

## What is the Role of the Australian Faith Community Nurses Association?

### **AFCNA provides the community with:**

information, education, resources, research and publications; aiming to increase awareness of health related issues through the agency of health ministry workers employed by a faith community. (They may be working in a salaried or voluntary capacity).

### **AFCNA provides health ministry workers with:**

1. *Information, education and resources to perform their role which includes:*

- promoting and sustaining charitable health care;
- preventing disease and alleviating illness;
- facilitating the social preconditions for health;
- assisting individuals with condition/disease self-management;
- supporting those with existing disease within a community environment;
- assisting people to see how integrating faith can promote health.

This care is undertaken within the supportive context of an employing faith community to whom the health ministry worker is accountable.

2. *Standards of practice relevant to health ministry and professional conduct.*

As Australia's peak professional body for faith community nurses, AFCNA is a member of the Council of National Nursing Organisations in Australia. AFCNA assists with promotion and publicity of health ministry and the Faith Community Nurse role and functions. We liaise with comparable professional bodies locally, nationally and internationally; to ensure quality communication and networking to increase awareness of the opportunities that health ministry provides to all Australians.

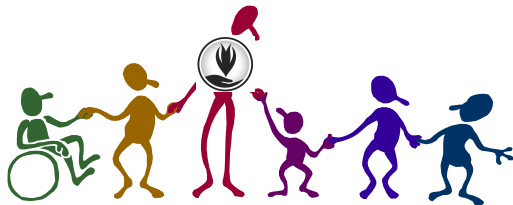
### **AFCNA provides faith communities with:**

consultancy; resources; education; and networking opportunities to enable them to commence, nurture and sustain viable health ministries. There is a Graduate Diploma Theology (FCN) course endorsed by AFCNA which is available at Australian Lutheran College via flexible delivery. It is aimed at registered nurses but is equally beneficial for, and available to, other health professionals. Information at [www.alc.edu.au](http://www.alc.edu.au). For AFCNA contacts

see our website at [www.afcna.org.au](http://www.afcna.org.au).

Email inquiries to [afcna@afcna.org.au](mailto:afcna@afcna.org.au).

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# Introducing Health Ministry to Your Church



*Promoting health of body, mind and spirit...*

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## What Does God's Word Have to Say About the Church's Role in the Health and Healing Ministry?

The Church has a vital role in health and healing ministry. The way that Christians care for one another is a powerful witness of God's love and grace. It is also an expression of living out what we preach and teach in a practical way that glorifies God.

The Church is commanded by Christ to *"preach, teach and heal the sick"* (Luke 9:2). The Church has a role in modelling Jesus' healing ministry, to which almost a third of the gospels are devoted.

Wellbeing, the result of healing, allows the Church to serve God in the best possible way and involves the responsible stewardship of our gifts (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). How we use our body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and the life God gives us, is our "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1) and response to His love.

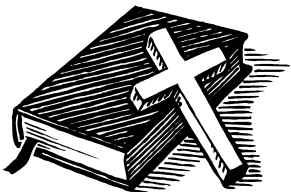
The Church is called to encourage growth towards wholeness - an abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10). A health and healing ministry allows the Church to assist others to improve/maintain their physical, emotional and spiritual health.

The Church has a mandate to care for those in need and to respond to Jesus' message; *"...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"* (Matthew 25: 40). A health and healing ministry expands on the Church's role in following Christ's example (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Church points others to Jesus through the way it cares for God's people; *"by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"* (John 13:35). The Church's involvement in health and healing ministry is a demonstration of its faith; *"faith by itself, if not accompanied by action is dead"* (James 2:17).

The Church has a theological directive to serve; to seek justice; to exercise good stewardship; to empower people; to nurture growth toward wholeness in and through Jesus Christ, facilitating God's mission and ministry in this world. This is achieved within a community of healing - people who are connected and able to reach out with strength and solidarity, to provide renewed hope, meaning, purpose and support. Health Ministry motivates, inspires and equips people in the Church to *"love one another"* through a health, healing and pastoral care ministry which speaks deeply to the human spirit and brings glory to God.

I have experienced first hand the Church's vital role in health and healing ministry after a tragic accident left my husband a quadriplegic. The holistic care that my husband, three children and I received through Health Ministry enabled us to cope remarkably well under extreme conditions. The powerful witness of God's love that this ministry displays lives on.



Millie Davey RN. RMHN. Grad.Dip.Theol.(FCN)

- It is important to have a place for face to face, or telephone interviews where clients are assured of privacy and confidentiality.
- Hold a commissioning service for the health ministry team – it helps people know you are being sent with the blessing of the faith community, and ministering on their behalf.

### Getting Started Phase 3: Health Ministry in Action

- **Documentation:** Keep documents that are uniform and legally accountable. AFCNA has a manual of proformas available for nurses working in health ministry that will have universal appeal. Always maintain an accurate record of activity; client progress, evaluations and a personal portfolio of your HM practice.
- **Recruiting more HM volunteers:** Survey the faith community for time and talents. Present and introduce the HM role, functions and program to the faith community and the wider community - inform how they may refer and volunteer their assistance. Make a personal approach to appropriate people as this often has the most success. Clarify the reason you need volunteers, and the time & level of commitment necessary. Provide a position description that details responsibilities and benefits of the position.
- **Preparation:** Undertake the "Introduction to Health Ministry" course AFCNA offer. It costs approximately \$250-300 for a 2-3 day intensive course including a course manual. Budget to enable people to attend. These courses provide a baseline for HM and are an investment in preparing your team for this ministry role.
- **Program Planning:** Ensure programs conducted meet the needs of the faith community. Then, extend the reach of your programs into the wider community. It helps to do a 'needs survey' to identify pertinent needs in the faith community and the region. Start with a program directed to an established need for a lot of people, avoiding controversial programs in the early stages, and focus on wellness, not just diseases.
- Use the weekly newsletter for health tips and publicity of program activities.
- Develop a health resource area within the building for your HM publications.
- **Visiting:** It is wise to commence the health ministry with visits to people who require assistance. Visits build rapport within the faith community and when people can see the health needs of members being met they endorse the HM role as 'more than a program' but a genuine health and pastoral care ministry.
- **Celebrate** regularly with your team. Pray together, read God's word together, learn and encourage each other. Keep sharing the blessing of this ministry.

*"In our church we provide foot, back and neck massages to those in need. Older people who can't reach their feet are helped to stay mobile. These occasions provide us with an opportunity to provide physical care, and the person having the foot massage talks to you about life. I have been able to pray with people about many issues while providing them with a tangible experience of Jesus' love for them. We have massaged the feet of pregnant mothers, people with mental illness, exasperated parents of young children, and ofcourse people with physical illness. It is an unassuming and powerful way to communicate Christ's healing love at their point of need."*

(Pastoral Nurse: Blackwood Hills Baptist Church)



- **Develop a proposal** which defines the population to be served, offer a description of HM roles, functions and programs, identify goals that complement and supplement current ministries.
- Submit proposal to the governing person/body of the faith community for permission to start.
- **Develop position descriptions** and criteria for selection (this may be necessary before the permission to commence has been granted). Clarify position description and (if salaried the contract) ensuring that it is realistic with respect to capabilities, time and the resources available, before both parties sign the agreement. Organise for selection/appointment of the HM leader.
- **Accountability** structures need to be identified.
- Ensure all practising health professionals have current registration from the regulatory authority in your State/Territory and a current practising certificate/licensure. This should be sighted and documented annually by a representative of the employing faith community.
- **Insurance** must be in place prior to commencement of the HM. The adequacy of the insurance cover must be ascertained to be sure your work is completely covered. Get this documented in writing and keep that information on file.
- **Orientation:** After appointment, ensure the HM workers are orientated to the faith community, the pastoral care team, the structures and processes in place to 'get things done'.

### Getting Started Phase 2: Commencing the Health Ministry

- **Promote** the health ministry in weekly bulletin, newsletters, notice boards, spots during services, presentations to small groups, fliers, posters, and personal introductions etc. Create a brochure about health ministry that explains the role, functions, services, programs, activities and the time and place these will occur, and how clients/participants can make contact.
- **Network** with other local health services. Know appropriate referral processes; do not duplicate existing services. Establish referral networks.
- Network with other faith communities in the area and establish key contact persons for support, mentoring and resource and referral.
- **Assess the health needs** of your faith community using a health survey form, telephone survey, direct visits, small groups, etc.
- **Programs** must be congruent with the vision, mission and values of the faith community and current health care. They should reflect a holistic perspective of the person and focus on promoting health and wellbeing, preventing disease, and self-managing existing conditions/illness.  
**Short term plan:** specific activities that are achievable. Start small and do a few things very well. Plan to use local 'experts' first, to keep costs down.
- **Long term:** keep workload in mind so larger events do not take all the time away from 1:1 visiting. Meet the faith community needs first.
- **Develop a plan** of immediate and projected costs, noting the degree of importance for each item - e.g. mandatory, immediate (medium & long term) desirable, non-essential. If possible, create a budget that indicate where funds are coming from in the short term and longer term.
- **Office space:** desk, chair, lockable filing cabinet for confidential case notes, storage, telephone, and bookcase. An office is not essential but it is important to have a quiet space to



## What is Health Ministry?

HM workers are part of a health promoting ministry within the Christian faith community. HM workers are people who may or may not hold professional health related qualifications. If they are working in the capacity of their health professional status, they must hold recognised qualifications that allow them to practice in that state/territory in which they are employed. They must ensure their qualifications are up-to-date and comply with the professional standards, codes and regulations that govern that particular profession in the jurisdiction of their employment, even if this is in a voluntary capacity.

The HM worker focuses her/his care on people within the faith community and the geographic or cultural group which that faith community serves. HM workers have two key foci: firstly, health promotion and disease prevention, aiming to help individuals and communities become better stewards of their health to enable them to fulfil God's purpose for their life, and the mission and ministry of their faith community. Secondly, they support other health professionals to help people with existing illness and conditions to self-manage their health so they can continue to live within their community. HM workers extend the social justice, compassionate service, stewardship, pastoral care and healing ministry of the Christian church.

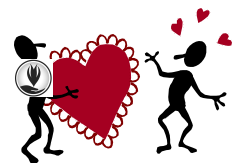
Health care has its historical roots in the Christian church's ministry by religious brotherhoods, sisterhoods, deacons and deaconesses. Health ministry is returning to its origins within the mission and ministry of the Christian church. HM workers volunteer approximately 4-10 hours per week to work as part of a team ministry in health, healing and/or pastoral care within their faith community. They endorse a Christ-centred holistic approach to health, healing, disease and illness. They see the person as more than a composite of physical, psychological, social and spiritual 'parts'. Rather these 'parts' are integrated via the spiritual dimension, which creates a dynamic growth toward wholeness in and through Jesus Christ, the source of healing, wholeness and consequently well-being. The central goal of the HM worker's role is to restore and maintain this spiritual integration and nurture growth of body, mind and spirit.

For the Christian faith community the spiritual dimension is organised around the framework of Scripture, so HM Workers seek to support and sustain that framework and sustain the person's relationships to God, to other people and to the created environment.

Health ministry is "a manifest realisation of our parish vision, which is '...to become a community reaching out to all in the name of Christ Jesus'."

Father James Valladerez (Roman Catholic Priest)

"The concept is magnificent! It provides holistic care. It fits in well with our overall pastoral care... It fits into that overall ministry of care in this parish. It is an integrated approach..." Rev. Bob George (Anglican Priest)



## Is Health Ministry an Effective Ministry for Today's Churches?

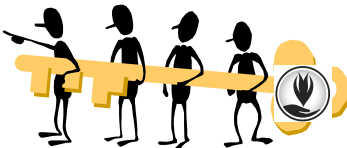
There are many common social factors affecting the health of contemporary Australians. They include crisis and loss events based on life changes and transition periods; poverty; unemployment; under employment; conflict and breakdown within the family; lack of social support; inadequate life skills (such as communication, conflict management, parenting etc.); loneliness and isolation (particularly for the elderly); mental illness; abuse, family violence and harsh social conditions. These key factors are among those identified as significant contributors to illness. Many of these factors are capable of being addressed by our faith communities as part of a health ministry/faith community nursing program.

Health ministries are one vital way the church can promote health and healing that can be experienced by living life within a caring and nurturing community that is bound together by the healing love of Jesus Christ. We live in a society experiencing an increasingly fragmented social fabric with many people experiencing family separation, which leaves many elderly, young families and singles to face illness and life transitions alone. Isolation and loneliness are known precursors of illness and accompanying mental, social, physical and spiritual needs. Reconnecting people to support is integral to improving community health, helping people experience belonging which is imperative to social, mental and spiritual wellbeing.

Many preconditions for healthy communities are found in communal living and this cannot be simulated. The church is the only community group that meets voluntarily, regularly, across the lifespan and on a long-term basis. These important attributes of the church need to be recognised, embraced, protected and nurtured by those privileged to be living in such blessed faith communities.

Christian churches have been active in providing hospitals, aged and community care facilities and educating health professionals for centuries. In 1988 the Commission on Catholic Health Care Ministry stated "*Catholic health ministry is the activity of the whole church - individual members, parish communities, religious congregations, dioceses and institutions - responding to human suffering with a range of personal and corporate resources.*" The commission predicted that without change "...the majority of health services will be delivered outside any institution in small decentralised units such as clinics, outpatient centres, group homes, and the church will no longer have a significant role as a sponsor or provider." To that end many faith based health services are looking for ways to

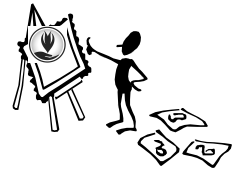
respond to changing community needs with new health care models that show stewardship of resources and produce quality outcomes for the person. Health ministry is proving effective, accessible and sustainable, and it is returning health ministry to its roots in the church.



## How Can We Get a Health Ministry Started in Our Church ?

### Getting Started Phase One: Planning Permission & Selection

- **Pray** about the Health Ministry, for God's will, timing and leading.
- Be patient, any new project takes time.
- Expect at least 6-18 months for the ministry to commence.
- **Learn about Health Ministry**
  - Access specific resource sites:
    - *Australian Faith Community Nurses Association Inc.* – is the peak association in Australia for education, resources, consultancy re faith community / parish nursing. Contact them at PO Box 2707 Kent Town, SA 5071 or via the website [www.afcna.org.au](http://www.afcna.org.au). Become a member! It's cheap and enables you to receive the quarterly newsletter, access resources, education, library books and network with others in HM.
    - *The International Parish Nurse Resource Center* (St Louis USA) – peak centre for education and resource development re parish nursing in USA and now internationally, Deaconess Parish Nurse Ministries, 475 East Lockwood Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63119 Telephone: (314) 918-2559, Fax: (314) 918-2558, <http://ipnrc.parishnurses.org>
    - *Health Ministries Association* (USA) – peak body for support of health ministry in USA. <http://www.hmassoc.org/> Ph 770 640 9955 or e-mail: [info@hmassoc.org](mailto:info@hmassoc.org)
  - **Search denominational websites** for a key person using key search words such as [faith community nursing] or [parish nursing] or [health ministry] or [congregational health] to find many free resources on-line.
  - **Discuss the vision of the possibilities with the Priest/Pastor/Leadership:** first via discussions with the leadership of the faith community, then possibly a verbal or visual presentation.
  - **Get permission to investigate interest - establish goals and formulate a strategy.**
  - Establish a preliminary health ministry planning group. This same group may form the nucleus of a health ministry committee. Approach people with health and care qualifications and include those with specific gifts for such a ministry.
  - Identify why HM would benefit the faith community, and how it is congruent with the purpose and goals of the faith community.
  - Evaluate where it fits best in the structure of the faith community and clarify that existing ministries/programs are not being duplicated.
  - Ascertain feasibility, particularly re human and financial resources and consider the most suited model to sustain the life and growth of this ministry.



## Is Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance Required for Health Ministry?

Health professionals practice within a regulated framework that details the scope of their practice. Each State/Territory has regulatory requirements and Acts to which all health professionals must adhere. Professional indemnity should be obtained, whether the HM worker is employed in a salaried or voluntary position. The employing institution is responsible for professional indemnity and public liability insurance for this ministry.

Many congregations/parishes carry this insurance via their denominational insurers. It will be necessary to provide your insurer with a letter detailing the exact role and functions of the HM worker so the insurer can determine if premiums need to be altered to provide adequate cover.

If the denomination's insurance policy does not cover professional indemnity and public liability, the HM worker can obtain cover via their professional body eg Nurses with membership of the *Australian Nurses Federation*, or the *Royal College of Nursing, Australia* can get cover via these groups.

### What Models of Health Ministry are in Use?

[NB A faith community may be a church, parish, parish cluster, parish/church school, aged care facility, or community agency run under the auspices of the church.]

#### Models include:

**A. Church/Congregation based salaried/volunteers:** Volunteer HM workers provide 4-10 hours per week and are responsible to their employing faith community. They may receive a salary from bequests, sponsors, grants, donations, or wages.

**B. Institution or Agency based salaried/volunteers:** The salaried HM worker receives a salary/stipend from the employing board, agency, diocese, synod, organisation. The HM worker is responsible to directors who focus the HM program: for example aged care, schools, chaplaincy, community/outreach services, specific organisations.

Example 1: A HM worker in a church/parish based school may serve in conjunction with ministry in the parish and the wider community. Responsibility for salary/stipend may be shared.

Example 2: A HM worker may be employed in a coalition of networked church-based social welfare and community agencies and churches, aged care homes and a group of churches. New Zealand has Faith Community Nurses employed by the Auckland District Health Board focusing on health care within the Pacific Island communities of that city.

There may be a possibility to create agreements with aged care facilities and hospitals. Such arrangement may attract Home and Community Care (HACC) funding or similar Commonwealth and State funding.



## Does a Health and Healing Ministry Need Health Professionals?

Yes! Health ministry works best when it is headed up by a practising health professional. They are supplemented and complemented by HM workers, who may be retired or non-practising health professionals. There are significant advantages in having practising registered nurses in your team as they have generic health related knowledge and skills that are most suited to navigating the health system and providing care management. Additionally, nurses have the confidence and respect of the public and are considered to be one of the most ethical professions according to annual national public opinion polls! It is highly likely that there are registered nurses in your church willing to use their knowledge and gifts in health ministry.

### What Activities does Health Ministry provide?

**Health Education** to individuals, small groups and the wider community via newsletters, leaflets, seminars, groups...

**Health Promotion Activities** for all age groups across the lifespan. Eg exercise activities

**Health Support:** listening and discussing health and social issues with people and providing practical support such as: letters, tele-care, visiting, transport, gardening, home help, meals - using the resources available within the faith community and beyond if applicable.

**Referral, Liaison and Advocacy** to help people navigate the health system, locate resources, obtain referrals and source the most appropriate health care.

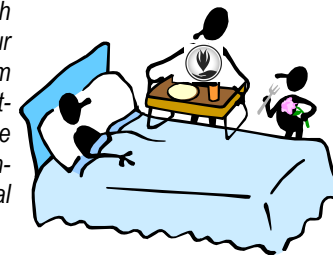
**Support to Carers and Contact Visits** to keep people of any age connected to their community people. HM workers visit at home, residential care, or hospital.

**Prayer and Pastoral Support** aiming to sustain spiritual growth and promote healing.

All the functions of the HM team are undertaken to promote health and healing of body, mind and spirit of the person and promote the health of the community. Health ministry is always undertaken under the governance of the faith community who support the ministry with resources and prayer.

*"We've been very, very pleased with the way it has worked out. There have been a whole lot of other new dimensions of ministry that have opened up which have never been opened before. It has certainly enhanced our caring ministry for people. They come with a physical problem and this can open the possibility of discussing life, spiritual matters such as the person's relationships with God, faith and the impact this is having on their health etc. Many of these relationships in the family impact on the relationship of the individual with God."*

Rev. Robert Wiebusch (Lutheran Pastor)



## Why Have a Health Ministry in Your Church?

### Health Ministry is an asset to a pastor/priest because HM workers:

- bring the gospel to people at their point of need, in word and action;
- provide care in ways that complement and supplement the pastor/priest role to provide a more comprehensive pastoral care of people;
- can conduct health and wellness programs that support the pastor's/priest's specific message re compassionate care, service, social justice and stewardship;
- can gain confidence of people who are not comfortable to talk about deeper health needs with a pastor/priest.
- provide a team of health professionals and lay workers to extend the reach of God's love into congregation and the community.
- greatly enhances what the pastoral care ministry alone can provide.

### Health Ministry is an asset to the faith community because its workers:

- nurture and support people with physical, psycho-social and spiritual needs in life;
- help support members at such times as: pregnancy, child birth, parenting, illness, hospitalisation, residential care, grief and bereavement, through chronic illness, disability, crises and life transitions;
- carry out a hospital, residential care and home visiting ministry;
- are led by health professionals- these professionals are regulated workers that are legally and ethically bound to maintain professional standards of care at all times giving the ministry integrity and accountability standards that are publicly monitored;
- provide health information and education that is considers faith based, holistic and professionally accurate products to people across the lifespan (eg school children, youth, parents, mid-life, seniors) depending on community needs;

### Health Ministry is an asset to the community because it:

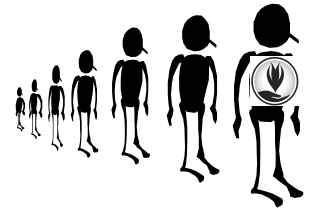
- is an identifiable public 'face' to the church's ministry of holistic care;
  - provides confidential personal support to clients and carers in need;
  - empowers people to manage their own health and wellbeing with support;
  - helps people navigate the continuum of health care in the community;
  - develops the social capacity of the community by creating strong links on behalf of the church with other health and social services;
  - opens the buildings and infrastructure use of the church for support groups and other community building and health support activities;
  - provides a link between home and hospital prior to, and following client discharge, and for those in transition between care services.



## What Does a Health Ministry Worker Position Description Look Like?

### Principle Activities and Responsibilities of the HM Worker

- Identifies and responds to the health and care needs of individuals, the faith community and the broader community the church serves.
- Has a Biblical understanding of the relationship between faith and health that they can share with anyone who may want to understand the connection.
- Supports education programs and groups aiming to promote wellbeing, prevent illness, or support those with existing diseases;
- Provides personal support re health and social issues relating to their professional knowledge, personal gifts and life experience;
- Works in a HM team of professionals and volunteers to support the HM activities;
- Reports back to professional coordinating Health Ministry;
- Participates fully in the life and activities of the church.



### Desirable Qualifications of the Health Ministry Worker

- Understanding of, and commitment to, the teachings and mission of this Church.
- Spiritual maturity and the ability to discuss issues relating to faith and health.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.
- Able to work with minimal direction and flexibility.
- Able to problem solve, plan, implement and evaluate health and pastoral care.
- Maintains knowledge and skills relating to HM practice by participating in continuing education activities.
- Has a personal attitude that demonstrates care and compassion.
- Complies with accountability mechanisms set in place by the faith community.
- Maintains legally appropriate standards of practice, ensures privacy, confidentiality, and engages in accountable HM practice.
- Holds a valid police clearance in the state/territory of their practice.
- Holds a current driver's licence.

NB This position description is a guide. It is not exhaustive. Adapt it to the needs of your faith community and its doctrinal basis. Include accountability structures within the statement. Please keep in mind the regulations governing various health professionals when employing any health professional (even as a volunteer) and ensure you comply with legal requirements in your jurisdiction.