

Report on New Zealand Faith Community Nurses Association Annual Conference, held in the Salvation Army Citadel, Wellington 03 - 04 August 2010

Thirty two registered nurses were especially privileged to be welcomed to the venue of the headquarters of the Salvation Army by Major Craig Millington, who prayed with us and encouraged us to take time during the conference to re-calibrate our lives for our special calling as Faith community nurses.

Our Patron the Very Revd Charles Tyrrell gave the conference opening address reminding us of the importance of the work that Faith Community nurses do, and encouraging us to communicate our mission among others. Charles also celebrated the ecumenical aspects of the organisation, commenting that we were an example to other groups in our ability to affirm and work with difference.

The theme to this year's conference was 'Transitions of Life' encompassing loss, illness, grief and also the joyful transitions that are part of human lives.

Our five main speakers were all registered nurses who gave structured and reflective stories. Nicola Curtis gave us a brief insight into her family's life living with a disabled child. This moving presentation gave us examples of encounters with health professionals, some of which provided positive role models, and others that illustrated unhelpful behaviour. Particularly inspiring was Nicola's faith journey as she struggles with God's purpose in our lives. We found much to take away into our practice. Elizabeth Niven conducted a provoking workshop 'walking in someone else's shoes'. The Revd Wendy Scott provided the theoretical and theological background for major life transitions, especially those related to illness and death. Again, the wisdom and resources will enrich the practice of all who listened. Carol Renouf gave a stimulating account of the transitional, focusing on family change and geographical and employment moves. Again, theoretical underpinning was provided that helped the attendees understand more deeply the psychological and spiritual aspects of these parts of life. The final address was from the Very Revd Charles Tyrrell who shared a personal narrative that led from tragedy to joy, reminding us that our lives are complex and that we need to be open to the transcendent.

Each session was linked to a Biblical theme, and speakers gave out bookmarks with these texts so that participants were able to add to their reflection, and to continue this prayerful aspect.

We enjoyed a wonderful conference dinner, at which we were especially pleased to raise \$250 for our chosen charity, the fistula hospital in Ethiopia.

Attendees judged that the conference had a good balance of networking time, practice stories and educational material, all of which would enrich their practice. Those attending included already practising Faith Community Nurses, from a wide range of settings, those

interested in exploring the ministry, and nurses who support the ministry of faith community nursing in various ways.

For more information please visit our website: <http://www.faithnursing.co.nz/> or our National Coordinator, Diane Webster at admin.faithnursing@xtra.co.nz