

What's New in Parish Nursing and Health Ministry?

by Catherine Lick

A Parish Nurse ministry offers the love and care of Christ in a congregation and the community. A Parish Nurse can reflect Christ's love by bringing holistic—physical, emotional, spiritual, relational— healing, care, comfort and hope to hurting people in our broken and sinful world. Here are some stories from my ministry to help you see how each of these gifts can be employed to benefit God's people.

Healing. Often, healing is achieved through health education and counseling, either by directing persons to the proper medical person or by helping the patient choose good health behaviors. Recently, I called a man who had returned home after surgery. He complained to me that he had to wear elastic stockings which were not very comfortable. I explained to him that they were very important in helping to prevent blood clots from forming. During the conversation, I also told him to watch for any lumps, red streaks, or swelling of his leg which could be signs of a clot. A couple of days later, his wife was at church and told me her husband had a lump on his leg. I told her to call her husband and have him call his doctor immediately. The doctor instructed him to go to the emergency room, where he was diagnosed with a clot and was admitted to the hospital. He remained hospitalized for a week, but he is healthy today!

Care. Good relationships and trust lead to the opportunities for care giving. While visiting

an elderly couple, I recognized that the husband was very fatigued as he cared for his invalid wife. He stated, "This horse just can't pull this load any more." We discussed options for care and he accepted the help of a caregiver who was a member of our church. The support of the caregiver gave him relief, which decreased his stress and improved his health.

Comfort. Bringing a Stephen Ministry to our congregation has been a tremendous help in providing comfort to hurting people. A divorced woman, who was suffering from cancer, felt alone in dealing with her illness. She could not work and faced multiple challenges with her finances and some of her relationships. Her Stephen Minister kept contact with her for two years. She acknowledged that, without the love and care of her Stephen Minister, she didn't know how she would have coped during this very difficult time.

Hope. The son of an elderly parishioner called and asked that someone visit his mother, since she could no longer attend church. She had been in hospice care for several months and had been doing very well. But now she was weaker, and had even fallen several times. I visited her and brought her a clinging cross (it is shaped to fit in your hand, so you can cling to it). We talked about the journey she was soon to take and that the cross was the only thing she needed for the journey. I shared with her Revelation 7:14, which describes heaven. The next day she went into a coma and died three days later. What a blessing, to have shared the hope of heaven with her!

There are many "stories", but I pray that these will give you an idea of what a Parish Nurse/Health Ministry can bring to a congregation. For anyone who is unfamiliar with this ministry, please visit www.michigandistrict.org under Ministries/Christian Care or contact me by e-mail click@faithtroy.org or 248.689.4664.

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