



Historical Notes on the Church's Leadership in Health Care

History traces the church's role in health care to Jesus' instructions to care for the sick and poor, even if they are strangers.....*Matthew 25:36-36 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me; I was I was sick, and you visited me."* The earliest religious orders devoted themselves to this ministry, and care of the sick and strangers became a hallmark of Christianity.

During the Crusades, care of the sick and injured was formalized and institutionalized as an extension of the church. The Brothers of St. John of Jerusalem (1099) were committed to the care of those wounded in battle. The Knights of St. Lazarus (1142) cared for lepers, living among them in a “life of perpetual seclusion.” The Hospitallers of St. John of God, founded in 1572, continues to this day to care for the poor, disabled, sick, and dying in 51 countries.

Catholic nuns started most of the earliest hospitals around the world. After the Reformation, Protestant clergy founded hospitals and training schools for nurses. Florence Nightingale was driven by her strong Christian faith to train as a nurse, certain that it was “a calling from God.” Her parents were mortified. At that time hospitals were dirty and dangerous, and “more often than not, nurses were drunks and considered immoral, illiterate, and ignorant in demeanor.” Nightingale changed that image, establishing nursing as a respectable profession.

Beginning in 1847, the first hospitals in Pittsburgh were founded (and staffed) by Sisters of Mercy, St. Francis, St. Joseph, Sisters of Charity, and Divine Providence and also founded by clergy and laity of the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Jewish, and Episcopal faiths. Faith-based hospitals in the Pittsburgh area have been sold to secular providers, with only Mercy retaining its Catholic identity. However, major nursing home and senior care systems in our area today are managed by the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Jewish faiths. Catholic Charities provides health and social services “serving all in their time of greatest need.”

Individual parishes also serve people in ways that promote basic health needs through food banks, clothing banks, Meals on Wheels service, and Faith in Action volunteers who help senior citizens with shopping and transportation needs. Parish ministries dedicated to visiting the sick and homebound also promote health. Research done by Drs. Ron and Janice Glaser of Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio found that the factor most likely to negatively affect the immune system was loneliness. Doctors and hospitals can't fix loneliness, but churches can and do. The church has always cared for our spiritual health and continues to have a profound ability to affect physical and mental health as well.

"I Was Sick and You Visited Me..." by Mary R. Ebinger

I was sick and you visited me, and listened to me as I talked.

I was sick and you did not say "cheer up" when I was sad and wanted to share my feelings.

I reached for your hand and your touch gave me comfort, even though you said nothing.

I was sick and you understood I only wanted a few visitors for a short time.

I was in a nursing home, lonely and isolated, and you came and read to me and spent time with me.

I was in a hospital, full of tubes, and you did not look horrified but stayed for a few minutes to show you cared.

I was at home, the days were long and I wanted company, and you scheduled visits along with other friends to make the time pass, but never stayed too long to tire me out.

I was afraid and you listened to my fears, and I felt relieved to talk to you.

I was getting better and bored, and you brought me magazines and books and articles from the newspaper.

I was sick and you cared, and it showed.

I was sick and you understood, and I felt God's love within you.

Thank you.

Health and Wellness Classes

Join facilitator Becky Johnen at St. Elias Church, 4200 Homestead-Duquesne Road, Munhall, PA as she presents timely topics during the Great Fast. Sessions are held in the parish social hall following the Divine Liturgy.

"Power of Forgiveness" - March 17 - What is forgiveness, how to develop the skill, how it improves health.

"Relaxation and Stress Reduction" - this class was recorded on video and is available on DVD. The 37-minute presentation can be used in a group setting or individual viewing. Becky also compiled an excellent handout packet. If you would like a copy of the handout and/or the DVD, please reply to this email.

In the Archeparchy

A new Bethany Ministry recently got underway at St. John Chrysostom Church in Houston, Texas.

Visit the Archeparchy's new website at <http://www.archpitt.org/>

Health Information on the Internet

Over 60% of Americans reported searching for health information online, and 60% of these people reported that their online searches impacted their health decisions.

How do we know which websites provide accurate information?

The U.S. National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, MD, a division of the National Institutes of Health, is the world's largest medical library. Their website MedlinePlus offers information you can trust on diseases and health problems, medications, nutrition, and much more. Check it out at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/

Easter Baskets for the Homebound

This is a good time to start planning for Easter gift baskets or bags to take to our homebound parishioners. We suggest delivering these during Holy Week. Some items to include are:

- Blessed palms and willow branches
- Easter card
- Prayer card with icon of the Resurrection
- Pysanky or egg-wrap decorated eggs
- One or two food items that would be appropriate for the individual, such as paska, butter lamb, small lamb cake (Aldi's), nut roll, etc.

February is Heart Month

The risk assessment tool linked below uses information from the Framingham Heart Study to predict a person's chance of having a heart attack in the next 10 years. This tool is designed for adults aged 20 and older who do not have heart disease or diabetes.

To find your risk score, click on this link and enter your information in the calculator:

<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/atp/iii/calculator.asp?usertype=pub>

12 Things Your Dog Can Teach You

1. When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.
2. Truly enjoy the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face.
3. Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
4. Take naps and stretch before rising.
5. Run, romp, and play daily.
6. On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree.
7. When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.
8. Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.
9. Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Stop when you have had enough.
10. Be loyal.
11. Never pretend to be something you are not.
12. If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.

Mental Health First Aid Course

The recent mass shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. have brought forth serious public discussions about mental health care.

In all fairness, however, we must be aware of statistics on the connection between mental illness and crime, as noted in a recent article by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius:

"The vast majority of Americans with a mental health condition are not violent. In fact, just 3% to 5% of violent crimes are committed by individuals who suffer from a serious mental illness."

The question still arises: "Could anyone have prevented the Sandy Hook tragedy, or those at Columbine, Virginia Tech, the movie theater in Aurora, the Sikh temple, Western Psych (WPIC) in Pittsburgh.....etc.?"

Most people could provide emergency first aid for a physical problem and call 911 for the paramedics. Unfortunately, the average citizen is much less prepared to deal with an individual in a mental health crisis, like when a person expresses thoughts of suicide, intent to harm others, or exhibits behavior that is inappropriate or out of touch with reality (psychotic).

Many people do not know about the "Mobile Crisis Team" that can be called to respond to mental/behavioral health emergencies. In the Pittsburgh area, the **Re:solve Crisis Network 1-888-796-8226** provides round-the-clock mental health crisis intervention and stabilization services for residents of Allegheny County.

Any one of us may be the troubled person's first contact. Learning basic mental health first aid skills enables us to recognize signs and symptoms of a mental health problem and get the individual the help they need. It can reduce the risk of the individual causing harm to others or themselves.

Mental Health First Aid is a relatively new, groundbreaking public education program which is now available in the Pittsburgh area through Pittsburgh Mercy Health System. The 12-hour course, conducted in 2 sessions, helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. For more information and to find a course near you: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/program_overview/

Divine Liturgy Broadcasts Keep our Homebound Connected

Holy Ghost Church in McKees Rocks, PA

Sunday at 9 AM on radio station 810 WEDO and www.ustream.tv/channel/holy-ghost-church

Weekdays 8 AM www.ustream.tv/channel/holy-ghost-church

St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Munhall PA

Saturday at 5 pm and Sunday at 9 AM www.stjohnsbyzantinecathedral.com/

St. John Chrysostom, Greenfield, Pittsburgh, PA

Sunday at 10:30 AM www.sjcbcc.com/live.html

Contact us for information or assistance with your parish Bethany Ministry

Very Rev. Eugene Yackanich 412-461-1712

Dorothy Mayernik, RN, MSN (cell phone) 412-310-0521 dorothymayernik@comcast.net

Help with coordinating a Bethany Ministry, health care information, referrals, & community resources

Jennifer Kehm (cell phone) 412-389-0488 nkehm@aol.com

Cancer support for individuals and families, help with coordinating a parish Bethany Ministry

Becky Johnen, EdD (cell phone) 304-904-3501 palfys@verizon.net

Health and wellness presentations

To Read More on Health Ministry

- o **The Faith Connection newsletter** from Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, Pittsburgh [http://www.pmhs.org/pdf/PNP Faith Connection February 2013.pdf](http://www.pmhs.org/pdf/PNP_Faith_Connection_February_2013.pdf)
- o **Bethany Ministry newsletter back issues** are posted on <http://stgregoryusc.org/>
- o **Church Health Reader**, Church Health Center, Memphis, home of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center <http://chreader.org/healthMinistry.aspx>

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!
