



LCA Pastoral Care Nurse **NOTES & NEWS**

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Australian Faith Community Nurses Association to close

Last year, the board made the difficult decision to cease operating and deregister AFCNA as at the end of the current financial year – its 25th year. The move came as it became apparent after much prayerful deliberation, that AFCNA is no longer financially sustainable as a charitable association. Operational costs such as insurance, website hosting, web development and updating, digital platform costs, software licenses, etc, have continued to spiral.

AFCNA's origins go back to 1996 when Drs Anne van Loon and Marilyn Annells, two lecturers in nursing at the University of South Australia, gained sponsorship from that university to conduct a public seminar, *Parish Nursing: What is it?* In February 1996, Dr Ann Solari-Twadell, the Director of the Parish Nurse

Resource Centre in USA, spoke about the Parish Nurse role to some 100 people.

This seminar was the catalyst for the formation of an advisory board of nurses, doctors, pastors/priests, and other health professionals, who sought to formulate a statement of purpose and philosophical basis for the new role, and to develop an organisational structure that would provide leadership, education, support and direction for Faith Community Nurses – the name chosen for the role.

AFCNA was constituted as an incorporated association on 27 May 1997. The aim was to help establish the FCN role and shape it for the Australian cultural setting, by ensuring that it met legal and professional standards here, and that nurses in this new role had support.

AFCNA's purpose was to provide support, encouragement, and promotion of health care in the community, particularly through Registered Nurses working in conjunction with faith communities. AFCNA would do this by providing nurses with support, information, education, resources, professional standards and networking opportunities about health ministry. It would assist faith communities with consultancy, resources and education to enable



them to begin, nurture and sustain health ministries. The goal was to bring to communities a health ministry that met people's physical, mental and spiritual needs without distinction. To do this the board promoted the FCN role and developed a professional network for political action and lobbying on behalf of FCNs

with health professions, government, business, community, and churches.

From the outset, AFCNA has been active in providing quality education to prepare nurses for the FCN role. The first course was held at Luther Seminary in Adelaide (now Australian Lutheran College) in July 1997, drawing on the expertise of lecturers there for theological input. It was attended by 24 people, nine of whom were Lutherans. Since then, this course has been offered in Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, as well as South Australia. AFCNA also assisted with the establishment of the New Zealand Faith Community Nurses Association. More recently, an Australian adaptation of an American course has been offered on-line.

In a letter to members, announcing the board decision to close AFCNA, current chairperson, Anne van Loon, wrote that AFCNA has found that churches embrace the FCN role while a particular nurse feels called to that role, but do not continue the position once that nurse retires or leaves. There is little succession planning, and when FCNs leave their positions, churches are not replacing them.

She continued: 'Diaconate ministry was es-

established in the earliest New Testament Christian churches, and continues globally to this day. The FCN role is a contemporary expression of that ministry for this age. It provides an outstanding and meaningful opportunity to bring **faith** to community nursing and **nursing** to the faith community.



Dr Anne van Loon

who could offer a potential community outreach ministry of support, there is limited interest in activating this ministry within Australia’s Christian churches.

‘They fail to see the added depth, scope and broader skillset an FCN has, and the opportunity for ministering to the whole person.

‘However, even after an unabating global pandemic of two years duration and continuing the opportunity to mobilise FCNs

‘Churches willingly sustain chaplaincy roles, but show little interest in embracing the FCN role.’



Greeting cards



Lutheran Media has two sets of greeting cards that can be given to family, friends, or people in your community, to share a message of hope in these trying times.

Two packs containing five cards are available for \$5.00 a pack. Packs can be ordered at:

www.lutheranmedia.org.au/greeting-cards or call 1800 353 350.



LPNI Study Tours

This is a final call for registrations for this year’s Lutheran Parish Nurses International study tour to Alice Springs on 22-28 September this year.



scheduled to contribute to the program are no longer in Alice Springs.

The tour will include a day trip to the historic Hermannsburg mission village, as well as some sightseeing to tourist attractions such as Standley’s Chasm

Already more than 20 have booked; others have either not completed their registration or have indicated an intention to come but not yet registered. It will be a requirement of all participants that they are fully vaccinated.



If you have not completed your registration, or are still thinking about coming, please act immediately.

The 2023 tour has been moved from Ukraine to Romania, visiting two centres – Bucharest and Brasov. Travel between the two centres will be by train.

There will be a few minor changes to the program as advertised, some as a consequence of COVID, and others because people originally

Pictured is the Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest. There are two main Lutheran groups in Romania: the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, and the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.