

ILLUSTRATIONS OF HOW PARISH NURSE MINISTRY IMPACTS CONGREGATIONS

STORIES FROM PN AROUND THE NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

I love being with people – using my nursing knowledge to help someone journey through a ‘foreign land’ of hospitals, diagnoses and the medical world, all relating to the bigger picture of faith and the ability to withstand life’s crises.

I have a Parish Nurse office with a sofa and pillow for people to rest on if needed, a chair for nursing moms, a closet of medical equipment that people can borrow and a reference library for the congregation’s use. It was a real privilege for me as a parish nurse to lead a widow to faith in Christ. It was during her husband’s dying days that the ministry of the Word, the Church and the Holy Spirit finally spoke powerfully to her.

Participating in weekly staff meetings is a good time for communication between staff members. We share in a devotional time and prayer and also spend time in prayer for the needs of our church. (& The other side of the coin, as it were)

My greatest struggle is not knowing where or if I fit into the team as a colleague. It has always been one of my greatest desires that our staff really be a cohesive team and a disappointment that it is not.

Bereavement ministry: calls, support at funerals, cards signed during holidays by all the staff and personally delivered to families who have lost loved ones during the year.

The following occurrence could be from many of the congregations in our conference:

An elderly lady who lived alone and had no relatives living close by started showing signs of memory loss. Her out of state relatives became very concerned about her safety. I became the liaison person: communicating with her out of state relatives and accompanying her to doctor appointments. Because of the church’s involvement, she was able to stay in her own home. The importance of my accompanying her to appointments became very clear when I picked her up for an appointment one day and she asked me if I knew how to get to the doctors office - because she didn’t. What you need to know is, that up to this time I let her meet me at the clinic. That particular day I had an urge to call her and tell her I would pick her up. God intervened that day!

Our church has a membership of less than 100 people. They are gradually seeing my role as their Parish Nurse as beneficial to them. I am often asked advice over the phone and I routinely telephone those that are in need of encouragement. The congregation is very supportive as is the Pastor. The diaconate board in essence serves as the Health Committee. I am chair of the Diaconate Board.

One project is to do some exercising for a minute or two during the worship service, either with a chorus or some verses incorporated into the exercise. These exercise times do make a lot of people smile even if it is a little out of the ordinary for Covenant parishioners. AND particularly SWEDES!

I placed Hand Sanitizers and reminders in the Narthex as well as on the coffee & meal tables. I have also placed First Aid Kits on each level of the church. For our Young Adults/Parents we sponsored Family Fun Day – I presented a “Parent’s Health Toolbox.”

The following is common to nearly all PN Ministries: Blood Pressure checks on one Sunday a month, monthly newsletter articles and bulletin board with a health theme; networking with the Pastor on a regular basis; attend Care Commission, Council meetings and provide reports for the Congregational Business Meetings.

AROUND THE NATION:

The Resources Dept at Covenant Hdqtrrs in Chicago connected a Parish Nurse in Oregon with me by email. She had a question about personal liability insurance. (and yes, Parish Nurses are encouraged to carry their own liability insurance for a nominal annual fee). This PN has had no contact with other Covenant PN.

An elderly man in CA asked for information on how to start a Parish Nurse Ministry at his church.

At the ECC annual mtg in St. Paul last June, people from around the country visited our display booth. We were very encouraged by our experience. Follow-up emails have been sent to several of those we spoke with & we hope to continue the conversations.

A vision of the PN Commission is to network with PN at the ECC annual mtg in 2012, with a display booth & perhaps blood pressure screening, with the help of PN from other conferences. To assist us in networking, we hope to have a link between the ECC website & NWC website very soon. More illustrations of PN Ministry will be added to our web page which is located under ‘affiliated ministry.’

This past year, two congregations in the NWC started a Parish Nurse Ministry. The NWC through our Commission partnered with the congregations by paying half the expense of the Preparation Course for the two nurses. We have recently been contacted by two more congregations interested in beginning PN Ministry this year.

We, the NWC PN, thank the conference, our pastors and congregations for the encouragement and support we receive.