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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MERCY PARISH NURSE AND HEALTH MINISTRY PROGRAM
TO HOST 17TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
“PARISH NURSES AND HEALTH MINISTERS:
IN THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGING HEALTH CARE”**

Symposium provides opportunity for parish nurses to learn and share best practices

PITTSBURGH — Parish nursing was founded as a local movement in Chicago in 1985 by the Rev. Dr. Granger Westberg. A pioneer in wholistic health care, Dr. Westberg established medical clinics in several churches, wherein doctors, nurses, and pastors worked as a team, caring for body, mind, and spirit. He noticed that nurses were instrumental in translating information between the patient, doctor, and pastor because “nurses have one foot in the sciences and one foot in religion.” The clinics eventually closed due to lack of funding, but parish nursing was born. Under Dr. Westberg’s leadership, nurses were placed in six congregations to link health care

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resources to the faith community. The experiment confirmed that members' health improved because members would discuss their health concerns with the nurse before the concerns became serious problems.

Parish nursing is deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions, distinguished by the nurse's intentional care of the spirit and consistent with the basic assumptions of many faiths: that we care for self and others as an expression of God's love. Nurses, health professionals, and lay persons here and abroad continue to respond to the call of serving their faith communities through health ministry. Today, the movement has evolved to become a worldwide phenomenon, claiming 10,000 nurses in the United States, an additional 2,000 nurses worldwide, and significant numbers of lay health ministers, according to the International Parish Resource Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

Pittsburgh was, yet again, at the forefront of innovative health care delivery models. In 1991, Pittsburgh Mercy Health System established the region's first parish nurse program: the Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program. Today, it remains the only program of its kind in the region. Serving all faith communities, it has educated and commissioned 150 registered nurses as parish nurses and 12 others as health ministers, including licensed practical nurses, non-health care professionals, and clergy.

Parish nurses serve many roles, including that of health counselor, educator, referral agent, and advocate; physical, emotional, and spiritual support person; and

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17th Annual Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program Symposium

liaison between members of the faith community and community resources.

Parish nurses, health ministers, physicians, clergy, pastoral and social ministers, health and social services professionals, and individuals interested in “whole person health” — that is, physical, emotional, and spiritual health — are invited to attend the **Pittsburgh Mercy Health System’s 17th Annual Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Symposium on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2009**, from 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. in Sister M. Ferdinand Clark Auditorium, UPMC Mercy, 1400 Locust St., Uptown.

The symposium is sponsored by the Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, a part of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in their ongoing commitment of service to the community.

The welcome and gathering prayers will be offered by Sister Susan Welsh, RSM, President and CEO, Pittsburgh Mercy Health System; Very Rev. Lawrence A. DiNardo, Vicar for Canonical Services, Diocese of Pittsburgh; and Dorothy Mayernik, RN, MSN, manager, Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program. The keynote address, “Parish Nurses and Health Ministers: In the Forefront of Changing Health Care,” will be delivered by Jean C. Kennedy, RN, MA, a parish nurse.

Featured workshops include caring for individuals facing illness, end of life, and grief; diabetes management; starting a health ministry; PraiseMoves[®] (a Christian alternative to yoga); children’s health; and tracking the contributions of a health

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ministry by using an electronic database. Small, interactive group discussions include educational programming, blood pressure screening, consulting with parish nurses from both small and large congregations, re-energizing a health ministry, and more.

Four hours of continuing education will be provided to registered nurses who attend.

Registration is \$45 per person. Undergraduate nursing students may attend for \$10 per person. Registration includes continental breakfast, lunch, exhibits, workshops, and free parking in the Locust Street Parking Garage.

The registration deadline is **Friday, Oct. 30, 2009**. To obtain a registration form, call 412-232-7151 or e-mail ParishNurse@mercy.pmhs.org. Seating is limited.

About the Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program

The Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program was established in 1991 as a legacy program of the Sisters of Mercy and Pittsburgh Mercy Health System. As an educational partner of the International Parish Nurse Resource Center, the Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program assists churches in starting volunteer health ministry programs that will thrive and serve the congregation and serves as a resource center to provide: consultation, support and mentoring, ideas and materials for health ministry, information about community resources, and continuing education. In addition to sponsoring an annual symposium, the program also sponsors several Parish Nurse Basic Preparation Courses annually, conducts health ministry workshops, and serves as a regional resource center for parish nurse volunteers.

About Pittsburgh Mercy Health System

Pittsburgh Mercy Health System (PMHS) is an extension of the Catholic ministry to all people in southwestern Pennsylvania. A member of Catholic Health East and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, PMHS focuses on providing quality services that meet physical, mental and spiritual needs. Ministries include Mercy Behavioral Health, A Child's Place at Mercy, Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, Operation Safety Net[®], St. Pius X Personal Care Home, Mercy Foundation, and McAuley Ministries.

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