

**Community of Christ**  
**Congregational Nursing Role Description**  
(including the role of a Health Ministries Team)

Community of Christ congregations, as they seek to minister to the health, wholeness, and spiritual healing of individuals and families, may benefit from the contributions of a congregational nurse (and/or other health professionals in the congregation). The congregational nurse is a Community of Christ professional registered nurse, who utilizes his/her nursing and spiritual commitment in a "healthy living and healing ministry" within a congregation. The congregational nurse will act as a facilitator to meet the congregation's needs for whole person health: body, mind, and spirit. Congregations without nurses, and/or without other health professionals, may find it helpful to have a designated person, who is interested in the health needs of the congregation, to serve as a resource person for members. However, the licensing laws/practice acts of the state must be always be upheld.

In most congregations, one congregational nurse will volunteer, or be asked, to act as a leader in mobilizing/utilizing other nurses and/or health care providers in the congregation to create a congregational nursing (or health ministries) team. This team is often effective as a support to pastoral care and stewardship ministries, as well as to the priesthood regarding administration and visiting the sick.

NOTE: It is advisable that: 1) congregational nurses and/or health ministries team members receive role training from the Community of Christ Health Ministries Association and 2) function within the non-invasive parameters of this role statement.

The role of the congregational nurse (or other healthcare professional) may involve a variety of non-invasive functions, depending on the unique needs of the congregation and community, including:

- ◆ **Health Educator:** Increases awareness of health-related issues through presentation (and/or information) on topics like stress management, hypertension, parenting/children's needs, nutrition and preventive education for all ages, health screenings, health fairs, and health-related articles in bulletins/newsletters; a provider of health education/information
- ◆ **Personal Health Counselor:** Discusses health problems, clarifies/explains medications, treatments and treatment options/alternatives. May make home, hospital, nursing home visits for support of individuals and families and for assessment of the need for further resources from church or community; a personal health/wholeness support and advocate
- ◆ **Referral Source:** Acts as a liaison to community resources and services to assist families in decision-making (e.g.: living alternatives for older family members, treatment for substance abuse problems, counseling for marital discord or violence) or helping congregational members navigate through the complex health system to find needed resources. Shares in congregational ministerial referral and follow-up to address spiritual issues and overall well-being; a resource person
- ◆ **Facilitator:** Links congregational person's needs with specific church/ community resources and supports (e.g.: meals, transportation, support groups, stewardship ministries/oblation, priesthood ministries); linkage person
- ◆ **Interpreter:** In all activities, the nurse/team seeks to promote an understanding of whole functioning (without criticism or judgment): the relationship between lifestyle, attitudes, faith, and well-being. This is actualized through discussions with individuals (e.g.: hypertension, lifestyle, diet, and spiritual faith/ wholeness). When programs are offered (e.g. program on AIDS or Alzheimer's disease), the emphasis will be not only on the physical symptoms/care, but on the emotional and spiritual issues, and on the church's responsibility (as a caring community) to individuals and families regarding their health and wholeness; teacher/ minister

**NOTE:**

Whichever activities are needed in a particular congregation/individual, the registered nurse facilitates the use of available resources in the congregation and the community, rather than providing direct "hands on" care. The role of the congregational nurse should not include invasive procedures or care which undermines that of the primary care provider. The nurse works in conjunction with established health care services, medical diagnoses, and treatment. The congregational nurse seeks to creatively interface with identified health education and care delivery providers/systems and to share in bridging any health and wholeness gaps which individuals in a congregation may be experiencing.

The congregational nurse/health ministries team can network not only with the Community of Christ Health Ministries Association, but also with the Parish Nursing ministries of the area/region and with the Graceland Nursing Program. They can also share as an integral part of the congregational mission and of the leadership team.

When non-healthcare and/or non-licensed people are involved, care must be taken to act primarily in the support, referral, and facilitator role functions.

*~ Adopted 1991 in Center Stake (edited in 2003 and 2005); may be modified or copied for use in other regions ~*