

## The Corinth Parish Health Ministry Committee

The Parish Health Ministry Committee supports, advises, and or assists the Parish Nurse and others in activities such as:

- Blood Pressure checks
- CPR/AED training classes
- Support during crisis and losses.
- Updates and maintains a disaster response plan
- Provides ongoing training and support programs for the elderly and others with specific needs
- Assists with Stephen Ministries training, as needed
- Offers ongoing health and safety programs to meet the needs of the congregation, Preschool and the Faith Community
- Continues to assess the congregation for health related needs and responds appropriately.

### Mission Statement

The mission of the

Parish Health Ministry

of Corinth Reformed Church

is to promote wellness

of the body, mind, and spirit to

Corinth members

and the community

through education, presence

and prayer

## The Parish Nurse

### *What is a Parish Nurse?*

A parish nurse is a licensed registered nurse who ideally has formal parish nurse training and preparation with focus on assists persons, families and groups toward wholeness in body, mind and spirit.

The Parish Nurse works through the setting of a church congregation or a Faith Community, to promote healthier lifestyles and access to the health care system.

The Parish nurse nurtures relationships between lifestyle and faith.

The Parish Nurse is a member of the Pastoral Care Team and the Parish Health Committee.

A Parish Nurse is not a home health nurse or a Hospice Nurse and does not duplicate duties of other health-care agencies and does not perform invasive or hands on nursing, such as wound care, dressings, etc. Duties include working with other healthcare providers and the congregation members in finding healthcare community resources needed.

The Parish Nurse visits members in hospital, at home and nursing homes/ assistant living to provide support and maintain connection with the church family.

The Parish Nurse Ministry at Corinth is supported by the partnership between Catawba Valley Medical Center and the participating churches in the area. Continuing education and supervision are provided by the CVMC Parish Nurse Program.

*For more information on Corinth's Parish Health Ministry please contact the church office at 828.328.6196 or the Parish Nurse at ext 204 or email [betty@corinthtoday.org](mailto:betty@corinthtoday.org)*

### Members of

#### the Parish Health Ministry

Jeanie Brackett, RN, Chairperson

Will Thompson, MD, Consultant

Betty McGee, RN, CPHQ, Parish Nurse

Mickey Caudle, RN

Larry Estes

Barbara Robinson, RN (ret)

Alfred "Doc" Robinson, DVM (ret)

Martha Willis

Jane Murphy

Nancy Killian

Cheryl Logan, RN

Susan Laughter

*If you are interested in becoming a member of the Parish Health Ministry, please contact the Parish Nurse at 828 326 9162 ext 204 email [betty@corinthtoday.org](mailto:betty@corinthtoday.org)*

## Corinth Reformed Church

### Parish Health Ministry



*I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly*

*John 10:10*

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Brochure on parish nursing. From oral history interview with Betty McGee, conducted by Allison Wonsick, November 24, 2010, in Hickory, North Carolina.

*Interview took place in Hickory, North Carolina.*

AW This is Allison Wonsick and it's November 24, 2010, and your name?

BM Betty Propst McGee.

AW And what year were you born?

BM I was born in 1943.

AW Where were you born?

BM Catawba County, North Carolina.

AW What did your parents do?

BM My dad was...in furniture and my mom was a stay-at-home mom.

AW Did you have siblings?

BM Yes, I did. I had a brother, an older brother, an older sister and later I had a younger brother and a younger sister.

AW What was life at home like?

BM Growing up in rural North Carolina at the time was adventurous...it was a good life. Probably...we knew that we had friends, we had church friends, and school was good. It was good.

AW Can you tell me about your polio experience?

BM Uh...not much. I was only a year old when I came down with polio. It was during the epidemic of 1944. I have no memory of that, of course. I had just began to walk. I came down with polio about a month after my first birthday.

AW And what have you been told about that?

BM Pretty well what my sister has written, you may want to add this, her account is pretty clear because she is the historian in our family and she's done a lot of interviews with a lot of the family members as well as with my mother with what she did not remember, she's a couple years older than I am, she had to interview my mother for the family history.

AW Ok. And how old was she?

BM She was probably about...three.

AW So not a lot of memory there either, probably.

BM No, no. Uh huh.

AW What do you remember about having polio after that age? You grew up with it...

BM I...I remember going to the orthopedic hospital in Gastonia, North Carolina Orthopedic Hospital, where all the polio victims so to speak, went for follow-up, whether it was for treatment or for follow-up to see how they were progressing with physical therapy or the treatments that they were getting at the time after....and I think I went, probably, I'm not sure how frequently I went, seemed like it was pretty frequent when I was growing up, but...probably, maybe once a month for awhile and then probably less frequent as I got older. Then, when I was 13, I had surgery, what they called at that time corrective surgery from some of the things that polio left me with, some weaknesses in my lower extremities. One leg was a little bit shorter than the other so I walked with a limp all my life. I was fortunate I never wore braces, but I had to wear high-top shoes and I had lumbar scoliosis which the curvature of my lower spine was not very severe at all but they did have me to wear kind of a brace for awhile when I was smaller. And I have those memories but the reason they chose to wait until I was 13 to have the surgery, my understanding of that is because that was pre-puberty and before your growth would be complete with your bones and your tendons and your muscles.

AW So, 13, you probably do have memories of that...

BM Yeah. I have memories of that. I was in the 8th grade and I spent most of my 8th grade at the orthopedic hospital. I was there for six months. I remember that....going to school there. They had school for the ones that had to go through surgery there, treatment. I had, what they called, ankle manipulation on both ankles and a tendon transplant on my left. I had a little weakness in my tendon there so at that time they transplanted a tendon in...you know, to make you stronger. I've tried to get my medical records since then but they've all been destroyed, unfortunately. You know, I've never been that interested up until recent years. I got very curious. I was out of state for like 28 years and when I moved back, I tried to get them and that's what I've been told.

AW What spurred your recent interest?

BM I think...just the fact that I realize that that was part of who I was...whereas I grew up, I grew up...my parents always and said, "yeah there's nothing you can't do" and that was a great thing but also I had a little bit of...self-consciousness about...not being like everybody else, you know. At that time, I look back and I really...I really look back at some of things that was done at the time and it was just accepted as the thing to do, but when I was in elementary school, they had a campaign for March of Dimes and I can remember that all of the ones that had polio in the school, they would pull them out of class and we would be poster children, going around trying to get money for the March of

Dimes. I guess I kind of resented that because of the fact that that kind of takes you out and separates you from the norm.

AW Right.

BM And I always try to get away from that. You're probably getting a different viewpoint than you've had before.

AW Yeah! Definitely.

BM And, you know, there forth, I've always tried to excel in things that probably I've reached probably beyond what many, some people...you know, like, I water skied, but it took me a little bit longer to get up and get balanced on the water skis. I learned how to roller skate, I really had a lot of bruises, you know, learning and I just always...I tried to do.

AW Do you think you pushed yourself harder because you did have polio?

BM Oh definitely. I think most people that you probably have interviewed with polio, they are higher achievers.

AW It does seem to be a common theme.

BM And that's probably one of the things because you know you try so hard to fit in as a child and most of the polio victims at that time were children. And if you made it through that, you know, having and getting back into the norm so to speak of things, you really pushed hard to fit in. And that goes for a lesson in life for a lot of things that children face, whether it's mental, autism, whether it's just...something that sets you aside from someone else, you know, children go through that...peer pressure. And a lot of that peer pressure it comes from within their self.

AW Do you think polio influenced your decision to become a nurse?

BM I most definitely think it probably did have a lot of impact. As my sister had recalled in her narrative there about what she had...the information she had compiled from the interview with my mother and other people and, you know, going into the archives and looking like she does...there was a nurse, a public health nurse, Hazel Wilfong. And I can remember her coming into my home. Probably others came, but I can remember her...I can remember her red hair and her spirit and what she would do would come into the home and show my mom how to do exercises, you know, to keep my...strength up and to build up my muscle strength. Probably way ahead of her time in a lot of ways because she worked so diligently to keep you...keep you moving.

AW How old were you then?

BM Oh...I can't remember how old I was when she first started coming, probably as soon as I was discharged from the orthopedic, I mean, from the...hospital. Initially, after I had

polio, they probably sent someone out at that time to follow up with visits for all the ones...but I'm sure that they had their hands full because there were so many of them, I understand.

AW Right.

BM And then, as I grew older, it was probably less frequent and I don't know how old I was when she quit coming at all. After I had my orthopedic surgery I can remember, I can remember before when every time I went back to the orthopedic hospital what I hated so bad about that is that they would put a little skimpy...pants on you and have all the med students and you'd have like 5 or 6 doctors to come in and you'd walk across the floor for them and they would kind of discuss how your case was doing and all that. And that was not a good feeling neither as you get older you become very aware, you know...

AW Yeah, of all the attention...

BM Yeah, yeah.

AW Do you remember nurses from your surgery experience when you were 13?

BM I remember some of them, yeah. I remember...I remember a couple of the doctors, too. I remember, you know, since we had to stay at the orthopedic hospital day and night, I mean, we lived there, a lot of them had a really significant impact from the care that they gave at the time. But I can also remember being in, going into my teenage years and there were other teenagers my age down there, boys and girls, they separated the boys and girls, of course, they had different units for them. Also, at that time, segregation was a very big issue. And I can remember that they allowed us to visit the blacks, the black children, and we did have certain things together but they kept them segregated down a long, dark hall and into a completely different building. And if you read that book "Blue" you'd have more of an appreciation of what I'm saying, too, about that because...looking back, that was kind of weird, that we had fellowship and friendship with those other children, I can remember what impact they were making about their hair care and all that with my memories of that. There was even plans of escapism, believe it or not. We even plotted how we were going to escape the place. ?

AW You did?

BM Children are children and at that age you become more into the world and ...you know...some of the complaints, "oh I'm tired of this place." And some had more mobility than others. Some were in a wheelchair. A lot of the kids were, they had...their spines, they had what were called spinal fusions and I can remember some of the kids had a cast from their chin to hold their neck up right all the way to their toes when they first came out of surgery. And just lay there and they had to be turned they were in a stiff cast for weeks like that. And then, they after awhile they would cut it so it was half way to the hips and they would be sent home and probably for 6 months in a cast, you know, holding their spine, they'd put their neck just stiff and their chin, you know, some of them

even got sores on their neck from the pressure, sores from the cast, that, you know...you think back and you realize how lucky you are because mine was not really as significant as a lot of the kids went through. And I had a best friend that I became acquainted with down there and she actually had more of her arm was paralyzed by polio and she could not use her left arm and she had surgery on both hands to make...to give her more strength in her good hand.

AW So they were almost completely dependent on these nurses for awhile then?

BM Oh absolutely a lot of them were. Different ages of kids, too. One thing that I thought about as I have studied and as I have served in health care and I know that...you know, what health care is, it's an art and it's a practice and that there's nothing precise and you know at that time I think there was quite a bit of what we call, and this sounds cold and far-fetched to people who don't really have an understanding, a lot of it's probably experimental, you know, these surgeries that they did, they didn't really know how good the outcome would be as far as long-term studies, they had no way to measure that. And a lot of times I feel like a lot of the problems I have now actually was probably from the surgery, not the polio.

AW That's probably pretty frustrating.

BM Yeah, it can be. You just have to accept and let go, move on.

AW How did your family ever rationalize how you got polio?

BM I don't know, you know, there was a lot of misinformation going around at the time...you already know how it was spread. It was a virus and it had such an impact on people that...they don't know, they have no idea, whether it's contamination...maybe someone brought it in, the virus in or maybe I was with...you know, at that age you know you have diaper changes and you're around other people that may be changing diapers and not...washing good or whatever. They have no way of knowing. I know that I felt kind of smug about the polio thing at one time in my life, I think it's in the early 50s, they had another epidemic and they were quarantining everybody. We couldn't go swimming which was our favorite thing in the summer we would go to the swimming pool almost every day. And some of the kids were quarantined and supposedly at that time some of the belief was that if you had polio you know you couldn't get it again. We all know that's kind of...not a good thing probably because some of them had different levels and different types. But I remember thinking, "oh, well, I can go there because I'm immune" you know, but no.

AW How long were you in the Hickory hospital?

BM You know I think my sister has that written down...I think, for a couple months.

AW When you were in the hospital when you were 13, what was a typical daily routine like, do you remember?

BM They tried to keep it as normal as possible. I remember I was there during Christmas holidays which was really rough. I went in in October and came out I think in February, or January, February. And being in the 8th grade you know you become more conscientious of boys ...in fact, I had a boyfriend there and we wrote to each other after we both were discharged, he was from another county. But we...we just....we had a lot of entertainment a lot of outside even celebrities even came through at that time and entertained. We had a lot of the organizations in Gastonia would come out and, just like they do at children's hospitals anywhere, a lot of the community would try to make it as good a life as you could have. Like I said before, we had schoolwork. We had teachers. We were taken to a different...the grade levels and put in class and you know actually I passed my 8th grade studies mainly and then I was transferred back to the area when I was discharged. And all my courses were transferred with me.

AW And they were teachers that came in?

BM Uh huh.

AW Or nurses?

BM Teachers.

AW Had movies. They showed us movies, so you know we always looked forward to the movies. And, like I said, they had entertainment. The hard part was that you did depend on, especially right after you had surgery, you had to depend on someone taking care of your daily needs for you. That was, you know, really could be a big deal at that age.

BM Did you pick up on any relationships between the nurses and patients or doctors? What was nursing like then versus now?

AW Well, even I've been in nursing for over 40 years now, graduating in '66 and I came...I graduated from nursing school diploma program, a three year program, I had some post courses in college now and...but, nursing has changed and has evolved even since I have began in nursing. At that time it was a white, stiff starchy nurse you know that crackled when she walked because her uniforms were so starched and just you know that kind of background with the nursing that....a lot of the nurses were probably not licensed nurses that took care of our daily needs. The licensed nurses probably made rounds with the doctors and helped in surgery and all that, it's more like a CNA known today, probably, were by our bedsides. But, I noticed one of the questions that you had asked was how nursing had changed. Technology has changed nursing. Big time. In fact, the jobs I have had in nursing in the past I can remember when computers came aboard and it's either sink or swim and thank goodness I learned to swim. Because I think it's one of the most wonderful things that has hit health care, the technology, but it's also could be a very bad thing in a way that it can be misused, like any other thing.

AW Where did you go to nursing school?

BM I went to Mooresville to a three year program that has since has closed. A lot of three year programs closed their doors. I took classes at Davidson and...

AW Was it associated with a hospital?

BM Yeah, it was from a hospital base. A lot of the nursing schools were hospital based at the time. And actually when I went in nursing the hospital based nursing what has changed too is we were required to...we had first year, second year, third year and it's year round...and we were required to, as we went through rotations to take call. Like when we went through surgery for a three month rotation, you were on call. When you had maybe a hot appendix in the middle of the night it didn't matter if you had class the next day, you got up and you went to surgery.

AW Did you have to live there, too?

BM Mmm hmm. The dormitory.

AW What was that experience like?

BM Great. You know, it was just like any other dorm living although it was just all females at that time. And at that time until my senior year they would not let you get married in nursing school. You had to, you know...pretty strict rules. Lot of that was carried over from years before then after they went into the A.D. program, the associate degree program, and moved the nursing courses more on college campuses did the restrictions kind of lift. But with some of the three year programs it was a...you had a dorm mom that really watched the door and you had a lot of restrictions. And if you go back and read nursing history you'll find that nurses at the time, early 1900s, lived in the hospital and they scrubbed the floors, some days we felt like we scrubbed the floors but actually we did not [laughs], we had people at the hospital that did that kind of duty. But they did everything. They served the meals, they did everything, so yeah, nursing has really changed if you go back and look at the early history of nursing. There was a video out about the early history of nursing and I don't know whether you have come across it but it was telling about the traveling nurses, the early public health nurses so to speak that went out on the hills on horseback. So, I did public health in another state for some time did the home health, worked at clinics and all that and I thought about that many times. I was in the Mississippi Delta and had some pretty rural areas to go to how nursing must have been then in that kind of area with no car. I was lucky enough to have a car to get in, air conditioned and all that....but, some pretty crude places you go into when you go into people's homes...you know, putting catheters in by flashlight or whatever....but, yeah. Nursing's changed.

AW Did you go right after high school to nursing school?

BM I did.

AW And when did you decide to become a nurse?

BM You know, I'm not sure. Maybe my junior year in high school...I kept leaning towards that.

AW And what was your family's reaction?

BM Oh, they were very pleased, I think.

AW Supportive?

BM Mmm hmm. They've always been supportive. I'm very fortunate to have a loving family.

AW Then after you graduated from Mooresville, where did you go?

BM I came back to Catawba County and [laughs]...didn't stay very long though. I got married about a month after graduation and I went to Germany with my husband who was in the military at the time. I did not work in nursing the first year, I had to stay back and take the state board and I flew over, he had already gone back, and I flew over after I took the state board and was there a little over a year and came back and started working at Catawba Hospital until my husband's job took us to Arkansas for 28 years. Worked there in a hospital, different levels. I've done industrial nursing; I've done strategic quality management where I worked with the executive team, worked with peer review. Actually, I worked for an organization called Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care which was a peer review organization that we went around to different hospitals and checked like, records on Medicare, Medicaid, that kind of thing. Several years ago when they were making a lot of changes in health care and reimbursements and everything...probably helped close a few hospitals. But then I went back into public health from there and stayed there for a few years and then went back to the hospital.

AW What was your favorite?

BM My favorite? I don't know. I think all of them kind of prepared me for what I'm doing now. I always loved to work with children, but I can't say that I really had a favorite. I did some education, worked with staff education for a long time, too. I don't know...I've never really thought about what my favorite has been.

AW You mentioned "industrial nursing," what is that? ✓

BM I've worked on the hospital side with the industries that they had in that town. We set up wellness programs, we did drug screening, I helped coordinate that. I helped coordinate the flu vaccine for the industries. I worked with a quality management group that we had a lot of participation from industries and from the schools around. We just like met with them and tried to promote a lot of wellness programs through that. A lot of workers comps that came through the emergency room, I helped coordinate some of that.

AW When you were in nursing school, were there any black students?

BM Uh...no.

AW Do you remember black nurses when you were in the hospital when you were 13?

BM Not so many on staff as in, you know, in positions where they were licensed but mainly lower grade.

AW And have you seen that change over the years?

BM Oh, definitely. How wonderful. I mean, the opportunities...I mean, there's no limitation. The only limitation is within a person. Worked with marvelous, marvelous black doctors, black nurses. In fact I felt like I was working with the U.N. at one hospital we had so many different, it was so diverse, it had, you know, different countries around the table.

AW Have you worked with male nurses? Have you seen that change?

BM Oh yes. Helped train a few. They had a hard time stepping into mainly what was considered a female role, mainly because...you might call it a little discrimination, you know, because of their assignments, because they didn't know exactly what to do with them. It's kind of like gymnastics, I think, when they started teaching boys gymnastics and some of the instructors I understand after talking to a few, didn't know quite what to do with the boys at that time. But it was kind of like that with nursing. Male students were..."gee, where are we going to put him?," you know.

*Interesting!*

AW How do you think polio has affected you over your lifetime?

BM It's probably made me a strong-willed person...I guess that's kind of it in a nutshell. You look back and you know that it made an impact in many, many ways.

AW And what is your job, as a parish nurse?

BM Um...well, I gave you a little brochure. Parish nursing has been around for quite some time. And I worked out of Catawba Hospital, I'm a hospital employee and I work at this one church. I do a lot of coordination for the wellness programs here. I work with the parish health ministry here. What parish nursing is about is connecting the dots with mind, body, and spirit. We know if one breaks down, it won't be too long until the other will follow. And we try to connect those dots because we understand the importance of prayer with the importance of keeping well. I do a lot of things across the board. This morning I had what we call our "Spiritual Stretchers" that we do, an exercise program. I work with the preschool. Monday I went out the preschool and we learned how to wash our hands properly using a glow light, you know, which they love to play in water anyway...that kind of thing. Just very...I make visits to the sick, to the hospital nursing homes, to homes. I do referrals. I don't duplicate any other services here as a parish nurse in the community but I do make connections to people that may need a referral like to

Hospice...we work closely with the other health care agencies, so know what's out there. The way in different areas parish nursing's set up differently happens to be that Catawba Hospital, Catawba Valley Med Center, embraced the parish nurse program probably about 12 years, I understand, 12 years ago, and started out with a Duke Endowment program. And, unfortunately, because of the monies a lot of the churches have had to drop their participation in it because after a period of time, some of the churches pay the salary for the nurse and the hospital takes up the education. Where I am, I get paid through the hospital but the church reimburses my salary. So, it's handled different ways in different places. But I have been so fortunate here because I have a wonderful parish health ministry team that I work with. It's just been a very rewarding position. And I'm leaving you a brochure that explains the program a little bit more that if you want to go into more detail with it.

AW Thank you. How long have you been doing this?

BM Ten years.

AW Were you a member at the church first?

BM I am still not a member here at this church. Some of the parish nurses are members of the congregation where they are parish nurses, others are not. That's the beauty of this, you know, I actually belong to another congregation, but I feel like I have two congregations. I've been here so long with such a good rapport with the folks here.

AW How many people are in this congregation?

BM A little over a thousand now, I think.

AW Ok. Is there anything else you wanted to add about your nursing experience or...anything?

BM Not really, but it's been a very interesting journey and continues to be. As I wrap up my profession in my work, I think it's kind of like teaching, you'll never wrap it up completely, maybe your last breath. But it's fascinating to watch the changes in health care. Like I said before, I'm really excited about technology, you know, we're just on the brink of so many discoveries that it's mind boggling.

AW Do you think that will change nursing care?

BM Oh, I definitely think it will.

AW In what ways?

BM For example, you can see how...our veterans that are coming back, how different it is for them to come back and you have more focus on certain things, like brain injuries and things like that. So you have more money poured into that thing which as more focus is

on that, it centers a lot of things that...I just think there's going to be remarkable breakthroughs with cancer. But you know there'll be something else to replace it we all know that we're not in a perfect world.

AW Well, thank you so much for talking to me.

BM Well, thank you for the opportunity.