Introduction
A national descriptive survey was conducted on parish nurses focusing on who they are, what ministries they have developed and populations served, and how they are supported by clergy, congregations, and communities. Over 4,000 surveys were mailed to churches, and nurses who were listed in a parish nurse data base. This convenient sample included all 48 continental states. Survey items addressed age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, years of service, and other questions on who parish nurses are. The second section dealt with congregational health ministries and what services parish nurses have developed. The final section of survey items asked parish nurses how they are supported financially and church committee structure.

Parish Nurses: Who We Are?
Of the 558 parish nurses who returned the survey:
- 85% have the title “Parish Nurse”.
- All were female, except for two males
- Mean age was 65 years, with age range from 35 to 86 years.
- Over 60% served in the Midwest.
- Mean years of parish nurse service was ten years with range from 6 to 26 years.
- About 40% served in a team of one to three parish nurses in the church. Over half had solo ministries.
- Approximately 70% served as a volunteer one to ten hours per week. When paid, parish nurses worked on average 20 hours a week.
- Over half of congregations had religious affiliation of Lutheran. Others included Catholic, Methodist, Evangelical, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Baptist.
- Over 80% of parish nurses serve at the church they have membership, and serve that congregation only.

Parish Nurses: What We Do?
Their ministries, roles, programs, and populations served
Parish Nurses have individualized and unique ministries that serve the life span. Special ministries also have been developed for college students, veterans, homebound, frail, elderly, widowed, church staff, and clergy.

The following roles were identified:
- Parish Nurse as an Educator
- Most common educational activities included:
  - Advance directives
  - CPR and first aid teaching
  - Health care articles in church newsletter
  - Vacation Bible School and Sunday School on health and hand washing

Parish Nurse as a Health Counselor and Consultant
- Health screenings
- Blood pressure ministries
- Health fairs and flu shot clinics
- Chronic illness education and support for diabetes, Alzheimer’s and dementia, cardiovascular problems including hypertension, and cancer
- Weight management and exercise

Parish Nurses: How We Do It?
Support for parish nurses
- Financially, about 50% of parish nurses have a budget of $500 or less. 25% said that they have no budget.
- Over half of parish nurses are supported by a committee of four to ten people which consists of registered nurses, clergy, teachers, and others who are interested in congregational health ministries.
- Less than 5% of parish nurses are supported by grants to begin a congregational health ministry.
- About 30% of parish nurses have administrative secretarial help one to two hours weekly.
- An overwhelming majority of parish nurses feel strong support from their family, clergy, and congregational members.
- Over 60% of parish nurses attended parish nurse conferences and meetings to network with other parish nurses.

Recommendations
As an educator and in reflection of the past, present, and future of parish nursing and congregational health, the following are recommendations:
- Continue introductory educational programs for new parish nurses and continuing education for nurses who serve in this ministry in a cost-effective way.
- Include theology in all educational aspects of parish nursing underscoring the spiritual ministry of faith community nurses in their spiritual development of serving others.
- Develop grant writing opportunities, and other creative ways to financially support parish nurse ministries.
- Due to fixed budget and time, develop resources for parish nurses to use in developing their ministries.
- Continue to conduct research about parish nursing and congregational health. More importantly, research the impact of parish nurse ministries on congregational outcomes in health and wellness.
- As 39% of parish nurses were in the ministry for 1 year, networking and mentoring must be encouraged from other parish nurses in the community.

Conclusions
In conclusion, this national survey captured responses from across the United States. Demographics were similar to smaller studies. In essence, parish nurses are female, white, and retired from their paid position from acute care, clinic or extended care. However, their mission continues to serve their church and community as a volunteer in their own church or membership and denomination for 1 to 10 hours a week. Parish nurses work closely as a team with their clergy and a team of nurses and lay people interested in congregational health.

Parish nurses have developed service oriented ministries with budgets of less than 1,000 dollars. They are stewards of all resources creating unique ministries for their churches and communities. Parish nurses underscore spiritual caregiving, the essence of their nurse specialty. They witness for Christ by prayer, prayer shawls, grief counseling, devotions, music, and their presence in visiting shut-ins and those hospitalized.

In conclusion, this national survey demonstrated the growth of parish nurse ministries. Churches are becoming aware of this ministry. Additionally, health care institutions are using parish nurses as part of their referral system. This ministry will continue to be part of the Great Commission as parish nurses witness the Gospel message.

About the Researcher
Since 1995, Carol A. Lueders Bolwerk, RN, PhD serves as director of parish nurse and congregational health ministries at Concordia University Wisconsin. Carol is a member of First Immanuel Lutheran Church in Cedarburg. She and her family have started a music and prayer shawl ministry.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
Galatians 6:10