



Prairie Faith Parish Nurse News ~ December 2024

Body

Mind

Spirit

For some, 2024 has been filled with darkness. You may have lost a loved one and are still coping with that **death**. Maybe you are living with the **diagnosis** of cancer or some other medical condition that puts a question mark over the future. Others may be dealing with a **divorce** or a shattered relationship, living with a **difficult work situation**, struggling to conceive a **baby**, living with **loneliness and isolation**, or experiencing **financial difficulties**. Or perhaps this season is a time that is difficult for other reasons.



For many people, the approaching Christmas holiday does not bring with it the joy and happiness that is depicted in movies or in greeting cards. Typical holiday festivities—caroling, decorating, buying gifts, Christmas parties, family gatherings—leave little room for feelings of pain or grief, and we experience feelings of isolation. Our spirits sink as the days grow shorter. We feel the darkness growing deeper around us.

In response, the Prairie Faith Parish Nurse Ministry offers *The Longest Night Service*, offering a somber, gentle space for the community to gather on the **winter solstice**, the longest night of the year. *The service is simple: candles are lit, scripture is read, and the focus is on personal needs in an atmosphere of quiet contemplation.* This worship experience is a way to acknowledge the reality of difficult or painful life circumstances, while still recognizing that part of the reason for Jesus’ coming was to bring hope and comfort, to heal the sick, to seek the lost, to restore the broken and broken-hearted. This is a quiet meditative time for remembering, sharing our hurting places with God, and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ.

Those who do experience this season as a happy time can also find meaning in The Longest Night Service, as it serves as a time of quiet retreat from the hectic nature of the commercial aspect of the season and guides worshippers back to the real meaning of Christmas.

The Longest Night Service will be held on Saturday, December 21, 2024 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. The service will be followed by an opportunity to pray or meditate in the sanctuary for those who wish to do so. Please help spread the word in the community to friends and neighbors, and feel free to call Nancy or the church office with any questions or concerns or to request a ride.

***“I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.” Psalm 69:3***



Feel free to call or email me 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 for someone in the community going through a difficult time, request a comfort meal gift card for a friend or neighbor, locate community health resources, request other parish nurse work, or discuss your ideas for the health ministry!

The next parish nurse advisory board meeting will be held on Monday, December 2, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the library. Visitors are always welcome to attend!

Nancy Bollig, RN

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785-743-2005 (leave a message, please)

Yes, Healthy Holiday Eating IS Possible!

Eating healthy can be a challenge any time of year, but particularly over the holidays. Many people gain several pounds from October through January, and this extra weight often sticks around through the rest of the year. By making a plan in advance and sticking to it, we can avoid the pitfalls of holiday parties and maintain our health.

- Eat breakfast—studies show people who eat breakfast take in fewer calories during the day.
- Drink a glass of water before and during meals to help you feel full and stay in control.
- Eat a healthy snack before you go to a holiday party or dinner. If you arrive hungry, you will eat more than you need or had planned on eating.
- Have a plan. Make a conscious decision to eat healthy. Decide what you will eat and how much you can eat before you go. Select foods that fit into your plan.
- Make a healthy contribution. Support your friends and family members' efforts to be healthy. Think about fresh veggies with low-fat dip, a fresh fruit tray or hummus with baked pita chips. Proteins—nuts, dairy, legumes and lean meat in healthy portions will help you feel full. Bake with whole grain flour. Include non-alcoholic drinks as well, since alcohol is a source of many unnecessary calories.
- Putting food on a plate, rather than grazing, helps you be more mindful of what you're eating and how much, and using a smaller plate helps manage the temptation to put more on your plate than you need.
- Slow down—the first bites you take are the most satisfying; enjoy them without thinking you need the entire dish. It takes your brain time to receive the signal that you're full, so slow down and enjoy every bite. Put your fork down in between bites. Wait for the seconds—if you wait 10 minutes, you'll feel fuller and the temptation for seconds will pass. Once you feel full, stop; put a napkin over or clear your plate.
- Finally, be active! Exercise helps relieve holiday stress and helps offset any weight gain. If you feel you're short on time, you can take two brisk walks each day, 10-15 minutes each time. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise will also give you an added energy boost so you can enjoy the celebrations at hand.



Have a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year's!!



Night Prayer

Lord,
it is night.
The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence
of God.
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
What has not been done has not been done;
Let it be.
The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world
and of our own lives
rest in you.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.
In your name we pray. Amen.

Source: A New Zealand Prayer Book