

You need an FCN

JAMES A. CRESS



Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'¹

When Jesus commissioned His apostles to ministry, He sent them two-by-two to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (Luke 9:2). Today, these paired priorities remain central to what ministers should accomplish.

Despite Jesus placing equal weight on both preaching and healing, we often focus just on proclamation with very little, if any, time left over for healing. We even suspect the term *healing* as only the province of sensational, overly emotional public display rather than empathetic sharing of Holy Spirit power.

Limited knowledge about health and medical issues may also deter integrating a healing ministry into our pastoral and evangelistic endeavors. Over extended physicians may interact with their too-busy pastors at church functions, but neither expects the other to intrude on their specialized work. So how can we combine expertise in preaching and healing for nurture and evangelism?

Over the past few months, I have begun conversation with several colleagues on the role of the parish nurse, better termed Faith Community Nurse



Katia Reinert

(FCN). In fact, I am indebted for much of this content to family nurse practitioner, Katia Reinert (MSN, FNP-BC, FCN), who serves as coordinator for Maryland-based

Adventist HealthCare's Faith Community Nursing, a specialty recognized by the American Nurses Association for which registered nurses must receive additional preparation and study.

Reinert says, "There must be other ways to minister to the sick in a wholesome way without overwhelming the pastor or compromising the preaching of the Word. One powerful and effective solution is to

add an FCN to the ministerial team. Many churches have experienced the blessing of having paid or volunteer FCNs on their staff who work effectively alongside the ministers to provide healing of body, mind, and spirit, as well as lead in health evangelism and wellness promotion for the congregation and community."

In order to understand their role, it helps to understand what FCNs are *not* to do. The FCN is not a physician and will not diagnose or treat illness. The FCN is not a home or public health nurse and will not dispense medications or provide treatments prescribed by a physician. The FCN is not a therapist and will not perform physical, occupational, or psychotherapy. Neither is the FCN a clergyperson, but comes to the ministry team with a deep spiritual commitment.

Rather, the FCN provides health and spiritual coaching whose major functions include being an integrator of faith and health, health educator, counselor, and advocate, referral advisor, developer and facilitator of support groups, provider of spiritual care, and trainer of volunteers.

Consider various options how your church could afford additional staff: ask busy professionals who understand the value of FCNs to sponsor this ministry, retired nurses might willingly obtain the necessary training and volunteer full or part-time service, cooperatively share expenses with other congregations, schools could share costs for a combined FCN/school nurse, several volunteers might divide FCN responsibilities to provide various services just as any member volunteers some time each month, administrators might consider sponsoring this effective ministry in a community where a number of churches would benefit from coordinated health ministry.

Issues and benefits to consider include:

- Much of a pastor's work is health-related. The parish nurse may assist in visiting the sick, counseling, and advising members on whole-person issues.
- Volunteers are not as available as they were in the past and an FCN facilitates effectively meeting many needs.
- Clergy and congregations often must interact with community facilities and bureaucracies. FCNs can contribute knowledge and skills to bridge the gap.
- FCNs help improve member and clergy health, as well as lead in health evangelistic efforts in conjunction with the ministry team. Such activities include, but are not limited to, holistic lifestyle classes, twelve-step groups, birthing preparation, family and parenting support, stress reduction, home and hospital visitation, exercise promotion, retirement coaching, inter-generational guidance, wholesome cooking demonstration, sexuality education, smoking cessation, divorce, loss, and grief recovery support, plus volunteer training.

To better facilitate development of FCN programs, Candace Huber of Florida Hospital's Parish Nurse Institute has prepared a variety of materials and information including a helpful DVD, *Beyond Four Walls*, which you can view online at www.parnursing.net.

Although not a new concept, Faith Community Nursing is rapidly expanding as both denominational and health professionals recognize the enhanced effectiveness that result from ministers who are also medical missionaries, who can cure physical ailments and, thus, are much more efficient workers than those who cannot do this. Their work as ministers of the gospel is much more complete (see *Medical Ministry*, 245). ■

1 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

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To: NAD Ministries Convention Participants

Dear Pastoral Colleague:

Greetings in the name of our Wonderful Saviour, Jesus Christ.

On the back side of this letter, you will find my article from the December issue of *Ministry* on the exciting and important area of Faith Community Nursing.

Now you have opportunity to hear, first-hand, a dynamic seminar on this important area of church nurture and outreach.

Please allow me to encourage you to incorporate Faith Community Nursing into the ministry activities of your congregations. Even if you do not have sufficient resources to add a “church employee” to your team, I encourage you to consider recruiting and deploying volunteer team members into this essential care-giving and soul-saving work.

Although the terminology – Faith Community Nursing – is fresh and new, the concept is as old as our denomination and emphasizes the strong importance which the Spirit of Prophecy places on joint evangelistic efforts between pastors and health workers in building a strong plan for nurture and growth.

I place great confidence in this particular ministry methodology and urge you to seek ways of implementing it for your own churches.

Your friend in our Saviour’s service,

James A. Cress
Ministerial Association Secretary