



Showcasing Faith Community Nursing:

Anne Ranse and her team at Holy Covenant Anglican Church Jamison in Canberra

[Anne Ranse is a Registered Nurse and a Deacon in serving as an FCN at Holy Covenant Anglican Church in Jamison in Canberra with an Enrolled Nurse and a team of 20 volunteers to support older people in their community. In this newsletter we showcase their wonderful and inspiring ministry so others can see what is possible in the HCM ministry and the FCN role. The outreach and compassionate service opportunities are worthy of your consideration in your region. Why not copy this article and show it to your leadership and pastoral care team to show the difference having a nurse in your team can really make.]

What does faith community nursing look like at Holy Covenant in ACT?

The FCN program has been operating for around four years now and in that time we have grown into a large service that is recognised in the community as a service that offers a great deal to its clients and focuses on nursing people back into life. We are a team of an RN coordinator, an EN, an Administration assistant and 20 volunteers.

In the parish we come under the name of Holistic Care Nursing Ministry and under that umbrella we have several ministry activities. We care for the older people in our community who are housebound and isolated and often fall through the gaps within other services. These gaps include friendship and social support, and spiritual care, especially for those who can't leave their home. Our group go on outings to places they would like to visit. We have been blessed with a van that has disability access, so taking these people on an outing has become possible. Birthdays are celebrated, and Christmas hampers arrive on their door step in plenty of time for Christmas.

Meet Jane

Let me tell you about one participant, I will call her Jane:



Jane lives alone in a small three bedroom home that is well kept (with the help of a friend who visits). Jane loves her garden but she cannot do much herself any more. She has multiple health issues and consequently she lives on a disability pension. Some of her health issues prevent her from driving and leaving home, unless she is having a really good day. Jane emigrated to Australia from Europe and has lost touch with her European family. She was referred to our service by a community agency because of her social isolation. I went to visit and assess her needs. I found a very lonely woman who was living with depression and anxiety. I learnt that Jane has a family, but they are not functioning well and offer no support. I discovered Jane is gifted in needlework, knitting and crocheting and to keep herself occupied she makes beautiful clothing for premature babies at the hospital, angel gowns, and small crocheted blankets, and larger rugs for the oncology unit at the local hospital. What beautiful gifts these handcrafts are and what self-determination this woman has, seeking to do things for others and contributing in such an important way to her community and her self-care. Sadly, Jane had begun to lose her sense of self and her sense of purpose.

After undertaking a comprehensive assessment of Jane's health issues and medication use, I asked her what she most desired in her current situation. Recognising her health decline was unlikely to change, she listed several things that she would like, and that would help her to be as well as possible. These included friendship, home and garden help, to find out about her family history, to find a job she could do from home that would give her some pocket money because she was on the limited finances of a disability pension.

Our team has been working with Jane for over 3 years now. We have been able to provide two regular visitors from our pool of volunteers who will visit her at different times to share afternoon tea, to help her around the garden with planting plants (that are provided by another participant from her garden) and to do any helpful jobs around her home. We placed a notice into our church bulletin requesting donations of wool and material with which we have been able to bless her.



I was able to acquire a laptop computer and printer and we set up an internet account for her so she now has access to online jobs and she is able to research her family ancestry. She now has a large folder of family history which she proudly shows. Jane is now employed making alterations to school uniforms for a local school uniform shop. At the moment our team is gathering a few keen knitters and sewers together to form a visiting group who will meet at her home to sew, knit and have morning tea together for an hour or two.

Through our membership with the Doctors Co-op Jane now receives good medical help and appropriate and timely referrals at a manageable cost. In recent times Jane has started asking 'the god questions'. So Jane now receives my bi-weekly blog of Christian reflections which she is really enjoying. A final exciting development is that Jane has reconnected with her family and they are coming to her home for Christmas dinner!

Visiting people

We have many participants like Jane and others who are bed-ridden in residential aged care. Our team is visiting a younger woman living with multiple sclerosis in a nursing home because her MS has progressed and she can only move her head and speak, so she requires high level supportive care. Many of the facility's programs do not suit her and she can no longer leave the facility so we have rostered a team of 11 people who arrive in pairs to play scrabble with her. She requires help moving the tiles, but her mind is sharp and she is often the game winner!

Helping with hoarding

Recently the Local Government Community Housing Tenancy Assistance asked us to help specific people in their housing who had significant issues with hoarding. We already have four people to assist and it's a big issue! Naturally, there are far greater issues to deal with than just the de-cluttering, so after an assessment, various jobs are allocated to our volunteer team members. We complete the de-cluttering process slowly and work one-on-one, because this is easier for the person. Some find it very difficult to part with their good, so if we come away with a small box of possessions we have achieved and the person has achieved. This activity is not just about sorting out their houses, but it's about helping these people reconnect with life through friendship, trust, and accompanying them to doctor's appointments at their request.



Spiritual support

Our ministry is opening the door for God to come in, and that invitation is usually instigated by the person. When I go to visit people with my clerical collar on, I am a deacon as well as an RN, and my sleeves are rolled up to serve. What people see is who I am and who I represent. It has not deterred any of our participants and we are developing life-long friendships with them and providing spiritual support. Personally, it is humbling when a person asks out of the blue, “Will you pray for me?” I usually respond with “I can do that and more! We have a small chapel at church, with a bowl of sand and candles for prayers, I will make sure I light a candle for you and send the prayers to God on the flame.” I really don’t know who receives the most blessings in this ministry!

Day hospice

A few years ago, our Holistic Care Nursing expanded and we formed a Memorandum of Understanding with Palliative Care A.C.T., Anglicare, and our local Parish to operate a ‘Day Hospice’. This was the first and only day hospice in Canberra until recently, when we set up a second one in the south of Canberra in 2014. The Covenant Care Day Hospice at Jamison (north Canberra) has 14 clients, a qualified Registered Nurse with palliative care experience, an activity coordinator, and 21 volunteers. We operate one day a week, on a Monday, and it’s a wonderful ‘Day with a Difference’ for our clients. The clients are specifically older people living at home with a life-limiting illness and being cared for by a carer, who is usually their spouse, or adult children. The clients are picked up from home by our volunteers, they are brought to the church centre for the day where activities are provided. The person can do some craft, hear a story, chat and share friendship. A three course meal is provided by our local Southern Cross Club. Having this meal means the carer doesn’t have to cook a meal at home on that day and they can have a genuine respite day because their family member is with us for the whole day, so they can do and go wherever they wish. We return the clients to their homes around 4pm. Included in the day is the option of a prayer service in the chapel which many attend.

The so much more to tell...

There is so much more I could tell you about the Holistic Care Nursing at Holy Covenant Jamison, this is just a morsel of the feast we live and experience each week. What we are doing is changing lives, raising people up so they can once again experience life and health, and meet Christ on their



journey, which for many is long and hard, but no longer alone. We are so blessed as nurses and as Christians to be able to serve Christ this way. Consider faith community nursing for your church, you will be blessed, others will be blessed and God will be blessed.

I read a passage out of Joyce Rupp's book 'The Cup of Life' and it said this:

Compassion has a price. It doesn't come without a cost, the least of which is the pain that pierces our hearts as we accompany one who is suffering.

I have come to see how significant my motivations for compassion are. The more I am aware of my motivations the more I can give the gift of compassion with true freedom of heart without any strings attached. The freer I grow the more genuine my generosity becomes. Like the lines of the old song 'Freely, freely I have received, freely, freely I give.

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