment of a support group provides the participant a level of comfort that will facilitate sharing personal issues or concerns.
- **Confidentiality:** All members of the group agree to keep any personal or medical information shared within the group.
- **Confirmation:** Learning that others are experiencing the same feelings, have the same fears, or are facing the same struggles validates that experience for the participant.
- **Counsel:** Who better to help me navigate my hurdle than someone who has already dealt with that same hurdle? Information shared between participants can be invaluable.
- **Companionship:** There is a sense of unity that develops quickly in a support group. The participants may become friends quickly and will oftentimes exchange contact information so they can stay connected.
- **Compassion:** Empathy will always be present at a good support group.
- **Communication Opportunities:** Sometimes people simply need a place to be heard. Groups offer an opportunity for honest communication without risk.
- **Consistency:** There is something comforting about knowing what to expect and when to expect it. In the case of serious illness, the unknown can be daunting. Knowing that there is a set time and day to surround oneself with loving, caring people can have a calming effect on one’s daily chaos.
- **Christ-centered care and concern:** It is hard to put into words the effect that such care can have on another’s life. In the midst of chaos, it offers calm. In the midst of fear, it offers peace. In the face of death, it offers eternal life.

## Resources

### Reminder

St. Luke Day is October 18th and this is a good time to rededicate the parish nurse ministry in your congregation. See website for available resources.

### Veterans Day

Veterans Day is around the corner, and we remember the many who have served that we may enjoy our freedom. Last year I asked if there were any parish nurses who had served in the military and received the names of several; there are probably others. Thank you to each who have served in any branch of our military at any time. Thanks also to those who stayed at home and kept the “home fires burning” while a loved one was serving.