

Parish Nurses Celebrate 20 Years of Compassionate, Christ-centered Care

By Kim Krull

When LCMS parish nurses gathered to celebrate their ministry's 20th anniversary, they also celebrated lives that have been saved in congregations and communities through their compassionate care for body and soul.

"We heard about a number of situations where, because of a parish nurse's perceptiveness, she uncovered a health condition before it became dangerous – conditions such as hypertension, mini-strokes, and more," said Maggie Karner, director of LCMS Life and Health Ministries. "Parish nurses provide a valuable assistance to pastors and are making a real difference to people, physically and spiritually."

Karner made those remarks after the annual Concordia Conference for Parish Nurse and Congregational Health Ministries, May 27-29, at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon. More than 100 parish nurses attended the conference, which included a birthday party hosted by LCMS World Relief and Human Care highlighting two decades of parish nursing. LCMS President Rev. Gerald B. Kieschnick proclaimed May 28 "National Parish Nursing Day."

"Our church body is so very blessed by your army of health professionals who understand that you are a 'continuation' of the love and care that Christ demonstrated to the needy of Palestine 2,000 years ago," said Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS WR-HC executive director, in a "thank you" letter read by Karner to the parish nurses. "You are a continuation of Christ's presence of love shown through myriad saints across the ages of His church."

LCMS WR-HC coordinates the parish nurse ministry, which officially began when Dr. Marcia Schnorr was invited to develop the program. Parish nursing has grown from a handful of nurses in 1989 to more than 1,000 today.

Blood pressure checks are their most familiar role, but parish nurses do much more,



LCMS Parish Nursing Coordinator Dr. Marcia Schnorr, left, serves cake to parish nurses at the ministry's 20th anniversary birthday party, May 28, hosted by LCMS World Relief and Human Care at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon. The parish nurses are, from left, Karen Hardecopf, Yorkville; Kitty Weber, Aurora; and Marilyn Cummins, St. Charles, all from Illinois.

including talking with new mothers about infant needs and explaining a diagnosis to a confused congregant.

Schnorr says parish nursing will continue to grow. Today's complicated health care system, the mobility of families, and longer lives with more chronic illness "clearly point to a need for compassionate, Christ-centered care," she said.

Supporting parish nurses is a primary goal of LCMS WR-HC. On tap for this year is a parish nurse certification course on DVD for registered nurses. RNs interested in earning a parish nursing certificate also can request a portfolio review. Both opportunities are geared

to nurses unable to take part in on-site education classes.

LCMS WR-HC also provides resources for parish nurses to use in their ministries and coordinates the LCMS Parish Nurse Directory.

If your congregation is interested in starting a parish nurse ministry or you are a nurse seeking an opportunity to serve both physical and spiritual needs, contact Karner at 800-248-1930, ext. 1371, or maggie.karner@lcms.org or Schnorr at 815-562-6823 or mschnorr@rochelle.net.

Your unrestricted gifts to LCMS WR-HC help support parish nursing, which receives no funding from the Synod's unrestricted budget.

From the Executive Director

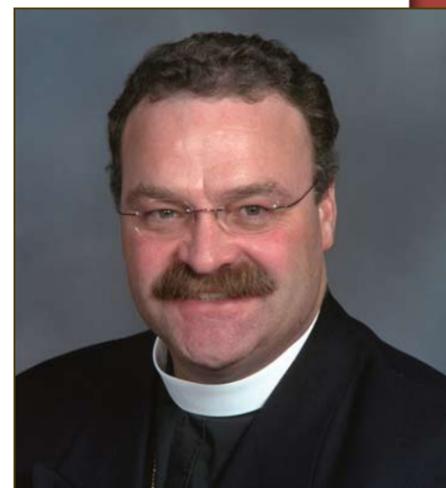
When I was a young man, just after losing my grandmother Harrison, I realized that the remaining three grandparents would not be around much longer, so I began asking questions of them about their lives. Grandpa Harrison was born in 1899 and died in his mid 90s. He told me about a relative he knew who fought in the Civil War. I talked to him about farming with horses. "Do you remember the names of the horses, grandpa?" He'd get a glimmer in his eye, dip his head, looking over the rims of his glasses with a smile, "Oh, I had a few names for 'em!" We'd laugh together. We talked about farming in the early days, about rebuilding Model T engines on the kitchen table in the winter time (I don't think grandma let that happen more than once!). I remember well that old oak table, sitting on the linoleum floor next to the old corn cob-burning stove. My, how grandma could cook on that stove!

One time I asked granddad what it had been like to live through the Great Depression. "Matt, more than once I remember putting my last dime in the offering plate," he said. He had been a charter member of Bethel Lutheran in Lawton, Iowa. My grandparents had six kids, farmed a small place east of Sioux City, Iowa, and lived what I might call "a modest life of plenty." When grandma wasn't up at church sewing quilts, she was sewing at home, making wedding dresses. Their lives (our lives) were very modest. Yet there was always "plenty" of work, plenty of love, plenty of relatives, plenty of fun, and plenty to eat.

Times are tight, and we are feeling the pinch, as are all churchly and charitable institutions. Moreover, those whom we are able to help are feeling the pinch too. Many of our larger donors have really been affected by the market and economy. I just want to state here how much we appreciate your generosity, no matter what your situation. The Lord has blessed, is blessing, and will bless your gracious gifts. And he is pleased with all of them in and through the cross of Christ. Just as I learned from granddad, He provides. Thank you!

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich [The gift] is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Cor. 8:9, 12).

Pastor Matthew Harrison



Mercy forever.