

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 Nursing



“Little children, let us not love in word or talk *but in deed and in truth.*”

1 John 3:18 ESV



Health Ministry

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What Is a Parish Nurse?

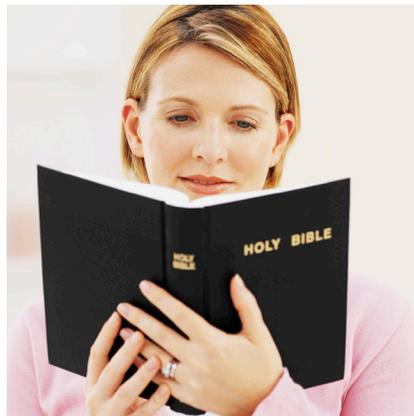


Following the example of Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel and care for the earthly needs of those who are hurting go hand in hand. The parish nurse is a vital, contemporary expression of this mercy and compassion in the church.

“By this we know love, that [Christ] 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 ESV).

The roots of parish nursing are ancient. Modern expressions in Lutheran churches in the United States date to the early 1800s. As the parish nursing movement has grown, the Synod has become a trailblazing leader in this caring ministry. In 1988, it became the first church body to name a national parish nurse coordinator: Dr. Marcia Schnorr.

Today, parish nurses in the LCMS enjoy a vocation that allows them to provide professional health care in the context of faith in Christ and His Church. Concern for the whole person makes parish nursing 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:

Health Education

- › Offer health screenings and services.
- › Provide classes on health and safety issues.
- › Facilitate support groups.
- › Coordinate health fairs.

Personal Health Counseling

- › Meet patients one-on-one to discuss health concerns and assess emotional and spiritual needs.
- › Encourage stewardship of body, mind and spirit.

Liaison to Community Health Resources

- › Make referrals, when needed, to health-care providers and social services.
- › Initiate a congregational response to a community crisis.

Coordinator of Volunteers

- › Arrange transportation, meals and visits to shut-ins and families experiencing difficult times.
- › Serve as the liaison to a congregation’s human-care or social ministry committee.

Integrator of Faith and Healing

- › Provide resources for health care decision-making within a Lutheran Christian context.
- › Encourage and assist the congregation in sharing the Gospel.
- › Assist pastoral staff with parishioner visits and in providing support for caregivers.
- › Mentor church staff in establishing good health habits.

Education 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, visit www.lcms.org/health/education.

Parish Nurse Compensation

Hours and compensation vary. Some parish nurses are paid and some are unpaid. Regardless of the compensation, the parish nurse should be considered part of the church staff.