Health Ministry for
United Methodist Clergy and Congregations

Concepts of Health, Healing and Wholeness

UMC Health Ministry Network

Wespath
Center for Health

GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Global Health
# Table of Contents

Wespath Benefits and Investments† and Global Ministries Collaborate................................1
Christian and United Methodist Concepts of Health, Wellness and Health Ministry.................................................................2
Healing Services ........................................................................................................................................................................3
Perspectives on Parish/Faith Community Nurses and Health Advocates..........................................................................................3
Perspectives on Clergy Health .........................................................................................................................................................4
Health Ministry Leadership ............................................................................................................................................................4
Parish/Faith Community Nurses and Health Advocates ..............................................................................................................4
Roles of a Parish/Faith Community Nurse ..................................................................................................................................5
A Parish/Faith Community Nurse Health Ministry Can Operate in Several Different Ways ...............................................................5
Guidelines for Health Committees .......................................................................................................................................................6
Responsibilities ..................................................................................................................................................................................6
Getting Started ................................................................................................................................................................................6
Definitions ........................................................................................................................................................................................7
Financing Health Ministry Programs and Services ............................................................................................................................7
Resources ........................................................................................................................................................................................8
Contacts ........................................................................................................................................................................................9

†a general agency of The United Methodist Church
Wespath Benefits and Investments and Global Ministries Collaborate

Wespath Benefits and Investments’ Center for Health and Global Ministries’ Global Health have a natural connection because of their respective focus on clergy and congregational health, as well as their mutual efforts to strengthen mission and ministry. Our collaboration will expand and enhance the current UMC Parish/Faith Community Nurse and Health Advocate Network by working cooperatively, passionately and purposefully to establish a denomination-wide UMC Health Ministry Network. This new Network will emphasize holistic* health for clergy, congregations and communities.

The Center for Health and Global Ministries’ Global Health will provide materials, information and events to serve and promote the Network while developing connections that will increase the Network’s reach and effectiveness. Through this collaboration, valuable resources will be provided to the members of the UMC Health Ministry Network adding to the already-existing benefits of local health ministry for clergy, congregations and communities.

This resource booklet created by the UMC Health Ministry Network provides a foundation for the practice of health ministry and wellness-focused programs within a local congregation. It offers:

- Christian and denominational definitions of health, healing and wholeness;
- perspectives on parish/faith community nurses and health advocates who act as health promoters;
- suggestions for healing services;
- perspectives on clergy health;
- guidelines for health committees; and
- resources for health-related materials and education.
**Christian and United Methodist Concepts of Health, Wellness and Health Ministry**

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

United Methodists have a historical foundation of wholistic care too. 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, *The Primitive Physic*, 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 in his writings, is his continuous emphasis on preventive care and healthy living.²

According to Wesley’s journal, for more than 27 years, he chose anatomy and physiology as topics for leisure reading. He applied the knowledge gained to the basic treatment of illness, both at the dispensaries he opened and during his travels. John Wesley perceived and earnestly desired that his followers should have healthy bodies and minds, as well as saved souls. History tells us that the common person could not afford the cost of medical 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, common sense medicines and treatments. He also prescribed a healthy lifestyle that included healthy foods, exercise, cleanliness, sleep and reduced stress.

In his medical text, *Primitive Physic or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Diseases*, 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 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.”³

---

*Wholistic*—“Wholistic” is not a misspelled version of “holistic.” In health ministry, the linguistic terms “wholistic” and “holistic” are not interchangeable—they each have distinct meanings. When speaking of health ministry and parish/faith community nursing, the “W” should be used. The Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg first advocated the use of the term “wholistic” rather than “holistic,” to more closely relate the term to wholeness and to avoid confusion with the term “holistic” that connotes non-religious alternative health care practices.

---

¹ United Methodist Book of Worship (1996), p. 613
Wesley even addressed mental health:

The passions (emotions) have a greater influence on health than most people are aware of. All violent and sudden passions dispose to, or actually throw people into acute diseases. The slow and lasting passions, such as grief and hopeless love, bring on chronic diseases. Till the passion, which caused the disease, is calmed, medicine is applied in vain. The love of God, as it is the sovereign remedy of all miseries, so in particular it effectually prevents all the bodily disorders the passions introduce, by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy and perfect calm, serenity, and tranquility it gives the mind, it becomes the most powerful of all the means of health and long life.4

Healing Services

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 the Church’s healing ministry does not detract from the knowledge God gives in the fields of physical and psychological medical practice. Preventive care and healthful living are also emphasized. God does not promise there will be no suffering, pain, or that a person will always be cured of disease. Instead 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 as 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. 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, 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 see fit. The oil itself is not magical. It is often sold as sweet oil, which is olive oil combined with a preservative to keep it from becoming 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.

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/faith community 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, “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

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
10 United Methodist Book of Worship
Perspectives on Clergy Health

The health of the clergy directly influences the health of the congregation and vice versa. Holistic* health is necessary to successfully be in mission as a clergyperson; living a life of purpose in relationship with and as directed by God and in community and service to others. According to the Center for Health, many factors impact clergy health including the 24/7 nature of the position, inadequate support systems, high expectations and the complex demands of managing a church while serving the needs of the congregation. Parish/faith community nurses are in a unique position as health professionals and church staff colleagues to provide both personalized health guidance and education as well as to act as advocates promoting healthy clergy work environments.

Health Ministry Leadership

A health ministry combines the therapeutic qualities of church, community and faith in God to strengthen the healing task, and there are many models of health ministry to choose from. It is important the ministry be customized to serve the specific needs of a congregation and the community. Health ministries may be coordinated by a parish/faith community nurse or a health advocate.

Parish/Faith Community Nurses and Health Advocates

A parish/faith community nurse is a registered nurse with specialized training. Parish/faith community nurses provide intentional care of the spirit along with expert nursing knowledge to promote holistic* health and prevent or minimize illness. These nurses work with individuals, groups, congregations and communities. They are not expected to provide patient care in the church or in the home, but coordinate existing services and supplement them to provide a holistic* dimension of health and caring.

Health advocates are people with professional training in a health-related field or an interest in health and healing who use their gifts and talents to serve the needs of the church congregation and surrounding community. Health advocates work closely with parish/faith community nurses to provide health ministry to congregations. When a congregation does not yet have a parish/faith community nurse, health advocates provide services at their level of expertise. Health advocates are usually volunteers who focus on specialty areas. Examples of health advocates include, but are not limited to:

- 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
Roles of a Parish/Faith Community Nurse

Health ministry is customized to meet the needs of the congregation and community as well as the gifts and talents of those who provide the care. Clergy health support is also a part of Health Ministry. The roles of a parish/faith community nurse or health advocate may be described in broad categories, but are not limited to activities such as:

- **Clergy, congregational and community support** through home and hospital visitation, one-to-one or family care in times of crisis or loss, supervision of shelters or grief support services following a disaster or community-wide crisis. Parish/faith community nurses and health advocates blend their expertise of medical science with their knowledge of faith practices to provide intentional care of the spirit that focuses on God as the Great Physician and healer. Parish/faith community nurses not only work with clergy and church staff to improve the health of the church leaders, but also in partnership with clergy and church staff to improve the health of the congregation and community. For example: stress management, grief and loss support or exploring the relationship between faith and health.

- **Healthy lifestyle education** through Bible study, small groups, newsletter articles and bulletin inserts. Parish/faith community nurses and health advocates are available and accessible to individuals, families and groups to educate and explain the many facets of wholistic* health, including but not limited to, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, financial and environmental health. For example: heart-healthy cooking classes, home safety checks, new parent classes, care for aging parents or emergency preparedness.

- **Resource and referral** by providing current, unbiased information about locally-accessible services such as home health, hospice, meals-on-wheels, Medicare. Under the guidance of professionals who understand the language and process of choosing and obtaining services, those in need of care are assisted in making appropriate health-related decisions. Parish/faith community nurses work in partnership with other congregations, organizations and community groups to promote fellowship and increase community health.

- **Coordinator of volunteers** Many hands are needed to care for congregations and communities. Parish/faith community nurses organize, teach and guide others who wish to share their expertise and talents to improve the wholistic* health of others through programs, services and support groups. For example: community health fairs, Sunday morning blood pressure screenings or church-sponsored exercise and support groups.

A Parish/Faith Community Nurse Health Ministry Can Operate in Several Different Ways

For example:

- One church providing the salary for their own full or part-time nurse or group of nurses
- Several churches supporting the salary of the nurse
- A paid nurse coordinating a group of unpaid (volunteer) nurses
- An unpaid (volunteer) nurse or group of nurses serving one or several churches
- A nurse related to a hospital or clinic who serves a church or churches

Regardless of how the parish/faith community nurse health ministry is designed, the nurse is required to maintain an active license and follow the Scope and Standards of Faith Community Nursing Practice. It is strongly recommended that a Foundations of Faith Community Nursing course be taken.
Guidelines for Health Committees

Health ministry encourages and empowers 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 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 health ministry partners. 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/faith community nurse and/or team of parish/faith community nurses and health advocates
- Contact the UMC Health Ministry Network for resources and assistance
- Develop health ministry policies and guidelines aligned with conference and denominational guidelines
- Assist with the introduction and promotion of health ministry to the congregation and community
- Provide support and direction by setting obtainable goals
- Assist health ministry leaders 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.
- Explore the UMC Health Ministry Network website for resources such as the Health Ministry Toolkit, articles, guidelines, templates, educational offerings and archived newsletters.
- Check with your district and conference office regarding a conference parish/faith community nurse or health ministry coordinator or other parish/faith community nurses in your conference.
- Visit with your pastor, district superintendent and other church leaders about your call to health ministry.
- Seek out the parish/faith community nurses in your area who already work in a United Methodist or other denominational health ministry setting for ideas and support.
• Research parish/faith community nursing on organizational websites such as the **International Parish Nurse Resource Center** and the **Health Ministries Association**.

• Network with other parish/faith community nurses, other congregations, denominations and organizations in your community to explore partnerships for serving your congregation and community.

• With the assistance of the pastor and church council, develop a health ministry committee, job description and mission statement.

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

• Attend a Foundations of Faith Community Nursing course.

• 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.

**Definitions**

**Health Ministry**—The purposeful ministry of working with individuals, families, groups, congregations and communities to focus on wholistic* 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 an active license 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 advisors, health educators, health advocates and referral agents.

**Health Advocate**—Retired registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, allied health professionals, lay health professionals, or others interested in wholistic* 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/faith community nurse or health ministry coordinator at each of these levels. At the denomination level, parish/faith community nursing and health advocates are part of the **UMC Health Ministry Network** which is a collaborative ministry of Global Ministries’ Global Health and the Center for 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 and Standards of Practice (2005) define 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.”

**Financing Health Ministry Programs and Services**

There are many ways to finance a health ministry program, so be creative and flexible. Explore the possibilities for funding and do not 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 grants and fundraisers available in your area
Definitions (continued)

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. 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.”

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

Resources

Internet

- UMC Health Ministry Network (www.wespath.org/cfh/umchm/)
- Wespath Benefits and Investments’ Center for Health (www.wespath.org/cfh)
- Global Ministries’ Global Health (www.umcmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/global-health)
- International Parish Nurse Resource Center (www.parishnurses.org)
- Health Ministries Association (www.hmassoc.org)
- Journal of Christian Nursing (www.jcn.org)

Books

- Patterson, Deborah (2008)—Health Ministries: A Primer for Clergy and Congregations. Pilgrim Press.
- Wesley, John (1747)—Primitive Physic or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Diseases.*
- United Methodist Book of Worship, Section VIII.
- Madden, Deborah (2008)—Inward & Outward Health: John Wesley’s Wholistic Concept of Medical Science, the Environment, and Holy Living.


Articles

Appendix A
Scriptures related to health, healing and wholeness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark 8:22-25</td>
<td>Psalms 31:12</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 4:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 9:1-7</td>
<td>Ezekiel 34:16</td>
<td>Mark 16:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 7:33</td>
<td>Hosanna 6:1</td>
<td>Luke 4:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 1:29-31</td>
<td>Romans 14:7</td>
<td>Luke 4:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 53:5</td>
<td>Matthew 9:22</td>
<td>Acts 5:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah 8:22</td>
<td>Matthew 10:8</td>
<td>James 5:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms 69:20</td>
<td>Romans 14:7</td>
<td>John 16:32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 twelve samples of ancient oils and information booklet.
