

* [**National
Information**](http://www.elpna.org/news/organization.php)



**Because the Lutheran tradition has used the term Parish Nurse more extensively, for now we are continuing to use this term, while recognizing that the term Faith Community Nurse is becoming more widely used.  We will use both Parish Nurse and Faith Community Nurse interchangeably in this web-site.**

**History of Parish Nursing:**
The 1980's began a new movement in healthcare. Diagnosis related groups (DRGS) determined what a diagnosis should require in cost reimbursement through Medicare. Wellness outcomes are not predictable and many patients were requiring more care than medical reimbursement wanted to provide. As a result of this change in healthcare management, patients were being discharged earlier and sicker.

In 1983 Lutheran Chaplain Granger Westberg proposed an experimental program to assist with medical crisis. He enlisted six Chicago congregations, four Lutheran and two Catholic to hire a nurse to care for parishioners. (Granger discovered that nurses made the easiest and most natural connection with parishioners.) Chicago Hospital Lutheran General agreed to sponsor the program by paying 3/4ths of the salary the first year, half the second year and 1/4th the third year. By the fourth year, the church was paying the full salary and more churches could be added to the program.

The Parish Nurse provided support for those discharged early from the hospital and assisted in referring congregants to health care facilities when needed. Health promotion became a necessary to component of the health and healing ministry. Hundreds of congregations now have parish nurses – many different denominations. Many churches use the model of incorporating a parish nurse as a staff member as developed by Granger Westberg. Hospitals and care facilities are finding parish nursing as a good source of outreach and prevention of unnecessary visits to the emergency room or admission to a care facility.

The Evangelical Lutheran Parish Nurse Association (ELPNA) is a nonprofit membership organization comprised of registered nurses who are affiliated with an ELCA or other Lutheran congregation. It was founded in 2004, with the first membership list including 65 nurses in the Minneapolis and St. Paul Area Synods of Minnesota. The membership is open to Registered Nurses who have completed a Parish Nurse Preparation class and are paid/unpaid/retired staff with an ELCA  or other Lutheran congregation.

**What is a Faith Community Nurse (FCN)?**

A FCN is a registered nurse with an active license in the state he/she has or has had a practice, who has taken the Foundations for Faith Community Nurse training to promote and practice Health Ministry. Whereas most health disciplines are trained in our aspect of medical care, FCNs are trained to nurture the whole person — body, mind and spirit. FCNs work in partnership with [pastors](http://npnm.org/npnm_programs0.aspx), churches, hospitals, social [service agencies](http://npnm.org/npnm_programs0.aspx), and the community. FCNs focus on prevention, wholeness, and wellness. In many communities of faith, the FCN is the Health Ministry team leader.

**Roles of a Parish/Faith Community Nurse**

**A Parish Nurse/FCN is an Integrator of faith and health**, reminding people to care for their body, mind and spirit. Parish Nurses will utilize the ELCA Wholeness Wheel to facilitate understanding and promotion on wellness. Examples include: Praying with members in need, offering Healing Services.

**A Parish Nurse/FCN is a Health Educator.** The nurse educates in all formats, one on one to group seminars. In her teaching, she encourages the understanding to the connection of attitude, faith and wellbeing. Examples include: Arranging adult forums on various health topics, teaching with Sunday school classrooms and confirmation, giving classes on diet and/or exercise.

**A Parish Nurse/FCN is a Personal Health Counselor.** The nurse discusses health problems with parishioners, giving clarity and support. The nurse makes home, hospital and nursing home visits as needed.

**The Parish Nurse/FCN is a Referral Agent.** The nurse assists with the network of the health care system, making referrals when necessary. The nurse works with community agencies, establishing resources and networks that assist with the well-being of the congregation.

**The Parish Nurse/FCN is a Health Advocate.** The nurse assists with healthcare assessments and decisions when requested or needed. At times it may mean going with a member to a MD appointment.

**The Parish Nurse/FCN is a Developer of Small Groups.** The nurse may develop small group ministry or support groups depending on the needs of the congregation. Groups could include grief support, weight loss, or parenting.

**And Finally the Parish Nurse/FCN is the Trainer of Volunteers.** Health ministry cannot be done with one person. Christ called all to be his disciples of His ministry. The nurse utilizes volunteers to assist in the ministry of health and wholeness.