

Five FAQs About Faith Community Nursing

What is a faith community nurse?
Is it different from a parish nurse?

A **Faith community nurse (FCN)** is:

“A registered professional nurse who is actively licensed in a given state [or international equivalent] and who serves as a member of the staff of a faith community. The FCN promotes health as wholeness of the faith community, its groups, families, and individual members through the practice of nursing as defined by that state’s nurse practice act [or international equivalent] in the jurisdiction in which the FCN practices and the standards of practice set forth in this document” (American Nurses Association & Health Ministries Association, 2017, p. 86).

Nurses from many countries outside of the United States and some Christian denominations continue to use the traditional title “parish nurse”:

*“**Parish nurse** is the historical term Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg chose as the name of this specialty practice. He did so as a theological choice for this professional ministry, because it connoted service not only to the congregation but also to the wider community within the geographic area surrounding the physical location of the sanctuary. Just as the word sanctuary can mean both ‘church worship area’ and ‘safe harbor,’ the word parish can mean ‘congregation’ and ‘geographic area served by a congregation.’” (Westberg Institute, 2019, Introduction, p. v).*

Both titles along with other religion specific titles for the practice are acceptable to distinguish the practice from other types of specialty practice nursing.

What is the specialty practice of faith community nursing?

According to the ANA/HMA Scope & Standards of Practice, faith community nursing is:

“The specialized practice of professional nursing focusing on the intentional care of the spirit as the foundation of the practice. The delivery of care and relationship established promotes whole-person health and prevention or minimization of illness within the context of a faith community and the wider community.” (Faith Community Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, 3rd ed., 2017 p. 86)

Where do faith community nurses work?

Although the practice began in communities of faith and faith community nurses are represented in all major religions, faith community nursing has expanded. Faith community nurses can be found in a wide range of practice settings including hospitals, academic centers, theme parks, industry, and hospice.

How did the specialty practice of faith community nursing start?

The practice of Parish/Faith community nursing began with the Reverend Dr. Granger Westberg's pilot programs in 1983. In 1985, he expanded the concept by creating the Parish Nurse Resource Center which quickly became the International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC) and the Health Ministries Association. Over the past 35 years, the concept of Parish nursing has developed into a recognized specialty practice for professional nurses around the world with an estimated 20,000 practicing FCNs in over 30 countries.

What organizations support and educate faith community nurses?

- Westberg Institute for Faith Community Nursing (www.westberginstitute.org)
- The Nursing Division of the Spiritual Care Association (www.spiritualcareassociation.org/nursing.html)
- Health Ministries Association (www.hmassoc.org)
- Faith Community Nurses International (www.fcinternational.org)

Interested in learning more?

Contact Sharon@SharonTHinton.com or visit www.SharonTHinton.com.