



# Práiríe Faith Parish Nurse News~~August 2025

Body

Mind

Spirit

Many of us currently have, or have had in the past, a **beloved pet**--an estimated 68% of U.S. households have a pet--dogs, cats, fish, reptiles, hamsters, outdoor animals like donkeys, cows, horses, etc. We love them, we provide responsible care for them, and we miss them when they are no longer with us. But did you know that there are actually a **wide variety of health benefits from interacting with animals?**



Pets can increase opportunities for us to **exercise, get outside, and socialize**. Regular walking or playing with pets can **decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels**. Interacting with animals has been shown to **decrease levels of cortisol (a stress-related hormone)**. There are several ways that being around animals **improves our immune function**. Other studies have found that animals can help **manage loneliness, anxiety and depression** by **providing companionship, increasing feelings of social support, and boosting our mood**. Pets may also help children with their **emotional and social skills** and help them learn **responsibility** by caring for an animal's physical needs.

Animals who are specially trained as **therapy animals** to serve as a source of comfort or support are sometimes brought into hospitals, care homes, or therapist's offices to help **reduce patients' stress, fear, anxiety, depression and loneliness**.

Animals may also aid in the school classroom. One study found that dogs can help children with ADHD **focus their attention**. Children who read out loud to animals showed **better social skills, showed more sharing, cooperation, and volunteering, and had fewer behavioral problems**. Another study found that children with autism spectrum disorder were **calmer** while playing with guinea pigs in the classroom, their **anxiety levels dropped**, they had **better social interactions and were more engaged with their peers**.

Animals may help in other unexpected ways. A recent study showed that caring for fish helped **teens with diabetes better manage their disease**. Researchers had a group of teens with type 1 diabetes care for a pet fish twice a day by feeding, checking water levels, cleaning the tank. This was paired with the children reviewing their blood glucose (blood sugar) logs with parents. Compared with teens who weren't given a fish to care for, fish-keeping teens were more disciplined about checking their own blood glucose levels, which is essential for maintaining their health.

So, which type of pet is best to have? The eternal debate between **cat lovers and dog lovers** will never be decided, so that topic won't be discussed in this article! 😊 Some things to think about: Is your goal to **increase physical activity**? Then you might benefit from owning a dog. You have to walk a dog several times a day and you're going to increase physical activity. If your goal is **reducing stress**, watching fish swim or holding a purring cat on your lap can result in a feeling of **calmness**. So, there's no one type fits all. **The American Veterinary Medical Association** has a webpage full of helpful information and points to consider as you make this decision <https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/petcare/selecting-pet-your-family>

Now you can enjoy your pet in an expanded way, knowing he or she is helping you be healthier, and also remember--your newest furry friend may be currently residing at your **local animal shelter!**



*Sources of information include: American Veterinary Medical Association, National Institutes of Health, Pets for the Elderly, and Nursing 2021)*





The Prairie Faith Parish Nurse Ministry Advisory Board will meet on Wednesday, August 6, 2025 at 5:15 p.m. in the Bethlehem Lutheran Church library. Anyone is welcome to attend meetings to learn more about the parish nurse ministry or to share ideas for future work or events. You may want to consider becoming a member of the board! Contact Nancy or any member of the board if you have interest in participating or if you have any questions or concerns. Current advisory board members include: Bev Armbruster, Donna Deines, Mary Cunningham, Margaret Schmitt, Liz Deines, Josh Keller and Chuck Rhoades.



The joy you felt today is the smile you share tomorrow.  
A time for all things, that all might be blessed.  
The grief you knew yesterday may be the comfort you share today.  
A time for all things, that all might be blessed.  
The hurt you felt today is the forgiveness you share tomorrow.  
A time for all things, that all might be blessed.  
The seed you sowed yesterday may be the fruit you harvest today.  
A time for all things, that all might be blessed,  
in springtime  
and winter,  
in dancing  
and mourning,  
healing,  
life and death.



*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance .... Ecclesiastes 3:1-4*

*(Source: faithandworship.com)*



The parish nurse ministry serves the community, regardless of any church affiliation. Feel free to call or email to: schedule a confidential appointment to discuss your health/wellness questions, schedule transportation to a medical/dental/counseling appointment if you need a ride, request a prayer shawl or comfort meal for someone in the community going through a difficult time, locate community health resources, request other parish nurse work, or discuss your ideas for the health ministry! 😊

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785-769-4731 (leave a message)