

UMCOR-Health/General Board of Global Ministries

Health Ministry for United Methodist Congregations: Concepts of Health, Healing, and Wholeness

Introduction

This booklet from UMCOR Health is designed to provide a firm foundation for the practice of health ministry and wellness-focused programs within a local congregation. It offers Christian and denominational definitions of the concepts of health, healing, and wholeness; perspectives on parish – faith community nurses and health advocates as health promoters; suggestions for healing services; and resources for health-related materials and education.

Christian and United Methodist Concepts of Health, Wellness, and Health Ministry

Jesus' ministry was holistic. He ministered to the many aspects of an individual, including the physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social.¹ The New Testament provides many examples of how Jesus healed the estranged and sick and sent his disciples to pray and anoint and heal the sick.² For a list of scripture passages related to health, healing, and wholeness, see appendix A.

United Methodists have a historical foundation of holistic care. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was also a physician. As was the norm in the 18th century, clergy who trained at Oxford or Cambridge attended courses in theology and medical advice. Wesley's medical text, *Primitive Physic or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Diseases*, provided medical advice that was affordable to even the poorest. The most significant aspect of Wesley's book, as well as the medical advice that can be found scattered throughout his writings, is his continuous emphasis on preventative care and healthy living.³

According to Wesley's journal, for more than 27 years, he chose anatomy and physiology as the topic for his leisure reading hours. He applied the knowledge he gained to the basic treatment of illness, both at the dispensaries that he opened and during his travels. John Wesley perceived and earnestly desired that his followers should have healthy bodies and healthy minds as well as saved souls. History tells us that, for the most part, the common person could not afford the cost of care by a physician in Wesley's time, so most turned to the local church vicar for care. While Wesley recommended that for trauma or complicated diseases a person should seek an "honest physician that fears God," he emphasized simple, commonsense medicines and treatments. He also prescribed a healthy lifestyle that included healthy foods, exercise, cleanliness, sleep, and reduced stress.

In his *Primitive Physic*, Wesley edited the medical treatments of the day into simple forms with readily available resources. He purposely included several remedies for each disorder "not only

¹ <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/congregational/scripture> 2010 (accessed February 15, 2011).

² United Methodist Book of Worship (1996). p. 613

³ J. Shorb, "The Holistic Vision of John Wesley: Q&A with Randy Maddox Part 1." www.chreader.org/contentPage.aspx?resource_id=580 (accessed February 14, 2011.)

because all are not equally easy to be procured at all times, and in all places: but likewise because the medicine which cures one man, will not always cure another." ⁴

Perspectives on Parish – Faith Community Nurses and Health Advocates

Parish – faith community nursing is based on the healing ministry of Christ. Florence Nightingale believed that nursing was a calling as well as a profession. The specialty practice of parish – faith community nursing was founded in the late 1980s by Reverend Doctor Granger Westberg, a Lutheran pastor and chaplain, who stated that "a nurse has the sensitivity, the peripheral vision, to see beyond the patient's problems and verbal statements... to hear things that were left unsaid by the patient."⁵ According to Patterson, parish – faith community nursing is nursing that is "guided by the Holy Spirit, as the patient (parishioner or member of the community), the pastor, and the parish nurse journey together toward God within the context of the congregation and the wider community."⁶

Parish – faith community nurse health ministry builds on a solid foundation that blends science, humanities, and religion to "intentionally promote health within and beyond the faith community."⁷ Florence Nightingale, the founder of professional nursing practice, "emphasized that science-based nursing care puts individuals in the best position to benefit from the healing power of nature."⁸ John Wesley, an Anglican priest and the founder of Methodism "also had a particular care for the disadvantaged in society and wanted to make sure that all had access and understanding to the medical advice of the day."⁹

According to the 1996 edition of the United Methodist Book of Worship, healing services and prayers are an integral part of United Methodist ministry. United Methodists believe that the church's healing ministry does not detract from the knowledge God gives in the fields of physical and psychological medical practice. Preventative care and healthful living are also emphasized. God does not promise that there will be no suffering, pain, or that a person will always be cured of disease. God promises to accompany us through our life experiences even when the end result is death.

Healing services or a service of healing is not necessarily a service of curing. It is possible to be healed without being cured of a physical or mental illness. The type of healing service must be customized to the specific needs and desires of the congregation being served. In general, a healing service may be a specific service held at a stated time at regular intervals or it may be incorporated into any service of congregational worship as a Response to the Word. Prayer,

⁴ Wesley, John (1747, reprint 1960) *Primitive Physic*. Epworth Press, p. 29.

⁵ Deborah Patterson, *The Essential Parish Nurse: ABCs for Congregational Health Ministry*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.) p. 7

⁶ Deborah Patterson, *The Essential Parish Nurse: ABCs for Congregational Health Ministry*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.) p. 7

⁷ R. Buijs, J. Olson, "Parish Nurses Influencing Determinants of Health." *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 2001, 18(1), p. 13.

⁸ T. Trinite, C. Loveland-Cherry, L. Marion, "The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force: An Evidence-based Prevention Resource for Nurse Practitioners." , 21(2009), p. 301

⁹ J. Shorb, "The Holistic Vision of John Wesley: Q&A with Randy Maddox Part 1." www.chreader.org/contentPage.aspx?resource_id=580 (accessed February 14, 2011.)

anointing, laying on of hands, and music may accompany the healing service.¹⁰ *NOTE: Touch and laying on of hands in the United Methodist Church speaks of holding a hand, gently touching someone's head or shoulder and anointing as a tangible expression of the presence of the healing Christ working in and through those who provide health ministry. Touch in this connotation in no way implies promotion of any of the various forms of energy-based therapeutic touch.*

Anointing is a physical act that invokes the healing love of God. Parish – faith community nurses and health advocates may anoint with oil as they feel led to participate. The oil itself is not magical. It is often sold as Sweet oil, which is olive oil with a preservative, because plain olive oil becomes rancid over time. Fragrant anointing oils are readily available and may be used with the precaution that some members of the congregation may be sensitive or allergic to perfumes. Resources to learn more about anointing and resources for anointing oil are listed in appendix B.

Models of Health Ministry

There are many models of health ministry to choose from. It is important that the ministry be customized to serve the specific needs of a congregation and the community served.

Health ministries may be coordinated by a parish – faith community nurse. Parish – faith community nurses are registered nurses with current licensure in good standing from the state in which they practice and who have advanced training in spiritual care from an accredited educational provider such as the International Parish Nurse Resource Center.

Parish – faith community nurses are members of the church staff and may be:

- paid or unpaid professional
- full-time or part-time
- may work for one church or be shared by several churches, districts, or annual conferences
- work individually or in teams

Health ministries without parish – faith community nurses are coordinated by health advocates. Health advocates are usually volunteers who focus on specialty areas.

Health Advocates include:

- Retired registered nurses
- Licensed vocational/practical nurses
- Allied health such as social workers, therapists, pharmacists, nutritionists, and other licensed professionals
- Lay health professionals, such as exercise coaches
- Others interested in holistic health

Examples of Health Ministry Programs and Services

Below is a list of a few of the many types of programs and services that might be provided by parish – faith community nursing/health ministries. It is critical that all programs and services be customized to fit the needs of the congregation served and the abilities/resources of the providers. Clergy health support is also a part of Health Ministry.

¹⁰ United Methodist Book of Worship

Disease & injury prevention such as healthy-heart lifestyle classes, home safety checks, or blood pressure screenings

Emotional & spiritual health such as stress management, grief & loss support, or teaching the relationship between faith & health

Family health such as parenting, care for aging parents, or emergency preparedness

Volunteer training such as CPR/first aid, home visitation, blood pressure screeners, or Stephen ministers

Guidelines for health committees

Health ministries encourage and empower everyone to develop and share their gifts and talents to serve others—it is a team sport that holistically improves the health of the server as well as those being served. Health committees are vital to support and guide health ministry in a congregation. The health committee is a sub-committee of the church council and is comprised of people interested in the holistic health and welfare of the congregation and surrounding community.

Members of already established specialty ministries, such as Stephen ministers, visitation, youth, and elderly ministries, should be included as partners with health ministry. While it is important that the pastor assist in the development and support the health committee's goals, it is the laity's responsibility to chair the committee. The committee must be able to continue the work of health ministry, as pastors are frequently reassigned.

Responsibilities

- Plan and recruit leaders
- Select and support a parish nurse and/or team of parish nurses
- Develop policies and guidelines for the health ministry aligned with conference and denominational guidelines
- Assist with introduction and promotion of health ministry to the congregation
- Provide support and direction by setting obtainable goals
- Assist leaders/parish nurse in selecting and providing appropriate programs and activities
- Monitor programs and leaders for quality and need
- Evaluate all leaders and programs annually and make recommendations regarding changes and modifications to enhance the ministry
- Report regularly to the church council

Getting Started

- Pray for discernment and guidance
- Contact GBGM-UMC Parish Nursing for information and contacts in your area.
- Check with your conference office regarding a conference parish nurse/health ministry coordinator and other parish nurses in your conference
- Seek out parish nurses in your area who already work in a health ministry setting

- Visit local parish nurse coalitions for ideas and support.
- Explore the GBGM-UMC parish nurse website, the International Parish Nurse Resource Center website, and the Health Ministries Association website for resources, educational offerings, and networks in your area.
- Visit with your pastor, district superintendent and other leaders in your church about your call to health ministry.
- With the assistance of the pastor and church council, develop a health ministry committee.
- Find out the health needs and interests of the congregation through surveys and visiting Sunday school classes, youth groups, and other health-related programs already in place.
- Network with other parish nurses, other congregations, other denominations, and organizations in your community to explore partnerships for serving your congregation and community.

Work with the health ministry committee to define, describe, plan, and promote your health ministry.

Financing Health Ministry Programs and Services

There are many ways to finance a health ministry, so be creative and flexible! Explore the possibilities for funding and don't hesitate to ask. Here are a few suggestions to get started:

- pray
- develop a working budget based on goals
- consider sources within your congregation such as individuals and groups or classes who support projects
- members of community organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lion's club
- memorial donations and honorariums
- check with the district and conference regarding seed money and additional funding for education or programs
- research the grant funders in your area
- fund raisers

Definitions

Health Ministry: The purposeful ministry of working with individuals, families, groups, congregations, and communities to focus on holistic health, wellness, and disease and injury prevention. Health Ministry is usually directed by a health committee incorporating a parish – faith community nurse or health advocate and customized to fit the needs of a specific congregation.

Parish – Faith Community Nurse: Registered nurse with active licensure in the state of practice with advanced training in spiritual care from an accredited educational provider such as the International Parish Nurse Resource Center. Parish – faith community nurses serve as health counselors, health educators, health advocates, and referral agents.

Health Advocate: Retired registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, allied health professionals, lay health professionals, others interested in holistic health, who provide health ministry usually in a specific area related to their expertise. Health advocates may work in

conjunction with a parish – faith community nurse or under the direction of a health committee.

Structure of the United Methodist denomination: The local church is a member of a district. Districts are members of an annual conference. Annual conferences are members of a jurisdiction. There may or may not be a parish nurse/health ministry coordinator at each of these levels. At the denomination level, parish nursing/health ministry is a division of UMCOR Health.

Health: According to the 2008 *Book of Resolutions, "Health and Wholeness,"* health is the ultimate design of God for humanity and is a gift from God. It includes biological well-being as well as spiritual health. The *Faith Community Nursing Scope & Standards of Practice* (2005) defines health as "the integration of the spiritual, physical, psychological, and social aspects of the patient, promoting a sense of harmony with self, other, the environment, and a higher power."

Healing: The root of the word *healing* in New Testament Greek, *sozo*, is the same as that of *salvation* and *wholeness*. All healing is of God.¹¹ It is "the process of integrating the body, mind, and spirit to create wholeness, health, and a sense of well-being, even when the patient's illness is not cured."¹²

Anointing: Anointing the forehead with oil is a sign or act that invokes the healing love of God.

Resources

Internet

www.gb-gm-umc.org/parishnursing

Website for United Methodist Parish Nurses and Health Advocates

www.parishnurses.com

International Parish Nurse Resource Center

www.HMAAssoc.org

Health Ministries Association

www.JCN.org

Journal of Christian Nursing

http://www.healthministries.info/module8/8m_healing.html

Sample UMC healing service

Books

Patterson, Deborah (2008). *Health Ministries: A Primer for Clergy and Congregations*. Pilgrim Press.

McNamara, Jill Westberg (2006) *Health and Wellness: What Your Faith Community Can Do*. Pilgrim Press.

IPNRC, (2002) *The Health Cabinet: How to Start a Wellness Committee in Your Church*. International Parish Nurse Resource Center.

Wesley, John. *Primitive Physic or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Diseases*. ***Reprint copies available**

UMCOR Health (2009) *Introduction to Health Ministry for United Methodist Congregations*

Methodist Publishing House (1996) *United Methodist Book of Worship, Section VIII*

Madden, Deborah (2008). *Inward & Outward Health: John Wesley's Holistic Concept of Medical Science, the Environment, and Holy Living*.

¹¹ United Methodist Book of Worship (1996). p. 613

¹² ANA/HMA (2005) *Faith Community Nursing Scope & Standards of Practice*. p. 3

Holifield, E. Brooks (1986). *Health and Medicine in the Methodist Tradition: Journey Toward Wholeness*.

Articles

Hughes, Melanie (2008). "The Holistic Way: John Wesley's Practical Piety as a Resource for Integrated Healthcare." *Journal of Religion & Health* 47, no. 2:237-252.

Appendix A

Scriptures related to health, healing, wholeness

Matthew 9:27-30	Jeremiah 17:14	Matthew 14:36
Mark 8:22-25	Psalms 31:12	Ecclesiastes 4:10
John 9:1-7	Ezekiel 34:16	Mark 16:18
Mark 7:33	Hosea 6:1	Luke 4:18
Mark 1:29-31	Romans 14:7	Luke 4:23
Luke 22:49-51	Matthew 9:12	Luke 4:40
Isaiah 53:5	Matthew 9:22	Acts 5:16
Jeremiah 8:22	Matthew 10:8	James 5:15
Psalms 69:20	Romans 14:7	John 16:32

Appendix B

www.cokesbury.com: Wide variety of oils and containers as well as the books listed below.

www.youngliving.com: Twelve oils of Ancient Scripture: Contains 12 samples of ancient oils and information booklet.

Ramirez, Frank, (2005) *Partners in Healing: The Ministry of Anointing*.

Henry, Melanie & Gina Lynnes (2007) *Anointing for Healing*. Comes with vial of oil.

Stewart, David (2007) *Healing Oils of the Bible*.

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