Health Ministry Models

There are numerous models of health ministry; below are five of the most common. Examine your faith community’s current structure and existing ministries, and then consider ways to improve coordination and communication between those ministries with the formation of an organized health ministry. Choose a model or combination that works best for you, your faith community and your community.

Congregational Health and Wellness Ministry
Many congregations have or are developing an organized health ministry that address a faith community’s internal and external health. Health ministry seeks to find common ground with other congregational ministries such as social justice, religious education, volunteer visitors, hospitality and youth ministries. Health ministry sees health wholistically, meaning it views health from the perspective of body, mind and spirit. Health ministers and faith community nurses (FCNs) often have key ministry roles—and when actively supported by clergy—meet regularly to discuss and plan health activities for the benefit of the congregation and the community. Examples of health ministry activities may include support groups, specific presentations with speakers, visitation ministries and advocacy efforts.

Health Ministers
Health ministers can be health care professionals, barbers, stay-at-home parents, lawyers or accountants. They can be health navigators, wellness coaches, outreach workers, health educators, health ambassadors, promoters de salud or health promoters. Health ministers are often part of a health and wellness ministry/team. They can work with faith community nurses to organize, plan and evaluate health ministry activities.

Faith Community Nursing
The faith community nurse—formerly known as a parish nurse—is a registered nurse who has completed coursework specific to faith-based nursing practices. Using the medical foundation of nursing, the FCN infuses his/her work with the faith traditions of the specific community where he/she serves. Key roles may include health education, health counseling, referrals and coordination of a health ministry team and volunteers. Recently, the American Nurse Association approved a certification program for FCNs, which allows active licensed registered nurses to obtain a specialty practice certification in the field of faith community nursing.
Hospital/Primary Care-Based Faith Community Health Networks
With the Affordable Care Act emphasizing population-based care and improved health care continuity for patients, health ministry has the potential to greatly impact the health of our communities. From the perspective of hospitals and primary care providers, health ministry can provide valuable links and connections to the community, thereby improving the health status of entire communities.

Community-Based Faith Community Health Networks
Health ministry teams from different faith traditions often join together in local or regional networks to share resources and support each other through regular meetings. By collaborating, the health ministry teams can form a community-based network that works with both the sacred and the secular. As a group, they become a powerful advocate for their faith communities and the community at large.

Adapted from Wesley Theological Seminary, Heal the Sick Program (2015). Adapted with permission.

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