

# Parish Nurse Newsletter



Spring 2013



THE  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Missouri Synod

**Mercy Forever**

## Message from Marcy

Parish nurses often are involved during times of disease and discontent. We are present during times of sorrow and grief. Parish nurses, however, are not only specialists in sadness; we are available for good times as well as bad. This issue contains examples of parish nurses who have an outreach to people during their happy times, and it includes news and information about joyful opportunities for building relationships with peers, celebrating our mutual service and continuing to develop specialized gifts and expertise.



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Ecclesiastes 3 identifies many times that we experience . . . some are happy, some are not so happy. Parish nurses are privileged to serve in the midst of all of the times that are part of the human experience.

I rejoice and give thanks for each of you and the service that you provide. I hope you find happiness in this issue . . . and in your service to others.

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

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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.

**Give Now**



## A pastor's perspective

BY REV. ERIK GAUSS  
SENIOR PASTOR, CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH  
YORKVILLE, ILLINOIS

# Join team

*"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:3-5).*

I submitted to God's call to serve as a pastor for a myriad of reasons, one of which was the shortage of pastors in the LCMS. Because of this, I entered seminary with a negative view of team ministry. Why should one congregation "use up" so many workers when there are others that have none? As God always does, He takes our improper motivation and redeems it by His grace. He first had me marry an LCMS teacher, and then He placed me on a team ministry as a field worker, a vicar and ultimately in my first call.

I now serve as the lead pastor in a congregation with a school and couldn't imagine it any other way. I am sure my objections to team ministry in the past were sound, I just don't remember them anymore. Instead, this passage from Philippians is now my answer to questions about team ministry. The Church by definition is a team, with every member working together under the one head, Jesus Christ, and I thank God for that team. I can't do it alone — none of us can, and none of us should think that we do.

As a pastor, my position is to oversee the church in this place. The church is comprehensive and complicated.

It includes every believer and everything they do and everything they need. It is a daunting task to say the least, but every day I am reminded that I am not the church; I am merely one member of it. The church is run by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Scriptures, and there is no room for ego or pride, no time for turf wars or complicated bureaucracies. Every day the sick are in need of healing, the poor are in need of the riches of God's grace, believers are in need of encouragement and unbelievers are in need of the Gospel.

It is a joy and a pleasure to work with all of God's people, but especially with those who rightly understand servanthood, who are a part of the team under the one Lord, Jesus Christ, who respond faithfully to whatever it is that God has called them to do that day, working as partners to administer God's grace in its various forms. Whatever tactics Satan is using to discourage or distract you, I pray that this verse and others like it will restore God's purpose for you and your team. I pray that you and other faithful believers in your midst will rise up and be the presence of Jesus Christ to all who have need. Cast off the old self and thank God daily for the new self He restores: *"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).*



## Harvest blessings

BY CAROL A. LUEDERS BOLWERK, RN, PHD  
DIRECTOR, PARISH NURSE MINISTRIES AND CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH  
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN

*Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!  
Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!  
Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!  
Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!  
Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!  
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!  
(Ps. 150)*

Martin Luther is known for restoring music into worship. So strong were his beliefs about music that he wrote, "Next to the word of God, the art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our hearts, minds and spirits." Music has always been a part of my family, culture and religion. My exposure to music was not only in church and school, but also in my German family. I grew up in Wisconsin, which claims that over 50 percent of its population is of German

ancestry, and enjoyed many events with traditional German music. My parents and siblings are musically gifted and share the Gospel of Christ through song and music.

After my father's death in November 2011, it was a natural decision for my family to start a music endowment to honor my parents. This endowment for our church and school helps students with their band lessons, enhances worship by supporting the purchase of instruments and music, and created a music ministry program for shut-ins, the elderly, widowed, caregivers and others who may benefit from music resources. We held an inaugural concert in April 2012 with the German band Die Alte Kameraden from Trinity Lutheran Church in Friestadt, Wis. We invited residents of local nursing homes and arranged transportation to and from the concert. Over 375 people attended, and Thrivent Financial helped with a Community Care Grant to cover expenses.

Plans for a harvest blessings fall concert were organized. Since my father was a dairy farmer, the fall event recognized the cycle of sowing, cultivating and harvesting, and our concert theme highlighted the many blessings we have been granted. We also had a special salute to our veterans.

Our concert committee also recognized how prayer shawls can bring an awareness of God's presence and everlasting love. A prayer shawl is a reminder that God will always love you, wrap His arms around you and give you peace and comfort. The person who knits a prayer shawl prays for the recipient while knitting it. In less than six months, we needed to collect 100 prayer shawls. My sisters in parish nursing were each asked to donate one prayer shawl for the concert. Area churches were asked for donations, and our members were invited to knit shawls. We received shawls from California, New Jersey, Ohio, Minnesota, Arkansas, Illinois and Wisconsin. As the concert drew closer, more pleas went out. In the final week before the concert, we received 50 prayer shawls, bringing us to a grand total of 130 shawls!

First Immanuel is blessed to have a Lutheran day school. As the concert planning continued, we asked our school children to make cards for veterans, caregivers and others who suffer from loss and chronic illness. We received over 100 cards from the school children expressing their thanks for the service that our veterans have given this country in peace and war. Special cards were made for caregivers to remind them that "Jesus gives comfort."

The school children were also asked to help give out the prayer shawls. Every veteran received a red, white or blue shawl. Every family who attended the concert received a shawl to give to someone who needed one. Pastor Randy Raasch recognized special groups and asked them to stand to receive a prayer shawl. One veteran, with tears in his eyes, said, "No one has recognized me like this before."



## Outreach ideas

Jane Geske, RN, parish nurse at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Itasca, Ill., is pictured during a coffee hour that was hosted by her parish nurse team. The event provided information about parish nursing and "Five Wishes" (an alternative to a living will). In addition, congregants were given the opportunity to make donations to the Northern Illinois District Parish Nurse Network to help fund educational programs.

This coffee hour activity is a simple but valuable opportunity to provide information for the congregation while also giving individuals the chance to donate to parish nursing, either within their own congregation or beyond.

We received three prayer shawls with matching colored caps, which we reserved for chemotherapy patients. A gentleman was given one of these special prayer shawls. During the days following the concert, this man suddenly became ill and was hospitalized. He brought his prayer shawl to the hospital and slept with it wrapped around his shoulders day and night. His health did not improve. He went to surgery and later lost his battle to cancer. Five short days after the concert, this gentleman was called to meet his heavenly Father. I know that this prayer shawl was indeed a powerful symbol of God's everlasting love.

As I reflect on this harvest blessings concert and the prayer shawl story, I know that we have touched people with music. We have soothed souls, we have given comfort and peace, and we have given hope as we share the love of Christ. Our final song of the concert was "Abide with Me." We sang:

*Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.  
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*  
(LSB 878:6)

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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.*

## Wrapped in God's love

BY JANET HITZEMAN, RN  
PARISH NURSE, FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

As the parish nurse at Faith Lutheran Church, I am always striving to develop new programs that will serve members of our congregation. Last year, I wanted to provide a program that would focus on the new and expectant families in our congregation. Often, expectant families are the newer members at our church. My goal was to make them feel welcome and a part of our church family at a time when they were in need of support but were potentially removed from their nuclear family. I also wanted to involve several different ministry teams in the project in order to involve more people and give the project a feeling of community and congregational outreach. I initially approached the Needlework Guild for suggestions, and one of the ladies offered to make a flannel blanket and matching crochet hat. One member of the Children's Ministry team designed a gift tag that was copied onto cloth and stitched to one corner of the blanket.

One to two weeks before the baby's due date, I call the expectant mother and arrange a time to visit in the home. At that time I take several different blankets, allowing the mother to choose the pattern or color that fits best with the baby's sex (if known) and the color theme of nursery. If there are siblings in the family, they enjoy being a part of the selection process. At the visit, I also assess what kind of family/friend support they will have the first month or two after the baby arrives. This also gives me a chance to offer help from our members to provide meals.

I present them with some of the materials from Concordia Publishing House's *Growing in Christ Nursery Roll Family Materials*. Included in this is a book about Baptism. I encourage them to read it together as a couple, consider a potential date for Baptism and arrange a meeting with one of our pastors. I generally conclude my visit with a short devotion on one of my favorite Bible passages, Ps. 139:13-16:

*"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."*



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# Laugh for the heart of it

BY DARLENE RUETER, RN  
IOWA DISTRICT WEST PARISH NURSE REPRESENTATIVE

The Bible makes several references to happiness. Proverbs says, “A joyful heart is good medicine” (17:22), “A glad heart makes a cheerful face” (15:13) and “The cheerful of heart has a continual feast” (15:15). Psalms 126:2 says, “Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’” President John F. Kennedy made reference to God when he said, “There are three things which are real: God, human folly and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension. So we must do what we can with the third.”

In the 20th century, researchers studied the effects of happiness on the body. In the 1970s, Dr. William Fry found that oxygen levels in the bloodstream increased with laughter. He also began the study of how laughter affected blood pressure. In the 1980s, Dr. Lee Berk found that laughter decreased levels of cortisol and epinephrine. He discovered that the immune system benefits because of increased production of antibodies, activation of the body’s protective T-cells and the killing of tumor cells. He reported that repetitious, mirthful laughter — laughercise — responds the same as moderate exercise.

Research was directed more to the heart and vascular system by Dr. Michael Miller, cardiologist at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. In 2009, he published his research on the study of 300 people — those with cardiovascular disease and those without. This study involved multiple-choice questions on laughter in certain situations and true/false answers to measure anger and hostility. Funny sitcoms were viewed by participants, as well as the opening of the movie “Saving Private Ryan.” Ultrasound readings showed that average blood flow increased by 22 percent during laughter and decreased by 35 percent during mental stress. Dr. Miller made the discovery that laughter expanded the endothelium, the protective lining of the blood vessels, so there was increased blood flow in the body. He found that mental stress impaired the endothelium and could cause an inflammatory reaction leading to fat/cholesterol buildup in the coronary arteries.

So, what is a laugh? A laugh is a personal signature — a “laugh print” — that is characteristic to a person. Yet thousands of languages and hundreds of thousands of dialects “speak” laughter in the same way. Children born deaf and blind are able to laugh. Babies laugh before they acquire speech. Laughter can be a snort, cackle, chortle or giggle. Laughter can make people seem warmer, cooperative, ineffective or even obnoxious. Most laughter is about



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playful relationships between people. Speakers laugh more than their audiences (46 percent more). Females laugh 126 percent more than the males to whom they are talking. Laughing is contagious. Laughter makes people laugh.

Laughter helps lower blood pressure, gives our body a good workout, boosts the immune system, increases our oxygen intake, decreases our perception of pain and decreases the levels of cortisol and epinephrine in our circulation. Emotionally, laughter reduces stress, elevates our mood, improves brain functioning, connects us to others, fosters relaxation, makes us feel good. A good joke uses the left hemisphere of the brain to decipher the verbal content of the joke while the right hemisphere interprets if it’s funny or not.

How does laughter protect our hearts? Let’s look back again to the endothelium in our blood vessels. The endothelium regulates blood vessel tone, regulates blood flow, adjusts coagulation/blood thickening, regulates cell growth and secretes chemicals in response to inflammation and fats in the bloodstream. What does this mean for our hearts? Laughter relaxes blood vessels, improves blood flow, decreases clot formation, decreases vessel inflammation and releases endorphins.

How can we add more laughter to our lives?

- Thank God for the blessings in your life.
- Keep a journal of happy events and situations.
- Smile. We feel better when we do.
- Spend time with people who find humor in everyday life.
- Laugh at yourself.
- Observe the humor in children.
- Bring appropriate humor into your conversations.

In conclusion, I’ll continue to thank God for our ability to laugh and share that laughter with others. In the words of Woody Allen, “I am thankful for laughter except when milk comes out of my nose.”

## Blessing of a stethoscope

BY JOAN NATHAN, RN  
HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MIDDLE ISLAND, NEW YORK

Emma Raleigh was surprised by the gift of a stethoscope from the Health Ministry Team and the Ladies Guild at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Middle Island, N.Y. On Sunday, June 24, 2012, Pastor Bruce Nathan performed the first Blessing of the Stethoscope for Emma during the worship service. She will attend Concordia College—New York in Bronxville this fall as a nursing student. The church is excited to see this generous, talented young woman begin her career in nursing. Parish nursing is a new concept to Emma, and she is excited to find ways to serve Christ through nursing.

Teaching clinical classes at Good Samaritan Hospital provided an opportunity for me to encourage students as they learned to take care of patients. One day, a student sat quietly waiting for our clinical day to begin. She wore a lavender stethoscope. When I asked about her stethoscope, she was excited to tell me that it was a gift. “As I use it, I remember that my friends have faith in me to be a good nurse. This gives me strength,” she said.

I thought about the student’s words on my way home. God tells us to encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11). My heart beat faster as I thought about how wonderful it would be for a church to encourage a student by presenting a stethoscope that had been blessed. I knew just the right student. Emma is the granddaughter of a couple at our church. Emma also was a new high school graduate who



From left: Joan Nathan, parish nurse; Emma Raleigh, nursing student at Concordia College—New York, Bronxville, N.Y.; Pastor Bruce Nathan

had plans to study nursing at Concordia, Bronxville. Our church knows Emma well because she volunteers with the children at our church. My heart knows her dedication to serving Jesus by serving others.

The next day I contacted our Ladies Guild president and requested support for this ministry. In addition, I contacted the members of the Health Ministry Team. The purchase of this gift was swift, and the funds were raised within the week. Two weeks later, on June 24, 2012, Pastor Nathan happily said a blessing over the stethoscope as it was presented to Emma. May God, in His infinite wisdom and love, guide Emma in her studies. My hope is that other churches and health ministries will be inspired to present a stethoscope, along with a blessing, to nursing students.

## Conferences

### Concordia Conference for Parish Nurse and Congregational Health Ministries

The 21st Annual Concordia Conference for Parish Nurse and Congregational Health Ministries will be held at Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., May 29–31, 2013. With the theme Transforming Lives for Health, Healing and Eternity, the conference will include worship, plenary sessions, breakout sessions, exhibits and opportunities for fellowship. This year will include a global perspective with participants of the LPNI Study Tour attending and sharing information about parish nursing in Australia, Finland, Germany and Palestine. For more information or to register, contact [carol.luedersbolwerk@cuw.edu](mailto:carol.luedersbolwerk@cuw.edu).

### LPNI Study Tour 2013

Lutheran Parish Nurses International Study Tour 2013 will be to the USA and will begin at the Concordia Conference and continue with a trip to St. Louis and Lutheran sites, as well as other stops. For a complete description of the trip, visit [www.lpni.org](http://www.lpni.org) for a brochure and registration form. Note that the price of the LPNI tour includes the cost of the Concordia Conference.



*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.

## Parish nurse travel

### Finland

The LPNI Study Tour 2012 to Finland began with a diaconal conference in Oulu and then continued with a visit to Lapland and the Sami people. Fifteen people participated in the trip with representatives from Australia, Palestine and the USA. Several additional participants from Finland were part of the conference in Oulu. Highlights of the trip included the conference, a private organ concert at Oulu Cathedral (where “Beautiful Savior” was sung in four languages at the same time), a visit to the diaconal workers with the Sami people in Lapland and a visit to the Arctic Circle.

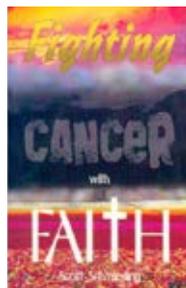
### Bethlehem

The Parish Nurse Mission and Ministry Team (associated with Bright Stars of Bethlehem) was scheduled to travel to Bethlehem on Nov. 23, 2012. However, with the escalation in the Gaza-Israeli conflict we prayed that God would clearly show us what to do. On Nov. 21, three emails were received from people in Bethlehem advising us to reschedule. The 2012 Parish Nurse Team trip will now take place March 8–16, 2013.

Karen and Mike Hardecopf will lead the 2013 Parish Nurse Team Nov. 29–Dec. 9, 2013. If you are interested in joining the 2013 team, contact Karen at [khardecopf@hiscross.org](mailto:khardecopf@hiscross.org).

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## Resources



*Fighting Cancer with Faith* is a hope-filled devotional booklet written by Rev. Scott Schmieling (LCMS pastor and stage 3 tongue cancer survivor). This is a wonderful resource for patients, survivors and others affected by cancer. The booklet is printed in a bright and cheerful style and is filled with Christ-centered messages of hope. For prices and ordering information, contact Rev. Schmieling at [fightcancerwithfaith@gmail.com](mailto:fightcancerwithfaith@gmail.com) or call 225-802-8602.