

**Parish Nursing – Compassion in a Community Context
Variations in practice in Durham, NC & San Antonio, TX**

Camille Ratliff, Trinity 2010, International and Comparative Studies, Duke University

What is parish nursing? The basics

- Past: Born from efforts by Granger Westberg in the 1970s and 1980s around wellness centers in churches.
- Context: Part of the larger field of health ministry, which is “the intentional practice of caring for one another within the distinct context of a faith tradition” (Packett)
- Holistic Approach: address body, mind, and spirit (Oates)
- Practice: Independent professional nurse provider. The parish nurse is not usually a provider of medical care, except when under doctor’s orders or in emergency circumstances. (Breisch)
- The parish nurse is a “health professional within health ministry” (Phillips)
- Training: All parish nurses are registered nurses with current licensure. Many schools of nursing now offer curriculum in parish nursing (eg Health and Nursing Ministries Program, Duke University)
- Interdisciplinary: The nurse acts as a “hub,” connecting people and needs from various disciplines (Breisch). The nurses’ familiarity with “science and spirit serves as a dual qualification” for health prevention (Davis).

Bios of interview participants

Anne A. Packett, MA, BSN

Health Ministries Educator, Caring Communities Program, Duke Divinity School

Interviewed Nov 16, 2007

Anne’s position with the Caring Communities Program puts her in the role of a parish-nursing consultant; This role involves primarily helping churches and institutions develop new programs, secure funding for new and old parish nursing programs, and negotiating and communicating liability issues. As a home health and hospice nurse, she first learned of parish nursing in the eighties and early nineties. Through the International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC), she completed the basic preparation course in parish nursing in 1998, and continued on to complete the Phase II training, which involved a nine-month preceptorship. Anne also serves as a voluntary parish nurse in her congregation.

Alyson Breisch, RN, MSN

Administrative Director, Health and Nursing Ministries Program, Duke Divinity School

Interviewed Nov 13, 2007

Working closely with Anne Packett at the Duke Divinity School, Alyson’s role deals more with the education of parish nurses and lay health ministers. She oversees the masters-track and post-masters certificates in health and nursing ministries, the continuing education of parish nurses, and to some extent the education of lay members of a church in health ministries. Formerly a nurse practitioner in cardiology at the Duke University Medical Center, Alyson completed the post-masters certificate in health and nursing ministries at Duke, as well as the basic IPNRC preparation course in parish nursing. She also is a voluntary parish nurse in her United Church of Christ congregation.

Pilar Oates BA, MA

Executive Director, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas

Interviewed Nov 20, 2007

“Pilar Oates serves as Executive Director of Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas (MHM). MHM is a 501(c) (3), not for profit, faith-based organization and is San Antonio’s largest non-public funding source for community healthcare. It is also one-half owner of the Methodist Healthcare System. MHM’s funding in 2007 will exceed \$28 million for programs to uninsured and underserved individuals throughout South Texas. Oates has a background of service to community, having worked for the City of San Antonio’s Department of Community Initiatives in adult literacy and community action programs. She is involved in extensive community service that focuses on improving outcomes for individuals and families, serving on community boards such as American Heart, United Way, and The Bexar County Health Collaborative. She is a member of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and has been recognized by the San Antonio Commission on Literacy as a leader in the promotion of Lifelong Learning. She received the American Heart Association’s William T. Wright award for community service.” (Bio provided by Pilar Oates)

Roy Phillips, RN, MSN

**Director, Wesley Nurse Health Ministries,
Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas**

Interviewed Nov 20, 2007

As Director, Wesley Nurse Health Ministries™, Roy Phillips is responsible for the strategic management of the Wesley Nurse Program, a faith based, holistic program committed to serving the least served through education, health promotion, and collaboration. The program is centered on assisting the individual and community in achieving enhanced wellness through self-empowerment. The Wesley Nurse service area extends to over 70 counties in the Southwest Texas conference area of the United Methodist Church. Roy Phillips has a background of service to the to the United States, serving as a career US Army Nurse Corp officer, and as a consultant to the DoD in nursing informatics research, development, and project management. (Bio provided by Roy Phillips)

Judy Davis, RN, Deaconess

**Community Outreach Coordinator, Laurel Heights United Methodist Church
Former Wesley Nurse, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas**

Interviewed Nov 19, 2007

Judy served as the Wesley Nurse within Laurel Heights United Methodist church until her retirement just in the summer of 2007. She helped start the Laurel Heights Youth Center and continues to be active in overseeing its activities as the Community Outreach Coordinator at LHUMC.

For further information

Please contact *camille.ratliff@duke.edu*. More information on this field can be obtained at The International Parish Nurse Resource Center, <http://www.parishnurses.org/>. More information about Wesley Nurse Health Ministries can be found at Methodist Healthcare Ministries’ website, <http://www.mhm.org>. Finally, more information about health ministry and Caring Communities at Duke can be found on the web at <http://caringcommunities.mc.duke.edu/FAQ.htm>.