Dear Friends,

“May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.” In a world of constant change and transition, these words from St. Teresa of Avila offer us inspiration as we strive to bravely embrace new challenges by taking comfort in the holiness of the present moment. We reflect upon this theme in our first issue of Partners in Health of the New Year, sharing the hope that we can all see transitions as opportunities for new joys and new growth.

As we announced last summer, the Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program is now a part of Holy Cross Health’s Community Health division. For our network partners and faith communities, this alignment will further expand access to resources and services as well as strengthen our shared goal of improving the health of individuals and families in our communities. To learn more about this exciting new transition, please see page 4.

Last October, our fall network meeting focused on domestic abuse and how the faith community can respond. One of our speakers, Scott Hurd, spoke on an important aspect—forgiveness. In this issue we have included a follow-up article by Scott (page 5) where he reflects on how one knows when the transition to forgiveness is being achieved. We also invite you to contact our office if you would like any resource materials from this event.

We were also gratified that many of you were able to attend our November fall retreat “Caring to Listen: Standing on Holy Ground.” Rev. Thomas Rodgerson, our guest facilitator, spoke eloquently about the importance of transitioning into intentional self-care as we minister to others. If you were not able to attend, please look on page 5 for a short summary of this event.

Finally, as we move into the harsh winter months, we know that the challenges facing the homeless grow even more urgent. What are the ways that we, as faith communities, can respond to crisis situations as well as be part of long-term solutions to transition individuals and families into lives of security and hope? Please see page 6 for a look at what churches around the nation—and locally—are doing.

Thank you for your inspiration and support during this past year, and we wish you a New Year of health and happiness.

Blessings,

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Faith Community Member News

Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Ruth Manchester, FCN
The Saint Luke Lutheran Church’s Caring Ministries team held its biannual special Communion Service and luncheon in October. This event is for church members who reside at the Village of Rockville and are not able to attend services regularly. The Village at Rockville made its van available to transport the Saint Luke members, who were accompanied by Ruth Manchester, FCN. On the Saturday prior to Reformation Sunday, October 29, Saint Luke held an “Oktoberfest” with an “appearance” by Martin Luther (the year 2017 is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.) Ruth prepared a lecture on “Art of the Reformation” that she presented to Saint Luke and the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew. A Caring Ministries retreat was held in November at Hallowood, Saint Luke’s retreat center. Bonnie Friedman, author of “Hospital Warrior,” discussed how individuals can advocate for themselves and loved ones during hospitalization. Ruth also presented her research on nurse Capt. Dorothy Wahlstrom at the American Association for the History of Nursing in Chicago in September. Capt. Wahlstrom was in the 127th Medical Evacuation Unit, which went into Dachau after the liberation to care for those interned there.

Lutheran Church of St. Andrew, Marilee Tollefson, FCN
The church sponsored a flu shot clinic in the fall where 69 flu shots were administered—a record for the health ministry. The fall blood drive yielded 32 donors and 26 units of collected blood. In December, a Blue Christmas service was held to provide comfort and hope for those struggling with sadness or grief during the holidays. The service offered scripture, prayer and song in a peaceful and contemplative setting. The caregivers support group continues to meet regularly with both day and evening meeting options. Twelve participants attended the October meeting and focused on current concerns and joys, options for daytime activities, and adult day care programs. A second support group for those living with chronic illness and disability hosted speakers on wholistic practices (such as Tai Chi) and nutrition to enhance health. Group members also took part in field trips to peaceful and relaxing locations for socializing and stress reduction. Both support groups welcome participants from the community and other faith communities.

Lutheran Mission Society Compassion Center, Jeanine McGrath, FCN
Last summer Jeanine was awarded a grant from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to continue her work as a faith community nurse at the Lutheran Mission Society Compassion Center in Hyattsville, MD. The focus of her role is to work with community partners to improve the health and well-being of the clients at the Compassion Center. In October Jeanine coordinated a flu shot clinic with the pharmacy at a new Safeway across the street from the center. The clinic afforded Jeanine an opportunity to connect with store staff about the work of the Compassion Center, including its weekly food and clothing ministry.

St. Francis of Assisi, Tracey Eberhardt, FCN
The St. Francis health ministry team has restarted its prison ministry, with team members going to the Jessup Correctional Institute on Monday evenings for a Communion service and Saturdays for Bible study. The men at Jessup are welcoming and appreciative, and the health ministry is grateful to have the opportunity to heal and support the men who will one day be neighbors. The ministry also continues to have an active prayer team, postal ministry, bereavement support group, cancer support group, medical equipment loan closet and monthly “potty training” (health information posted in the restrooms at the church).

Nurse Health Ministry at St. Nicholas, Joyce Kearney, RN, FCN Coordinator
The Nurse Health Ministry at St. Nicholas came into existence on May 23, 2016, and was officially launched in August with a commissioning and an awareness campaign. The Nurse Health Ministry, unique because of its composition and membership, is made up of mostly retired professionals—including nurses, a health educator and a social worker. Two nurses are actively involved in the ministry, supported by 18 other nurses of diverse expertise and experiences. The health ministry program is being rolled out in three phases: blood pressure screening with a focus on cardiac health, nutrition and exercise, and domestic violence. The team’s first outreach program, a flu shot clinic, was well received and blood pressure screening takes place once a month. Gloria Hynes, RN; social worker Mary Lou McKenna; and Deacon Perry Iannaconi have successfully completed five weeks of comprehensive training on domestic violence. Other members are attending workshops, webinars, reflections and retreats to keep their knowledge and skills current.

Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, Joanie Friend, FCN
While visiting Australia and New Zealand, Joanie and her husband were privileged to visit the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and see its outreach operations. Joanie reports that nurses who are primarily trained in midwifery are sent out,
particularly in the Outback, for rescue and treatment in all kinds of emergencies. Each community strives to designate one person to be responsible for a supply chest filled with medicine and equipment, and who will be available to be guided by phone in an emergency until RFDS personnel arrive.

Becky Boeckman, FCN
This past October, at the request of the Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Becky joined a group of representatives of Washington-area congregational health networks in hosting and exchanging information with visitors from Diakonhjemmet Hospital and University College in Oslo, Norway. Diakonhjemmet is a private, non-profit foundation and an independent diaconal institution within the Church of Norway.

Speaking as a Holy Cross Health Faith Community Nurse Program network member, Becky was invited to share details of her role as a faith community nurse in a church setting as well as in the community. She particularly focused on the value of Theological Reflection sessions for faith community nurses to share personal experiences in a supportive group setting. The representatives from Diakonhjemmet discussed their experience as faith-based providers of health services and innovations in this role, and the U.S. group addressed how to develop interdisciplinary competence and practices as well as how faith and spirituality are integrated as health assets.

All Saints Episcopal, Linda Hall, FCN
In November, Linda coordinated a Visiting Ministry training to guide congregational members who wish to participate in the church’s home visiting program. The training was open to multiple faith groups in the area that also were interested in preparing lay members for this role. Also in November, the church hosted its quarterly blood drive, which provided more than 35 pints of blood for those in need. At a fall flu shot clinic, more than 50 parishioners received their vaccine.

Recently, All Saints developed and implemented a form to assist Linda in assessing parishioners’ needs when they call the church office and request the faith community nurse. After attending the fall Health Ministry Association conference, Linda is working toward initiating a Seniors in Transition program at the church.

To submit your faith community nursing member news, please email fultont@holycrosshealth.org.

Library Resource Spotlight

The Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program library has books and resources that are available for checkout by our network members. New additions to our domestic violence resources include:

“Healing Your Family Tree” by Beverly Hubble Tauke
Every family has relational habits—both positive and negative—that have been passed down from generation to generation. The author cites real-life stories and suggests specific “transforming practices” to change family patterns.

“Forgetfulness: A Catholic Approach” by R. Scott Hurd
Author Scott Hurd, a speaker at our 2016 fall network meeting on domestic abuse, addresses the spiritual, psychological, physical and social benefits of learning how to forgive and find peace.

“Who Am I: Discovering the Value and Worth of Women” by Kelly Cody
Kelly Cody, a panelist at our 2016 fall network meeting on domestic abuse, tells her personal story, which led her to create SHE, a non-profit organization to Strengthen, Heal and Empower women and teenage girls who have been impacted by violence, intimate partner violence, human trafficking and sexual assault.

If you are interested in checking out these books or have questions about other resources in our library, please call 301-754-7066 or email FCNprogram@holycrosshealth.org.
Embracing Our Alignment with Holy Cross Health’s Community Health Division

The Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program (FCNP) has always worked closely with Holy Cross Health’s Community Health division to offer the broadest range of resources to our network members and their faith communities. Now, as many of you know, that connection has been made even stronger. This past summer, the FCNP was officially transitioned from Mission Services to Community Health, which will not only make our relationship even more seamless on a day-to-day basis, but also provide an even broader foundation to advance the interconnectedness between spirituality, health and healing. The transition enables us to maintain and expand our relationships with faith communities throughout our service area while leveraging the prevention, health promotion, and disease management resources and expertise of our Community Health colleagues, to further improve the health of partner congregations and the communities in which they reside.

Today’s health care environment—and public policy—is deeply rooted in “population health,” which focuses on education, prevention and care coordination to help ensure healthy lifestyles and better health outcomes for patients and the broad community. Holy Cross Health’s population health plan provides a path toward improving the health of our communities, enhancing patients’ care and lowering cost of care. All sectors of health care delivery are now extending their resources even farther outside their walls to support individuals and families in managing and improving their health. In reality, the population health concept is not unfamiliar to faith community nurses and health ministries; FCNs have worked within this model for many years now, ministering not only individual needs but also to congregational needs as a whole—and often beyond church doors into the neighboring community.

Throughout the past 20 years, our Holy Cross faith community network partners have forged strong relationships with our Community Health division through programs and initiatives such as Senior Fit, the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, health fairs and more. At the same time, our Community Health services have continued to expand through partnerships with all levels of government and public and private organizations throughout our region. These connections allow us to continually strengthen our ability to provide knowledge, resources and tools to the people we serve—including our health ministry partners—and ultimately improve health through a broad range of partnerships.

The stronger departmental connection, says Vanessa Briggs, vice president, Community Health, Holy Cross Health, is being mutually welcomed by the Community Health and FCN staff. “Our Community Health division will be equally enriched by the closer relationship with faith community nurses and health ministers. Their spiritual input, knowledge and experience at the community level combined with health care expertise will be tremendously valuable as we work toward our common goals—to improve and sustain individual and community health.”

Left: Instructor Keith Federman teaches a free, 45-minute Senior Fit class at the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, where Faith Community Nurse Program partner Marilee Tollefson serves as FCN. Facilitated by Holy Cross Health’s Community Health division, the award-winning Senior Fit program is available at 25 sites including three area churches.
Retreat: Reflections on Holy Ground

“Caring to Listen: Standing on Holy Ground” was the theme of the 2016 Faith Community Nurse Program fall retreat, offering participants an opportunity to reflect on the sacred, yet sometimes overwhelming privilege of standing on another person’s “Holy Ground” as we seek to offer them care of body, mind and spirit.

Retreat facilitator Rev. Thomas Rodgerson, PhD, director of the Master of Arts in Spiritual and Pastoral Care Program at Loyola University, Baltimore, offered reflections on the need for faith community nurses and all caregivers to make self-care a priority so as to nurture themselves as well as ultimately benefit those for whom they provide care. He encouraged caregivers to set aside time each day for meditative thought and reflection to provide self-renewal and a closer connection with God.

Those who attended were offered extended periods of personal silent reflection, as well as small and large group reflection. During the periods of personal reflection, participants were invited to go into rooms offering meditation in an environment of music, aroma and silence—as well as to walk an outdoor labyrinth. Small stones that featured words such as over-care, control, avoidance, self-care, self-renewal, waiting, being and standing were offered to assist reflection. Pens and journals, coloring materials, clay, inspirational books and prayer shawls were also provided to enhance contemplation and focus.

The retreat was held at the Wellspring Center at the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring, where Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program network member Marilee Tollefson, FCN, serves as faith community nurse.

Signs of Forgiveness

“Domestic Abuse: Responding as a Faith Community” was the topic of the Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program’s 2016 fall network meeting last October. Speaker Scott Hurd, senior director for leadership development for Catholic Charities USA and the author of “Forgiveness: A Catholic Approach,” discussed what forgiveness is—and is not—and the steps one must take to achieve it. In his follow-up reflection below, Scott addresses how we may know if forgiveness has truly been realized.

By Scott Hurd

At a fundamental level, forgiveness requires a decision to not seek payback for a hurt we’ve received. However, forgiveness also involves a process which begins with our hurt and continues as we journey toward a place of healing and serenity. As we make our way, we typically cycle through the stages associated with any loss: anger, denial, depression and bargaining. But how do we know if we’re making headway?

One way to assess our progress is to check our feelings. Do bitterness and anger still eat away at us? Are we stuck in pain and seeking to numb it with food, alcohol, irresponsible sex, or some other negative behavior? Or, on the other hand, do we experience a measure of peace? Can we think of the one who harmed us without our blood boiling or our feathers getting ruffled?

We can also take stock of our thoughts and actions. Do we entertain revenge fantasies? Do we slander or spread nasty rumors about the source of our woundedness? Should we encounter them, are we hostile, cold and unkind, or can we muster a measure of civility? Do we hope that they get creamed by the “karma bus,” or can we pray for them and hope for their ultimate well-being? At the very least, do thoughts of them result in an indifferent “meh”?

The ultimate sign of forgiveness is that we can look back at a hurtful situation and find things for which to be grateful. With grace and hindsight, we can see God’s hand in a hurtful situation and appreciate that it led to growth. We can now appreciate an occasion of hurt as an occasion of grace and an opportunity to forgive. It strengthened our faith. We learned to rely more completely upon God. We responded to hate with love.
Homelessness: Opening Doors—and Hearts—in the Faith Community

As the days grow shorter and the weather turns cold most of us are grateful to have a roof over our heads and a warm bed. But for many people in our communities, simple shelter—much less a home—is a daily challenge, and only one aspect of a life of uncertainty and need.

Nursing professor and author Lois Gerber, MPH, BSN, RN, writing in “Bringing Home Effective Nursing Care for the Homeless,” (Nursing, March 2013) notes that although the term homeless has often been applied to individuals who do not have a place to stay at night, it is important for us to distinguish that “homeless” is not who the person is, but what the individual is experiencing. Individuals and families experiencing homelessness are vulnerable physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually; they experience higher rates of violence, homicide and suicide than those with housing. The prevalence of physical illnesses among the homeless, Gerber writes, ranges from 33 to 55 percent, with an average life expectancy of 44 years.

In recent years Maryland has seen an increase in the homeless population. A 2015 state report, “Overview of Homelessness and Homeless Services in Maryland,” identifies primary reasons for this increase as being the closure of state psychiatric institutions, the reduction of affordable housing, and a sharp rise in the number of unaccompanied youth and children. The Maryland Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that there is a shortage of approximately 190,700 affordable rental housing units for families earning less than 50 percent of the area median income.

Government at all levels, in addition to community organizations, health care institutions and national advocacy groups, are striving to address the many needs of the homeless. Faith communities have been, and continue to be, active partners in finding both short-term and long-term solutions.

How are we as members of faith communities called to respond? Faith communities may be called to respond to homelessness when someone is referred to the church or comes to the church on their own needing assistance.

Congregations may also be called to help in non-direct ways, such as supporting organizations that assist the homeless with volunteers or financial resources. In a growing number of ways, faith communities across the nation—and within our own network—have initiated meaningful efforts to aid the homeless. Your church may wish to consider offering one or more of these types of assistance if it does not already do so:

**Connecting to Resources**
- Providing information on local resources for shelter, food and clothing
- Referral to community-based programs for chronic disease management
- Providing meals and possibly a health clinic staffed with medical professional volunteers
- Providing meals to shelters
- Becoming involved in Habitat for Humanity

**Organizing Support Services**
- Organizing food and clothing drives
- Organizing shoe box donations to give to shelters—soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, and warm socks, mittens/gloves, baby wipes, etc.
- Organizing a blanket drive
- Organizing volunteers to serve in soup kitchens and food pantries
- Organizing fundraising events such as “March for the Homeless,” fun runs, bingo, etc., to benefit local homeless shelters
- Organizing a foot clinic with volunteer podiatrists, RN-BSN students, interns and residents from local hospitals and health ministry teams to bathe and examine the feet of those who are homeless, along with providing a new pair of shoes with warm socks and a warm meal

**Offering Spiritual Support**
- Offering spiritual care and developing relationships and trust with individuals experiencing homelessness
- Discussing homelessness at the pulpit
- Starting a prayer shawl ministry for the homeless

**Advocating for Change**
- Being involved in policy initiatives that support those experiencing homelessness

For more information about any of the ways that faith communities can support the homeless, please contact our office at 301-754-7066 or FCNprogram@holycrosshealth.org.
The Cross Gets in the Way: God’s Call was Unexpected
By Violet Cucciniello Little

“The cross got in the way.” This is how Rev. Violet Cucciniello Little describes the life journey that led her to a ministry for the homeless. A random moment at a bus stop near a seminary, a life-threatening illness, and an encounter with women finding shelter in a public train station all brought God’s call into an increasingly sharper focus in her life. Below is an excerpt from her personal story, as told in the November 2016 issue of “Gather: For Faith and Action,” a publication of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Like Moses leading the Israelites out of the desert and into the promised land, Drew led me to the spot in the park that would become our sacred place of worship for the next several years. “Here it is,” he said, pointing to a circular formation of concrete benches. “And that’s where I stay,” he continued, singling out one bench. The following Sunday, The Welcome Church—a congregation without walls primarily made up of people living on the streets of Philadelphia—held its first worship service on that same spot. A card table found in a church basement served as our communion altar.

Drew, our lector at that first service, decided not to read the lectionary texts as I had suggested, but rather chose to read ones he had practiced reading because he liked them better. Drew always carried an extra Bible in his backpack in case anyone forgot to bring theirs. More often than not, that person turned out to be me. That’s why I became concerned one Sunday when the bench on which Drew slept showed no signs of his presence. Later I would find Drew’s worn blue blanket stuffed into a nearby trash can.

In spite of my attempts to find Drew, it was not until a month after his disappearance that he returned to the parkway, this time appearing in the middle of worship, after the reading of the Gospel. I acknowledged his presence and after a brief reflection on the text I opened up the sermon to the community for comment. Drew charged into the middle of the worship circle, excited to speak.

“I have a testimony,” he said. Not knowing what to expect, I encouraged him to go on. Drew began unbuttoning his shirt, and I began to sweat a little. Before I could say anything, Drew revealed a large scar on the left side of his chest. Around his neck hung the bronze cross distributed and worn by many in the Welcome Church community.

“Four weeks ago, I was stabbed,” he said, pointing to the scar with one hand and holding the cross with the other. “It was this cross that saved my life. The doctor said the knife missed going through my heart by a fraction of an inch, but...,” Drew paused, smiling. “The cross got in the way!”

Drew’s words and testimony on the street nearly seven years ago seemed to describe my own experience of God showing up in ways I could never imagine, let alone expect. The cross got in the way, redirecting me to places that were definitely not planned stops on the itinerary of my life’s journey.

Throughout my life, I have heard God’s voice in the most unexpected places – a park bench, a bus stop, through intravenous lines, and even in the rundown restroom of a city train station. The reality is that God speaks to all of us, in all places. When I look back, I see that the times that have seemed most unexpected have been the times I actually stopped to listen to God’s call.

The cross will always get in the way of our lives. God calls us, loves and heals us during the most difficult times because Jesus promised never to leave us or forsake us. “I will not leave you or orphaned,” Jesus told the disciples and us. “I am coming to you” (John 14:18).

The Rev. Violet Cucciniello Little serves as pastor and mission developer of The Welcome Church in Philadelphia. She is also a psychotherapist and trainer for Women of the ECLA’s racial justice ministries.
FREE ‘Ask the Doctors’ Events at Holy Cross Germantown Hospital

Held at 19801 Observation Drive, Germantown, Md.
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Navigating Urologic and Gynecologic Health Issues
Tuesdays, January 24 or March 21
Women’s health experts discuss issues that may be impacting your quality of life, such as incontinence, prolapse, abnormal bleeding, fibroids and other gynecologic or pelvic floor concerns.

Joints: Repairs and Replacements    Thursday, February 9
Return to a full and active lifestyle by learning more from our orthopedic experts about the risks and benefits of various treatment options for joint pain.

Overcoming Back Pain    Tuesday, February 21
Engage with an expert spine surgeon for an overview of strategies for managing and treating back pain, including temporary relief, or surgery as a long-term solution.

Improving Lung and Pulmonary Health    Tuesday, April 25
Hear from our panel of thoracic and pulmonary experts about the latest advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of lung conditions and diseases.

Register at HolyCrossHealth.org/AskTheDoctors or call 301-754-8800.

Time Is Running Out to Get Covered for 2017!

Open enrollment for affordable health and dental plans through Maryland Health Connection, the state’s official insurance marketplace, is now underway. Maryland residents have until January 31 to enroll or change plans, and to apply for financial assistance to help lower premiums in 2017. Outside of this annual open enrollment period, residents will only be eligible to enroll or change plans if they have a qualifying life event—such as getting married or divorced, gaining or losing a dependent, or losing other health coverage. Families and individuals who qualify for Medicaid or Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP) may enroll at any time during the year.

For more information and resources on enrollment support and income eligibility requirements for financial assistance, visit www.MarylandHealthConnection.gov.

Partners in Health is published by the Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program to assist faith community nurses and health ministry teams in educating, empowering and equipping members of their faith communities in pursuit of health, healing and wholeness. We encourage you to use the contents of this newsletter to support and strengthen your ministries so that together we may build healthier communities. When reproducing materials, please use the following credit line. Used by permission of the Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program. This newsletter is available for download at HolyCrossHealth.org. For more information about the Holy Cross Faith Community Nurse Program, call 301-754-7066 or email FCNprogram@holycrosshealth.org.