



# Whole Health

Newsletter of the  
Australian Faith Community Nurses Association Inc

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## God is in the valleys

During the past few months I have been walking alongside a number of people who have been going through difficult times or perhaps we could call them 'the valleys of life'. When I was preparing to lead a healing service in my church, I went to God's word to explore the metaphor of valleys in scripture. I read a passage from 1 Kings 20 that had me asking how many people think God is a God of the hills and not present in their the 'valleys'!

In this passage an Aramean king is threatening Israel, and finally makes war with them, but God helps his people, and the Israelites win the battle. The Arameans decide their defeat occurred because they fought the Israelites on the hills so the God of Israel must be a **god of the hills!** Therefore they speculate that the next battle should be fought in the valley and then the Arameans will be victorious!

As the Arameans are preparing for battle, they muster large forces of horses, chariots and more than a 100 000 foot soldiers. The Israelites by contrast appear like two little groups of goats on the opposite hillside of the valley, while Ben Hadad's army swarms the whole valley.

Can you imagine the fear that must have grabbed at the Israelites' throats? They would have been terrified, knowing they were soon to die. Over seven days they stand there watching their looming fate come closer. I am sure they knew discouragement, despair and terror. They would have wanted to give up, surrender or face their death.

But God wants people to know that his presence is not limited by humans. He sends a prophet to the Israelites to bring a message of hope! *'This is what the Lord says: "Because the Arameans think the Lord is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the Lord."'* (1 Kings 20:28)

How awesome! How amazing! God says, 'Don't limit me to the hills; I'm also the God of the valleys!' **And he wants us to hear that same message.**

Have you ever faced a valley? Are you facing one now? Perhaps you feel as if you are in the middle of a seemingly endless valley and you are weak, tired, empty and alone. You could see God in the hilltop experiences, but you are struggling to find him in the valley. You may have been calling on him, but it seems as if he's not hearing you. You may feel seriously outnumbered, surrounded and completely helpless, thinking: 'I'm about to go down here!'

No matter what you are going through, no matter how dark, deep, or long your valley is, **God is the same God now as he was then for the Israelites.** He is watching over you, and working **with** you, and **for** you, to assure you he has the battle in his control and the victory assured! Don't let your perspective of God be limited to 'a god of the hills'! When God says he is the God of valley, he means **every** valley you and I will face in our lives. The same God sent his son to fight the battle for us and this is what we will celebrate in a few weeks at Easter. He has won the victory over death and it is this message of hope and healing we have to share with people when they have lost their hope.

Anne van Loon RN PhD  
Chairperson AFCNA



## FCNs and aged care

Australia has an ageing population. Increasingly, older people are wanting to stay in their own home as long as possible. This is understandable. The government supports this concept, and makes a wide range of resources and services available to help make this happen.



The time comes, however, when elderly people are no longer able to remain in their family home, living independently. So they move into a more compact retirement unit, and eventually into low- and finally high-level residential care. Across Australia, churches are in the forefront among aged-care providers.

However, increasing age is resulting in an increase in the number of people with dementia. Australia's population today includes approximately two million people aged 70 years and over. It's expected that by 2029 this figure will double to four million. Our ageing population means a decrease in the tax base to meet future needs. And many aged-care facilities run by church bodies find it difficult to attract and keep qualified and competent staff who are also committed Christians.

This is where an FCN — whether full-time or part-time — can play a vital role, especially in a facility that had independent living units.

Companionship and a listening ear become increasingly important as people grow older. As people age and become frail their adult children experience a role reversal. Many of them are ill equipped for this. They mightn't have the time to accept the responsibilities it entails. Our increasingly mobile society means that often children live a distance away from the parents, interstate or even overseas. An FCN can be a supportive 'bridge' in such situations, and help children who're bewildered about what's happening to their parent, or who're unable to be a close support, perhaps because of distance.

— Robert J Wiebusch

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*Closing date for next issue: 10 July*

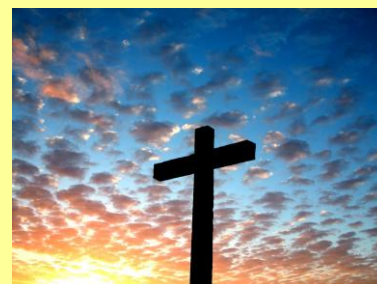


## This issue

God is in the valleys	1
FCNs and aged care	2
SHARE— Doing Life Together	3
New Book	4
Our Task	4
News	5
Consider an FCN role	5
Prayer, courses, resources	6

## Disclaimer

*In no event will AFCNA be liable to anyone for any decision made, action taken by anyone in reliance on information in this newsletter.*





## SHARE – Doing Life Together

Two years ago, a Mental Health pilot program was launched in Mt Barker, SA, and now it finally has a name: **SHARE – Doing Life Together**.

**Target group:** Socially isolated people recovering from severe mental illness, ready for discharge from a Community Mental Health Service.

**Aim:** To battle social isolation that puts this group at a high risk of relapse after discharge.

The program has grown into a partnership between three local churches (of different denominations) and the local Community Mental Health Service. It is mostly self-funded and is not time limited, which makes it more a **way of life** than a 'program'.

**SHARE – Doing Life Together** consists of four branches:

1) **RECON** – a weekly social 'get-together' for the target group and volunteers, where meaningful relationships can develop in a positive, relaxed and fun atmosphere. We do everything from learning how to cook, to chatting over a cuppa at a local cafe, trying out our talent at art and music, experiencing different outings to sharing an evening meal.

2) **RECONNECT** – a mentor program where church volunteers are carefully matched to an individual from the target group and supported to provide mentoring and friendship. Meaningful relationships are developed on a one-to-one basis.

3) **REVAMP** – an annual working bee is offered to a person from the target group who has a genuine need.

4) **RECHARGE** – respite opportunity is to commence in May 2013 and aims to provide a refreshing 'get away' experience.

Approximately 30 regular volunteers from the three local churches play a unique role. Some help on a weekly basis, while others are involved from once a fortnight to once a year. The program continually evolves according to the skills and passions of the volunteers. For example, we recently started cooking classes



in response to a volunteers' passion for cooking. Another volunteer's passion for teaching golf led him to mentor a person who had, for a long time, a desire to learn to play golf. Three of the volunteers are from the target group and embraced the opportunity to grow towards becoming volunteers themselves. The program empowers others to empower others. Currently, the target group consists of 16 people.

As a Faith Community Nurse, I provide ongoing support, training and evaluation to both the target group and volunteers.

Testimonies from the target group speak for themselves.

**Before joining the program:** 'I didn't talk much. I had closed down ... I'd lost confidence in myself ... Home was increasing my depression ... I had no friends, no interests ... I worried about the next bad thing that would happen to me ... I didn't know how to reach out to people anymore ... I'd lost a lot of my social skills ... Life was like being in jail, a place no one wants to be ... I would sleep all day, sleep all night..

**Since joining the program:** '(My mentor) is the light of my life ... I have made other friends ... I have a lot of interests now and I don't have much time to myself ... It's made me much, much happier and I have a thirst for life, feeling useful, something I didn't feel for a long time ... The best year I have had in 38 years and I'm 43 ... This time when I was discharged I actually had some people who wanted to help me.'

This program is only possible through the countless hours and generosity of the many volunteers, mentoring from Dr Anne van Loon and the inspiration of my late husband, Peter.

**Millie Davey RN, RMHN, GradDipTh(FCN)**



## New Book

### *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare*

Mark R Cobb, Christina M Puchalski , and Bruce Rumbold

Oxford Press

This new book brings together many international authors, and as part of the Oxford Textbooks in Public Health, situates spirituality as an important body of knowledge to be taught in curricula relating to public health. The book has 64 chapters and almost 500 pages, but is an excellent read.

FCNs understand the relationship between spirituality and health care, and this book demonstrates its presence as a significant field of scholarship in health research, health-care policy and clinical practice and training. The Amazon book review says:

Understanding health and wellbeing requires addressing spiritual and existential issues, and healthcare is therefore challenged to respond to the ways spirituality is experienced and expressed in illness, suffering, healing and loss. If health care has compassionate regard for the humanity of those it serves it is faced with questions about how it understands and interprets spirituality, what resources it should make available and how these are organised, and the ways in which spirituality shapes and informs the purpose and practice of healthcare? These questions are the basis for this book that presents a coherent field of enquiry, discussion and debate that is interdisciplinary, international and vibrant.

There is a growing corpus of articles in medical and healthcare journals on spirituality in addition to a wide range of literature, but there has been no attempt so far to publish a standard text on this subject. *Spirituality in Healthcare* is an authoritative reference on the subject providing unequalled coverage, critical depth and an integrated source of key topics. Divided into six sections including practice, research, policy and training, the book brings together international contributions from scholars in the field to provide a unique and stimulating resource.'

You can hear another book review at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0IWGAObzTg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0IWGAObzTg)

FCNs may be interested to know there is a chapter (Chapter 38) in this international book titled 'Faith Community (Parish) Nursing', which I was invited to contribute. It was an honour to be asked to share with the world the research-based model developed in Australia.

**Anne van Loon**

## Our Task

God put us here to be his hands  
his feet, his voice, in all the lands.  
Not everyone is born to preach,  
not everyone is born to teach.  
Some of us can sing or play.  
Others sew, or write, or pray  
But each one has a job to do,  
each one a special talent too,  
God-given, for a special task.  
Be ready for one day, he'll ask.

So on life's journey every day  
stay close to God in every way.  
He only asks us to be true,  
to try each day his will to do.  
Our efforts may be weak and poor,  
and yet the Saviour's love is sure.  
His faithfulness — unending, true —  
will through the ages, see us through.  
And we will know our best we've given,  
the day we pass from earth to heaven.

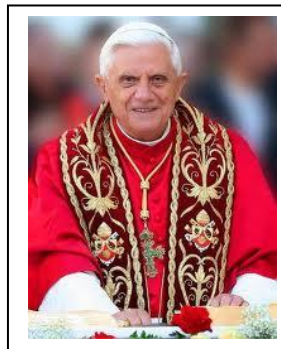
**Pam Oke, in *Encounter***





## At home and abroad

In a message for the 2013 World Day of the Sick on 11 February, former Pope, Benedict XVI, called on people to be a 'Good Samaritan'. Thanking those who care for the sick and elderly, the Pope emphasised the fundamental role of the church in 'lovingly and generously accepting every human being, especially those who are weak and sick'.



The parable of the Good Samaritan is just one of many accounts that show how Jesus expects his disciples to behave toward others, especially those in need, Pope Benedict said. He added that through prayer, people can draw strength from God's infinite love, in order to 'live day by day with concrete concern, like that of the

Good Samaritan, for those suffering in body and spirit ...'

He also called on those who are sick and suffering to help others find meaning and healing in accepting their own suffering by looking to Christ, 'who suffered with infinite love'.



Angela Uhrhane, Pastoral Care Nurse at Lutheran Aged Care, Albury, NSW, has been awarded an inaugural Board for Lutheran Aged Care Australia (BLACA) scholarship. She has begun study for a Graduate Certificate in Aged Care and Pastoral Studies at Charles Sturt University. The scholarship was launched at the BLACA conference in Adelaide last May, and is intended to equip recipients in the areas of chaplaincy and ministry in Lutheran aged-care facilities.



## Consider an FCN role

In these days when time and economic pressures are mounting on health workers everywhere we must not forget the feeling of fear and vulnerability many people experience during illness, and their need for reassurance, meaning-making, compassionate presence and a sense of caring companionship that demonstrates God is present in their 'valley experience'.

Health workers are privileged to walk with people in the midst of their struggle and suffering. This role moves nursing and health care back to a partnership with the person in the healing and recovery journey, rather than the professionally distant expert who can choose to hold or withhold information, expertise and control over the person's life. Health and care ministry workers have the wonderful privilege of providing this kind of holistic health care within the faith community setting.

It would be wonderful if more nurses could consider this role within their faith community. There are many places where you can receive the basic training. 'B Care' in South Australia is taking registrations for the

next *Introduction to Health and Care Ministry* course on 13, 14 May, to be held at Baptist Care House in Wayville, South Australia (See notice on page 8 in this bulletin).

The Lutheran Parish Nursing group conducts regular *Introduction to Pastoral Care Nursing* courses, and further information may be obtained from Lynette Wiebusch at [lynette.wiebusch@lca.org.au](mailto:lynette.wiebusch@lca.org.au)

Pastoral Healthcare Network Australia also conducts workshops and courses in Victoria and information can be obtained from Leonie Rastas at [leonie@apnrc.org](mailto:leonie@apnrc.org).

Please consider if God is calling you to share in this important ministry which our health services are struggling to provide.

**Anne van Loon**



## Courses at Australian Lutheran College

Courses helpful for Faith Community Nurses are available by flexible education or on campus. For further information:

The Administrator  
School of Theological Studies, ALC  
104 Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide SA 5006  
☎08 8267 7400 Email: [alc@alc.edu.au](mailto:alc@alc.edu.au)  
Website: [www.alc.edu.au](http://www.alc.edu.au)

## Introduction to Health and Care Ministry

A two-day course to equip participants for a ministry of health, healing and compassionate pastoral care.

**13, 14 May**  
**Baptist Care House**  
130 Rose Tce, Wayville, SA

**Registration:** \$100 for two days includes lunch and course manual.

Earlybird discount: \$50 by 30 April.

**Info:** [www.baptistcaresa.org.au](http://www.baptistcaresa.org.au)

**Course coordinator:**

Anne van Loon, RN, PhD

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## Pastoral Care/Parish Nursing seminar

13 April 2013

Good Shepherd Lutheran church  
Hamilton, Vic

**Theme:** *Called to care*

Sponsored by the

**Lutheran Nurses Association of Australia**

For more info: [lynette.wiebusch@lca.org.au](mailto:lynette.wiebusch@lca.org.au)

## In a word



*'We wait in hope for the Lord;  
he is our help and our shield. In him our  
hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.'*  
*Psalm 33:20, 21*



## Books

### *A Short history of Christianity*

Geoffrey Blainey

Viking, \$45.55

An accessible and dependable book by a well-known Australian historian.

### *The First thousand Years: a Global History of Christianity*

Robert L Wilken

Yale University Press, \$35.00

Detailed stories of the men and women who spread the Christian message.

## Prayer Corner



Almighty God,  
by your grace alone we are accepted and called to be Faith Community Nurses.

Strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, and empower our calling.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Pray for

- + Nurses who may be considering an FCN role.
- + Nurses who feel under pressure because of the demands of their role.
- + God's blessing on the introductory course planned for Goroka in Papua New Guinea in August.

## I Say ...

'The astounding truth of the incarnation is that [Jesus] looked so unlike a god that people had difficulty in recognising him as anything but Joseph the carpenter's son.'

— Rev Ivor Bailey

## Membership renewal

The AFCNA financial year is from 1 July to 30 June.

If you have not renewed membership for the current year, please send your renewal to the treasurer, Judy King, promptly.