

*Faith Community Nurses blend nursing and ministry to promote the wellness of the body, mind and spirit in our congregations and our communities. The following article was featured in the Spring 2017 issue of the **Church Health Reader: The Nature of Care:***

What is the nature of care? Do we “give” care generously, or is it a list of tasks to squeeze into the day? Is there a difference between “care for” and “care about”? Is it a job? A relationship? All of these choices can be true. Caregiving is complex, and no two situations are identical. Fundamentally, to care is to enter into the experience of someone whose life is invaded by suffering and powerlessness, and to recognize not only their need for the care we can give but our need for the care we can receive.

The culture around us is facing deep and wide challenges of what it means to give and receive care. What will be the church’s voice? Traditionally, when we talk about “congregational care,” we mean something like, “Does the Hernandez family have someone bringing meals while Alma recovers from gallbladder surgery?” Or, “Do we have people telephoning every household on a regular basis to ask about prayer concerns?” Those ministries are needful and meaningful. At the same time, we know more and more people are becoming involved in care of aging parents, even while they are in their own working years and may still have children at home. We also know that senior communities represent a growing industry, but that the caregivers who work in them are undervalued. We know that better health care means more people need care not only at the end of life but as they journey *through* a serious illness and find their footing for life that may have changed. We know that depression and other hidden conditions related to mental health also tax caregivers, though they may not feel free to talk about it.

Perhaps when we speak of congregations and care, as we make sure to tend the practical needs of families we know well and be intentional about uncovering needs of families we know less well, we might also explore a framework of faith to learn the needs for care in the communities we drive through every day. As people of faith, can we together set examples for the culture around us of what it means to both give and receive care that is not merely a set of tasks to check off but personal connections that bind us to one another and truly heal? (Spring 2017 issue of the **Church Health Reader: The Nature of Care**)

Elim Care is an affiliated ministry of the North Central District, one of 17 districts of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Elim’s Faith Community Nursing ministry mirrors Elim’s mission statement as we work together with congregations in a collaborative effort to integrate the Word of God and Christian principles into areas of health and wellness in the church and the community.

We are here to assist you launch and sustain a health ministry in your church.

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