

# PARISH NURSING NOTES



Vol. 4 Issue 1

Theme: HEEDING THE CALL

Fall 2022

## Called to Serve: The Vocation of Nursing and Parish Nursing

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Romans 8:28(NIV)

### Introduction and Background

Our vocation of nursing and parish nursing is one of God's calling for us to serve others and gives us purpose in life. It is the very essence of existence, and without knowing that we continue to search for a meaning and purpose in all aspects of life including our jobs, occupations, work, and service to family and neighbors. Thus, it is significant that we understand the meaning of our calling to nursing and parish nursing in life as we serve patients, church members and others in mind, body, and spirit.

In November, 2021, an online calling and vocation survey was distributed to nurses and student nurses to capture how parish nurses and other nursing groups perceived their vocation of nursing as a calling. The created survey was reviewed by a content expert on spirituality and religiosity, and then piloted to nursing faculty, parish nurses, and nursing students. The groups surveyed included parish/faith community registered nurses, traditional nursing students at Concordia University WI (CUW) and Ann Arbor (CUAA), and registered nurses who were BSN completion or graduate students at CUW at the same time.

Through the survey the study developers tried to capture participants' meaning of religion, and how belonging to a particular religion or denomination can influence one's perception of calling. Questions including faith affiliation or religious preference/identity, attendance at worship, importance of faith in life and age participants felt a call into nursing.

Besides demographic questions, participants completed two different research instruments on calling and career. "Calling" itself was referred to as a person's belief that she/he is called upon to do a particular kind of work. An instrument developed by Dik, Eldridge, Steger and Duffy (2012), and titled as the Brief Calling Scale, (BCS), uses four questions in a Likert rating format to measure the perception of a call presence or the search for a calling:

1. I have a calling to do a particular kind of work.
2. I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my career.
3. I am trying to figure out my calling in my career.
4. I am searching for my calling as it applies to my career.

Another scale, the *Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ)*, developed by Dik et al. uses a 24-item Likert rating format which focuses on calling in more detail, including subscales for meaning and purpose of life, calling in life, searching for a calling, meeting society's needs, and making the world better. Two statements focused on how God or a "Supreme Being" calls us to a vocation.

Both instruments demonstrated a moderate to strong correlation with informant reports of perception of being called. Both CVQ and BCS scores provide sound measures of calling with the CVQ offering a multidimensional analysis (Dik, Eldridge, Steger and Duffy, 2012).

Thus, the aim of the research is to compare the perceptions of calling within a group of parish nurses to that of a group of nursing students attending a religious institution. Additionally, the researchers wanted to find if certain variables such as age, years as a nurse, religious affiliation and importance of faith to that of calling correlated to perceptions of searching versus calling to vocation.

## **Results**

Overall, 592 nurses and student nurses completed questionnaires. Of these, 33% (N=195) indicated they serve as parish nurses. Eighty-three percent indicated a religious identity, with 25% reporting Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS), 23% Roman Catholic, and 13% ELCA Lutheran. Among parish nurses, 37% report LC-MS, 31% ELCA and 21% Roman Catholic, significantly more Lutheran identification than the overall sample which also includes nursing students ( $p < .001$ ). Older survey respondents had higher levels of religious commitment ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ). The age at which these nurses and nursing students first became aware of feeling called to nursing was late adolescence into early adulthood, midway between "11-17," and "18-25 years of age, excluding the eight percent who did not answer this question.

Two kinds of career orientations emerge from these survey findings: feeling called in current nursing role and still searching for meaning in work. A third scale was also constructed, based upon "meeting needs." Younger nurses and students, ages 20-25, were more likely (47%) to have higher scores on "meeting social needs," compared with older respondents, just 13% of those 66 or older. The meeting needs orientation is highly correlated with searching ( $r = .50, p < .001$ ), while feeling called and still searching are somewhat mutually exclusive ( $r = -.18, p < .001$ ). Among all respondents, secularity, not experiencing sacred calling, is negatively related to feeling called ( $r = -.24, p < .001$ ), while religious commitment increases sense of calling ( $r = -.29, p < .001$ ).

On average, parish nurses had served in nurse roles for 36 to 40 years. None of the parish nurses reported "no or secular" religious identity, reflecting higher levels of religious commitment compared with the overall sample. Table 1 shows some comparisons of parish nurses to other nurse respondents. Parish nurse average higher on the calling in current role index (Mean=8.66) compared with other nurses and students (mean=7.65,  $p = .002$ ), lower on searching orientation (Means=3.18, 3.92,  $p = .05$ ) and higher on religious commitment (means=8.18, 7.83,  $p = .009$ ). The strongest differences were for the calling index (Cohen's  $d = .60$ ) and religious commitment (Cohen's  $d = .47$ ).

**Table 1. Independent samples t-tests for parish nurse status.**

	Mean Parish Nurses	Mean Others	p-level	Cohen's d effect size
Meaning in current role (Q18)	8.66	7.65	.002	.60
Searching (Q18)	3.18	3.92	.05	— .39
Religious commitment	8.18	7.83	.009	.47

## Discussion

Interpretive frames potentially useful in understanding calling among nurses and nursing students include professionalization in nursing, Luther's conception of calling, scripture, and developmental stages.

1. *Professionalization*: Over the last century, nursing has evolved, causing a shift from a calling to professional orientation. For instance, the educational setting is often more secular with content being more secular than that taught in non-religious colleges rather than that taught in religious institutions. Nursing curricula focus on a medical model emphasizing the mind and body with little content on spirituality. The concept of vocation is usually not part of the curriculum. As a first step, as faculty at a religious affiliated educational institution, the researchers surveyed students attending CU and found that vocation does play a role in why students chose nursing. There were students who denied the importance of vocation. In contrast to such views, CU students are introduced to vocation, their calling into nursing.
2. *Luther's conception of calling*: The framework that most Lutherans have for "Vocation being Called" (Vieth, 2011) is from Martin Luther himself. Historically, Luther developed an understanding of vocation in opposition of the medieval Roman Catholic view. In the Catholic viewpoint, a calling only pertained to being called to the church including the priesthood. In Luther's explanation of calling, people have many callings and one of them is to be called to all occupations. As the majority of participants are Lutheran, Luther's Theology of vocation may have impacted their perceptions.
3. *Scripture*: Another framework is based on scripture alone. In the Christian Bible, God does indeed call people to particular work. Although scripture seldom uses the word "call" to describe God's guidance to work, scripture does refer to what we usually mean by vocational calling. There are many biblical verses that deal with feeling "called". Even Adam and Eve were "called" to work in the Garden of Eden having dominion over the fish of the sea and birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth, as directed by God in Genesis 1:27-28. People are called to belong to Christ, witness for Him, and to participate in work. God leads people and guides them to a vocation. Some examples include:
  - In Jeremiah 29:11, God reminds us that He has plans for all of us that will give us hope and a future.
  - Proverbs 19:21(NIV): *Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*
  - 1 Peter 2:21(NIV): *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*
  - 2 Peter 1:10a (NIV): *Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.*

4. *Developmental stages:* Another framework that can contribute to interpreting the survey findings is that of Erickson's stages of development. Many parish nurses are in Erickson's stage of "Generativity versus Stagnation." People at midlife are concerned with leaving a positive legacy of themselves. As most parish nurses have retired from their previous nursing positions, yet want to continue to direct their energies into other meaningful activities. Retired nurses have valuable skill sets, experiences, wisdom and knowledge that they want to continue to use. The church and other faith-based settings provide opportunities for service.

This article is only a brief summary of the survey findings we will share with you. This research opens the doors for the future in many ways. We will be reviewing nursing curriculum not only for our parish nurse courses, but also our nursing curriculum. More results will be shared at the 2023 parish nurse conference, to be held at Concordia University. We invite dialog with our colleagues in parish nursing. How do you reflect on your calling? How does your calling reflect on the service to Christ and the church? God-willing, we will continue our research to answer other questions that we have generated in studying the calling into nursing.

In Christ,

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#### **References:**

Cherry, K., (2022). Erikson's stages of development: A closer look at the eight psychosocial stages. *Psychosocial Development Guide* <https://www.verywellmind.com/erik-erikson-stages-of-psychosocial-development>

Dik, B., Eldridge, B.M., Steger, M.F., and Duffy, R.D., (2012). Development and validation of the calling and vocation questionnaire and brief calling scale. *Journal of Career Assessment* pgs.1-22.

Vieth, G.E., (2011). *God at work: Your Christian vocation in all of life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway

## Do What God Called You To Do — February 28, 2022

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. John 17:4

Joseph's brothers despised his dream, so they threw him into a pit. Jesus' family didn't understand His calling; one time they actually thought He was mad. Yet, when He reached the end of His life, He could say, 'I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.' If you wait for everybody to understand and agree with you, you'll never do what God called you to do. In the latter part of the nineteenth century when the Methodists were holding a denominational convention, one leader stood up and shared his vision for both the church and society at large. He told his fellow ministers how he believed that someday men would fly from place to place instead of travelling on horseback. It was a concept too outlandish for many in the audience to handle. One man, Bishop Wright, stood up and furiously protested: 'Heresy! Flight is reserved for the angels!' He went on to say that if God had intended man to fly, He would have bestowed him with wings. Clearly the bishop was unable to envision what the speaker was predicting. When he finished his protest, he collected his two sons, Orville and Wilbur, and left the auditorium. That's right — his sons were the famous Orville and Wilbur Wright! And several years later on 17 December 1903, they did what their father had declared impossible; they recorded the first human flight. Understand this: many people prefer the comforts of the past to the risks of the future. If you need their support and approval, you'll never do what God called you to do.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me follow Your vision, Your Voice, Your Calling for me, and not what others would want. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tim Hetzner

Retrieved on 2/28/2022 URL: <https://devotions1.lccportal.org/2022/02/28/do-what-god-called-you-to-do/>

## Bible Studies and Inspirational Devotions

- For an inspiring Daily Devotion to come to your phone each morning, you can subscribe to Lutheran Church Charities at <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/devotions.html>. Additional ministries information is also available at that site. LCC is located in northern IL and is very supportive of parish nursing.
- For a 1 minute online daily devotion by Rev. Dr. Paul Devantier go to: <https://www.bythewaytoday.org>
- Bible studies from CPH—not specific to parish nursing, but definitely useful for parish nurses.
  - *Waiting: A Bible Study on Patience, Hope, and Trust* by Sharla Fritz (CPH 2017)
  - *The God of all Comfort* by Donna Pyle (CPH 2012)

## Compassionate Care Resources

- **Cancer Companions:** [www.cancercompanions.org](http://www.cancercompanions.org)
- **Lutherans For Life:** [lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)
- **Stephen Ministry:** [stephenministries.org](http://stephenministries.org)
- **Lutheran Church Charities:** [lutheranchurchcharities.org](http://lutheranchurchcharities.org); LCC K-9 Comfort Dog Ministry; Hearts of Mercy and Compassion
- **Hope-ful Living:** [hopefulliving.org](http://hopefulliving.org)
- **Caring-Ministry:** [kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry](http://kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry)

**LCMS Parish Nurse Council:** offers a 17-module course for RNs wishing to become Parish Nurses in collaboration with the Lutheran Nurses Association of Australia. The schedule is flexible and encouraged to be completed within six months. Many complete the course in less than six months. The course was developed by practicing clergy and parish nurses and reviewed by LCMS clergy and practicing parish nurses. Module 17 is specific to the organization and resources available for parish nurses within the LCMS. The course is designed for the RN as an introduction to parish nursing, but it can be adapted to others within the health professions wishing to serve as congregational health advocates. Personalized mentoring is provided throughout the courses and periodic optional zoom meetings are provided to add the group discussion component. For more information contact Dr. Marcy Schnorr ([marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com](mailto:marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com)) or at 1-815-562-2744 (mornings).

## Certificate Courses for Parish Nurses Recommended by the LCMS Parish Nurse Council

There are many ecumenical/interfaith parish nurse (faith community nursing) courses available, but at present there are only three that are specifically recommended by the LCMS Parish Nurse Council (Leadership Team). These are recommended because of their specifically Lutheran framework and are consistent with the culture of the LCMS practice and teachings. Upon completion of any of the courses a Certificate of Completion is awarded, and the parish nurse is eligible to be included in the LCMS Directory of Parish Nurses. **Concordia University Wisconsin** offers two options for earning a certificate. They are:

**4-Day Intensive Course:** Taught by the Schools of Nursing and Theology, this course is offered annually in May at CUW. This course introduces Christian caregiving and parish nursing within a congregational setting. Most of the participants are registered nurses, but it is also open to other health care professionals and others interested in a congregational health ministry. Students from CUW may also take the course as an undergraduate elective for three undergraduate credits.

**Faith Community/Parish Nursing:** This 8-week course is taught by the Schools of Nursing and Theology and is similar in content to the 4-Day Intensive On-Site Course. This course is offered to registered nurses by distance learning.

**For more information about either of these courses contact Dr. Carol Lueders Bolwerk ([carol.luedersbolwerk@cuw.edu](mailto:carol.luedersbolwerk@cuw.edu)) or at 1-262-243-4233.**

## **The Lutheran Parish Nurses International (LPNI) Corner**

- **The Annual Parish Nurse Pilgrimage to Bethlehem and the Holy Land is scheduled for April 21-29, 2023.** This is always an interesting, insightful, and inspirational trip. We begin in Bethlehem because that is the home of the only parish nurse in the Holy Land. Raeda Mansour is a dear sister in Christ and has been at several of the Concordia Conferences and events in the Northern Illinois District-LCMS. In addition to a few days in and around Bethlehem, we will also see highlights in Jerusalem and Galilee. **Although the trip is several months away, registrations are requested by October 1st so that we qualify for the lower costs. In order to get this lower price, we need a minimum of 4 more registrants.** For more information or to submit a “statement of interest” contact Marcy Schnorr, Director Church Ministries-Parish Nurse at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Rochelle, IL. Marcy also serves on the parish nurse leadership council for LCMS Parish Nursing and Chairperson for Lutheran Parish Nurses International. She has been to Bethlehem more than twenty times and has escorted any of the teams. For more information, contact [marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com](mailto:marcyschnorr2009@gmail.com)
- **2023 Lutheran Parish Nurse International Study Tour to Bucharest/Brasov, Romania will be held on 8-15 September 2023.** LPNI study tours offer Parish Nurses and others from around the world the opportunity to learn, network and support one another, share experiences and models of practice, meet with pastors, deaconesses, and others to enjoy fellowship with like-minded people. Watch for more information coming soon.
- **A Handy Helper** for your bulletin inserts and newsletters. Please see the **Health Topic** and **Devotion** written each month for your use. Also available is an annual bible study contributed by **Rev. Dan Paalova**. All of these can be found at <http://www.lpni.org>

## Submission Guidelines

All articles or announcements for submission to the newsletter are to be in Times New Roman 11 font as a Word document. Pictures submitted for inclusion in articles should be in a JPEG format and attached to the email. Bible verses quoted in articles should include the version of the Bible. Please email all articles submissions to Jamie Spikes [jamiespikes@gmail.com](mailto:jamiespikes@gmail.com). All articles will be reviewed by the Education Team of the LCMS Parish Nurse Council prior to publication.

**A CALL FOR AUTHORS!** Please prayerfully consider being a contributor. If you are interested in writing an article for the upcoming newsletters or needing **Editorial Guidelines** please contact Jamie Spikes at [jamiespikes@gmail.com](mailto:jamiespikes@gmail.com). Upcoming issues will have the following themes and deadlines:

**Winter 2022: *The Beatitudes***. Deadline for article submission: **November 1, 2022**

**Spring 2023: *Prayer***. Deadline for article submission: **February 1, 2023**

**Summer 2023: *Kindness***. Deadline for article submission: **May 1, 2023**

**Disclaimer:** The information contained within this newsletter is selected for the insights and understanding of parish nursing within a confessional Lutheran setting. However, the views expressed are not necessarily those of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Please read with discretion and discuss any questions you may have with an LCMS pastor.

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