

How a Faith Community Nurse supports pastor/priest



*"Caring for 30 people personally is possible. Caring for 230 is not. Many pastors burn out trying."*¹

Nieuwhof claims the demands of pastoral care are stifling the ability of many churches to grow, and he calls for a different model to care for church members. He adds *"98% of pastoral care is having someone who cares. It doesn't have to be the pastor."* AFCNA agrees, and we want to propose a model of care that adds depth, breadth and scope to pastoral care which involves adding nurses to your team to release pastors/priests from too much caring responsibility. AFCNA believes small groups in churches can support one another via natural and genuine relationships that demonstrate care. However, not all groups are capable of providing the level of support some members need, nor can they sustain that effective support for people who live with chronic conditions. We propose adding a Faith Community Nurse (FCN) to your pastoral care team to bring a health focus to pastoral care because we know it can really change lives and lighten the burden of care for pastors/priests.

This empowering approach enables a person to make supported life changes that help them live in ways that facilitate movement forward to fullness of life (John 10:10) as the person learns to exercise effective stewardship of their health. FCNs provide that focus! FCNs have health knowledge and skills to work with a person on goal setting, self-care strategies, educating the person on condition self-management, working with their strengths using health coaching approaches that empower the person to action change. The FCN encourages like-minded people within the faith community to become part of this broader health and pastoral care ministry that focuses on empowering people, restoring them to health, and loving them into the community. FCNs offer capacity for outreach that meets genuine needs with the nurse's strengths, gifts, skills and knowledge to show authentic, compassionate and hope-filled care that reflects Jesus Christ.

Faith Community Nurses – God's heart in health care

An FCN is a professional registered nurse who is passionate about caring for the whole person attending to body, mind and spirit. They bring professional knowledge and skills which they couple with their Christian faith and their unique personal qualities and gifts, to show God's love to people in practical ways that nurture whole health, right relationships and connected community. You can find out more [here](#)

¹ Nieuwhof C 2019, How pastoral care stunts the growth of a church. Accessed 1/3/20
<https://carenieuwhof.com/how-pastoral-care-stunts-the-growth-of-most-churches/>

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The benefits of an FCN for the pastor/priest and church

The known benefits of having an FCN included in your pastoral care team include:

- **Greater depth to pastoral care:** FCNs bring specialist health care knowledge, skills and attitudes to bear on pastoral care situations across the lifespan.
- **Better quality of pastoral care:** current pastoral care is *reactive*, responding to current issues with ‘a casserole and a card’ or ‘tea and sympathy’ approaches when a person has specific needs. FCNs provide a *proactive* approach providing support that empowers people to be stewards of their health and wellbeing.
- **Broader focus to pastoral care:** FCNs respond to crisis, but they use proactive responses to prevent illness, injury and abuse, and they promote health. They use restorative practises to return the person back to their place in the family and the faith community. FCNs bring the *prophetic* approach of the gospel to their care bringing God’s word in prayer, encouragement and conversation to ignite hope, and help the person find meaning in their experience and lean into their faith in Jesus Christ.
- **More time availability for person/family:** The FCN’s focus is entirely on the health and pastoral care of individuals, families, the faith community, and the wider community your church serves.

**Faith Community
Nurses bring faith
to community
nursing and
nursing to the faith
community!**

- AFCNA 2019

- **Outreach capacity:** FCN may focus support on specific populations in your community as outreach activity. This can provide excellent contacts for churches to bring the restorative hope of the gospel to people in time of concern.
- **Whole person approach to pastoral care:** FCNs care for the whole person in context and in relationships. They understand ‘body, mind and spirit’ and translate that into whole-healthcare. They help people make sense of their situation and encourage growth in faith.
- **Longer-term and intentional journeying:** FCNs bring generalist health and community care knowledge and skills to provide care management and system navigation knowledge to people living with chronic conditions which supports their families. They know how, when and what to access to bring quality support to people.
- **Effective partnership in pastoral care:** Good communication between pastor/priest and FCN ensures they know when their support is required. It releases them from providing multiple visits to people which challenges their time and availability for other ministry tasks.
- **Greater trust in church:** Nurses are repeatedly the most trusted and respected professionals in Australia. This point is important to the broader community at a time when trust in the church has decreased.

AFCNA would be pleased to provide you with more information about the FCN role. We provide everything you need to get a legal, professional and faithful FCN ministry started in your church. Then we provide your FCN with ongoing support, resources, mentoring and a Christian community of practice. Contact us if we can help you meet the challenge of quality pastoral care in your church.



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[Click here](#) to find out more about AFCNA

To get a free ‘*Introducing Faith Community Nursing*’ booklet email afcna@outlook.com and provide your name, church, contact details and phone numbers, and we will be in touch. © AFCNA 2020