

## LPNI Devotion – February 2012

### Parish Nursing as a Calling

Some people have a **job**. They work to make money so they can do what they want in their ‘free’ time — get a nice home, travel the world, socialise, live the ‘high’ life ... and so on.

Some people have a **career**. They map out a path that will get them to the top in their sphere of work.

Then there are others who have a **calling**. What motivates them isn’t just something within themselves, but the voice of God himself.

In John 15:16 Jesus says: *‘You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures.’*

God has many different ways of getting people’s attention, and **calling** them into his service. Sometimes they’re quite dramatic! There was the prophet Jonah! God wanted him to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, but Jonah had other ideas, and set off in the opposite direction. It took a severe storm at sea, and a frightening encounter with a great sea monster, to finally get Jonah to heed the call of God!

Or there was Saul, the persecutor. Not far from Damascus Saul had this blinding vision of the risen Christ ... the one whose followers he was persecuting. It left him temporarily blinded, until a man called Ananias came to him, and led him to faith ... and to the calling to become the ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’.

And there was young Samuel ... woken out of his sleep by a voice that seemed to be calling his name. He thought it was Eli the High Priest, but when it happened three times, Samuel realised it was God himself calling him to a special role in the history of his Old Testament people.

Parish Nursing is a **calling**. It’s similar to, yet different from the call a congregation sends to a pastor. The big difference is that a congregation **has** to have a pastor — a spiritual leader or shepherd. It doesn’t **have** to have a Parish Nurse. The office of Parish Nurse is not a divine mandate; it’s a human option.

However, the appointment of lay people to support the Apostles (the church’s first **pastors**) in designated areas of service happened very early in the history of the church. Within a very short time after Jesus’ ascension it became obvious that the Apostles couldn’t do everything that was needed in caring for people both spiritually and physically. So, exercising its Christian freedom, the congregation in Jerusalem resolved to do something about this.

In Acts 6:1–7, St Luke describes the first occasion on which the New Testament church appointed lay members to support and augment the ministry of the Apostles. Several points are worth noting.

1. A **specific need** was identified.
2. To meet this need in Jerusalem, a **congregational meeting** decided to appoint laymen to support the Apostles in a caring ministry.
3. Seven **suitably qualified** men were chosen.

4. This decision established a **'team-ministry'**.
5. The seven men appointed as deacons didn't only have a 'bread-delivery run'; they also had a **spiritual ministry**.
6. The seven deacons were **officially installed** into their office, with prayer and the laying on of hands — a public affirmation of their role.
7. Blessings followed, as the ministry expanded and the congregation grew both spiritually and numerically.

Following this New Testament pattern gives Parish Nurses the assurance that their ministry is a **calling** from God.

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