



WHAT IS A PARISH NURSE?

Following the example of Christ, the Church has always sought to care for people, body and soul. As in the ministry of Jesus, so also in the Church's life, the proclamation of the Gospel and care for earthly needs of those who are hurting go hand in hand.

“By this we know love, that he laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (1 JOHN 3:16-18)

The New Testament gives ample witness to the Church's corporate life of mercy (**ACTS 6; 2 COR. 8-9**). The parish nurse is a vital, contemporary expression of this mercy and compassion.

The roots of parish nursing are ancient. Modern expressions in Lutheran churches in the United States date to the early 1800s. The parish nursing movement has grown tremendously in recent years. Parish nurses in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod enjoy a vocation that allows them to provide professional health care in the context of faith in Christ and His church.

By sharing in Christ's healing love to persons of all ages, parish nurses promote a stewardship of health. Parish nursing is a wonderful complement to good pastoral care and assists the Body of Christ in outreach to their communities.

HOW DO PARISH NURSES SERVE?

Parish nurses tailor their duties to fit the needs of their congregations and communities. Their responsibilities may include the following:

1. Health Education
 - Offering health screenings and services (blood pressure checks, flu shots)
 - Providing classes on health and safety issues (CPR, infant/child safety, caring for the caregiver)
 - Facilitating support groups
 - Coordinating health fairs
2. Personal Health Counseling
 - Meeting patients one-on-one to discuss health concerns and assess emotional and spiritual needs
 - Encouraging stewardship of body, mind and spirit.



3. Serving as Liaison to Community Health Resources
 - Making referrals, when needed, to health care providers and social services
 - Initiating a congregational response to a community crisis
4. Coordination of Volunteers
 - Arranging transportation assistance, visits to shut-ins, and meals for families during difficult times
 - Serving as the liaison to a congregation's human care or social ministry committee
5. Integration of Faith and Healing
 - Providing resources for health care decision-making within a Lutheran Christian context
 - Encouraging and assisting the congregation as they share the Gospel in both word and deed
 - Assisting pastoral staff with parishioner visitations as needed and offering appropriate support for other family caregivers
 - Serving as a resource for information and education on healthcare decision-making within a Lutheran Christian context
 - Mentoring church staff members in establishing and maintaining good health habits in the face of job stress and increased time demands

ON THE ROLE OF THE PARISH NURSE

“The parish nurse is an invaluable asset to the pastoral staff. The parish nurse provides Christian-to-Christian care and spiritual concern while addressing medical and often psychological needs. Parish nurses can provide care for Christian women that is not possible for a pastor to provide. Providing professional care, the parish nurse takes many issues off the plate of the pastoral staff, making sure hurting people don’t ‘fall through the cracks.’ The parish nurse is also a wonderful extension of the eyes and ears of the congregation’s shepherd, making sure the pastor knows when a member of the flock is in special need of pastoral attention. Of all the many tasks we have at The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, providing resources for parish nursing is one of the most vital.”

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison
 President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

PARISH NURSE COMPENSATION

Hours and compensation vary among congregations. Some parish nurses are salaried; some are volunteer. Some compensation for expenses is encouraged. Regardless of the compensation, the parish nurse should be considered part of the church staff.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Registered nurses who wish to become parish nurses are encouraged to participate in a parish nurse preparation program that includes the LCMS theological component.

To learn more about parish nursing preparation programs log onto lcms.org/health.

A PARISH NURSING LEADER

In 1988, the LCMS became the first church body to name a national parish nurse coordinator: Dr. Marcia Schnorr. Today the Synod is recognized as a trailblazing leader in this caring ministry.

The LCMS’ Health Ministry coordinates and promotes the vocation of parish nursing. Under this leadership, a Parish Nurse Council serves as a resource for the LCMS and is a catalyst for coordinating the national and international opportunities for LCMS parish nurses.

