



*...to hold guard over  
Truth, Life, and Love.*

Mary Baker Eddy

How can Christian Science  
nursing help to fulfill  
this purpose?



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## The Lady with the Lamp

Those of you who have been readers of the *Christian Science Sentinel* for many years will remember the "Lady with the Lamp" who appears on the cover of our *Fern Lodge Focus*. This figure was included on the *Sentinel* cover from 1906 until 1973, and the lady shared a message with the world that is still important today. What is this message, and why do we feel it is appropriate for our Christian Science nursing work?

### A symbol of nursing

We might first ask, who or what does the figure of the Lady represent? Mrs. Eddy states that the *Sentinel* is *intended to hold guard over Truth, Life, and Love*, and the figures seem to stand as guards. The words quoted from Longfellow are from the poem, *Santa Filomena*, a tribute to Florence Nightingale. Miss Nightingale was a contemporary of Mrs. Eddy. She revolutionized nursing by bringing to it the dignity and grace derived from her understanding that tender, disciplined care, which we understand to be evidence of God's love for man, was needed to minister to the sick and wounded. Her work opened the door for healing, on battlefields and in hospitals, where before there had been hope for little but misery and mortality.

We are grateful to have had this reminder on the *Sentinel* cover of the importance nursing plays in the progress of mankind. And we feel it is important for us to consider the role Christian Science nursing plays in helping fulfill the *Sentinel's* purpose, *to hold guard over Truth, Life, and Love*. When we think about the role of nursing in our Church and the service nurses provide for those who seek their help, the idea of "holding guard" seems quite appropriate. A nurse must guard her or his thinking to cherish and cling to thoughts of

health, holiness, harmony, barring entrance to suggestions of fear, sickness, or disease. In this way the nurse helps to maintain in a sick room a mental atmosphere of faith and trust in God to help and heal.

In the *Manual by-law*, *Christian Science Nurse*, Mrs. Eddy sets certain requirements for all Mother Church members who would be nurses. She calls for each nurse to have a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and the ability to take proper care of the sick. Steadfast devotion to Truth, reverence for Life, and unfailing expression of Love are needed for a Christian Science nurse to fulfill these requirements.

### Shedding light

The next four articles in this *Fern Lodge Focus* are from the Christian Science Nursing Forum held at Fern Lodge in February. They were written by experienced Christian Science nurses who share insights into their understanding of Christian Science nursing and its role in individual spiritual growth, in the healing practice of Christian Science, in the mission of our Church and in community issues which affect those who practice Christian Science. We trust you will understand why we feel it is appropriate to include on our cover "The Lady with the Lamp" who symbolizes to us the Christian Science nurse's role in holding guard over Truth, Life and Love.



# The role of nursing in the mission of Church

Our Pastor assures us that God cares for and heals mankind through Christ, Truth. In a discussion of the practical needs for food and clothing, our Master, Christ Jesus, tenderly told his followers not to be concerned. He said, *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matt. 6). Mrs. Eddy reiterated that it is the divine Mind, God who cares for the human body; and that Christ, Truth, gives mortals temporary food and clothing until material consciousness is transformed through Christ and Christian Science (see *Science and Health* 62 & 422). The pure practice of Christian Science nursing is the reflection and demonstration of this care.

## Our Master's Church

In establishing his church, Jesus found it essential for his disciples to know *who* he was in order to understand *what* he was doing. The effect of his healing work was the restoration of health, but its purpose was to *reveal the Science of celestial being, to prove what God is and what He does for man* (*Science and Health* 26). Peter's recognition that the human Jesus, the son of man, is one with Christ, the Son of the living God, is the basis of the practice of Christian healing and the Rock on which the Christ's Church is built. In order to support the mission of Church, the practice of nursing must be based on this rock of divine Oneness.

Peter's recognition of Jesus' divine nature came to him as a revelation from God. His spiritually based conviction enabled him to live by the truth he had apprehended. Before this, the disciples had accepted Jesus' Messiahship on the authority of John Baptist and others.

This shallow basis left them uncertain and doubting during difficult times.

A Christian Science nurse must continually defend her/his practice from personal opinion and material health theories. These false beliefs, if entertained in the sick room, would claim to undermine the foundation of our church and obstruct healing. Personal sense is incompetent to recognize the spiritual idea.

The nature and character of Christ is the model for nursing as it is for all Christian Science practice. *The character of the Nazarene Prophet illustrates the Principle and practice of a true divinity and humanity* (My. 179). The humanitarian qualities of cherishing, aiding, comforting, nurturing, encouraging, and supporting need to be identified with their divine source in order to keep the practice of nursing pure. Properly understood, the expression of these qualities paves the way for healing.

## What shall we do about suffering?

The healing outreach of our church is to all mankind, including those who don't understand or believe its truth. The pure practice of Christian Science nursing reduces and translates divine Love to a form that can be seen and felt by suffering and seeking humanity. The nurse understands the nature of suffering, and does not stand aghast. As Mrs. Eddy wrote, *Out of the gloom comes the glory of our Lord, and His divine Love is found in affliction. When a false sense suffers, the true sense comes out...* And with regard to her church she said, *Had I never suffered for The Mother Church, neither she nor I would be practicing the virtues that lie concealed in the smooth seasons and calms of human existence. When we are willing to help and be helped, divine aid is near* (Misc. 276, My. 166).

Pat Alvarez



If someone mentions “nurse,” what concept comes to mind? Caring for someone in need, nurturing, nourishing, comforting, assisting. One may see the nurse as one who skillfully meets needs for proper care in areas of food, shelter, environment, rest, personal assistance. Another view of nurse may evoke the image of reaching to take a pulse; checking blood pressure; giving medicine — basically a trained professional dedicated to maintaining physical bodies.

## Two views of nursing

Why the difference in these two images of nurse epitomized by a spiritual approach and a physical approach? Individuals practicing either method may have similar unselfish motives to help others. The difference in practice lies in the basic assumption as to the nature of man’s being. Medical practice assumes man is essentially a physical being. A nurse practicing from this premise is naturally concerned with the material body and health theories. A Christian Scientist works from an entirely different premise: man is made in God’s image and likeness, and he is a wholly spiritual idea, perfect, intact, governed totally by God’s law. A Christian Science nurse, practicing from this standpoint, gives Christian care in harmony with this premise. The thrust of his or her care is to bear joyful witness to the omnipotence of God and His care for man, even while meeting present needs in a simple and practical way.

Loving one another, practical caring for one in need, was a keystone in Jesus’ teaching. In Matthew 25 Jesus talks about the fact that if we haven’t met our brother’s need, we haven’t loved Jesus either. His parable of the good Samaritan links eternal life to caring practically for one’s fellow beings. In the *Church Manual*, Mrs. Eddy defines the proper practice of this care required by Jesus in relation to our

Church. The *Manual by-law Christian Science Nurse* calls for a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, a thorough understanding of the practical wisdom needed in a sick room, and the ability to take proper care of the sick. These requirements govern the care that we are impelled to give by our nature as the reflections of the infinitely caring Father-Mother, Love.

## Practical care

How does this translate into practical experience? It begins with a conviction of God’s all-presence and all-power. It calls for vigorous witnessing of the truth of man’s being — “no spiritual wimps allowed!” It permits no slushing about with thinking that matter has any lasting answers. It demands not an acquaintance with health theories, but with angels, with hymns, with the Bible Lesson, with bed-rock truths that melt fears, encourage and strengthen. Entering a room with this mental standpoint, one is able to discern the practical wisdom called for — the intelligent, appropriate, correct course to follow, and then do it. This may take the form of extending a hand, washing feet, fixing eggs, dressing a wound, reading out loud. The specific help given becomes a way of expressing God’s love in a specific, appropriate way. It becomes a living of the Christ here and now.

Who can do this? Anyone, all of us. We all get to do it. We’re all called upon to practice this cherishing, Christian care in whatever endeavor we happen to be engaged in. Why? Because God made us that way.

Anna Lisa McVey



# The individual practice of Christian Science nursing

I believe the key point and success in the individual practice of Christian Science nursing is anchored in our own spiritual growth as Christian Scientists. I discovered that you can't separate or compartmentalize your personal life from Christian Science nursing and simply learn a technique or system for the nursing practice.

The individual practice of Christian Science nursing is really the success and demonstration of our individual spiritual growth, which is expressed in our Christian character and the fruits of our work. Mrs. Eddy tells us of the demand *...to work out the spiritual which determines the outward and the actual*. We can certainly learn some skills which are appropriate to the nursing activity and benefit by working with other Christian Science nurses, but it is our fervent prayerful study and our growth in grace that will determine our practice.

## Meeting human needs

This taking time to be holy and to take *...deep draughts from the fount of Divine Love*, as Mrs. Eddy suggests we do, prepares us to break through the shackles of mortal mind as presented in the human conditions. God is more real to us through our prayers, and our practice is then from a calm fixed sense of the conscious harmony of Life. From this spiritual standpoint we are the most useful to meet practically and compassionately the human need.

Remember one of Mrs. Eddy's greatest desires for us, and she earnestly requested, *...that Christian Scientists here and elsewhere pray daily for themselves; not verbally nor on*

*bended knee, but mentally, meekly and importunately*. She goes on in part to say that the humble heart *will be conformed to a fitness to receive the answer to its desire...* and the outcome is *...great growth in Christian Science will follow even that joy which finds one's own in another's good* (Miscellaneous Writings 127).

## Being always ready

The importance of prayer was impressed upon me before I entered Christian Science nursing, for which I am forever grateful. The point has been driven home to me, and I always pass it along, that we make sure to keep our own lamps trimmed and burning and not let our light go out and our thought become dimmed to the healing power and presence of God. I read a wonderful Bible commentary about the parable of the ten virgins. It pointed out that Jesus felt vigilance was not enough and warned against the peril of *the drowsy life and the smouldering lamp*. Individual preparation was also essential, for to see *Christ in his glory each of his followers must be enlightened and ready*. It goes on to say, *The real difference between the two classes given in the parable who profess to love the Lord's appearing is a radical one—the possession by the one class of an enduring principle of spiritual life, and the want of it by another*.

Our prayers may lead us in our individual practice of Christian Science nursing to work in Christian Science nursing facilities or in the home. In my case prayer led me into the visiting nurse work and I have been blessed by this work. With this in mind, I will leave you with Paul's encouraging words from I Corinthians 9, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*.

Mindee Spear



## Community issues

What is our place as individual Church members in relationship to the community? The by-laws in our *Church Manual* can help answer this question. Article VIII, Section 4, *Daily Prayer*, includes, *...may Thy Word enrich the affections of all mankind, and govern them!* And Section 6, *Alertness to Duty*, admonishes each Church member to, *...not be made to forget nor to neglect his duty to God, to his Leader, and to mankind.*

Our relationship with our community is involved with fulfilling the mission of Church. We've spoken mainly of the practice of nursing as a one-to-one relationship between individuals, but there also are areas of public interest where Christian Scientists have an opportunity to "preach the gospel" to a broad audience. Among them are community concerns for the well-being of children and the elderly and government reimbursement for Christian Science treatment. These community issues involve Christian Science nursing.

### How is nursing involved?

Christian Science nurses have been called to give depositions or to testify in court about what they have done during the course of their nursing care for a child. In one case a Christian Science nursing facility was also named in the civil suit which included the child's family member, a practitioner, and a state Committee on Publication. During these times we can remember that, *surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain*, (Psalm 76:10).

The Medicare/Medicaid program pays for Christian Science nursing out of public funds. In order to obtain this "benefit" Christian Science nursing was defined as an activity that is not involved with the mission of our Church. Is the practice of Christian Science served by allowing the government, with the influence

medical thought has on it, to be involved with Christian Science nursing?

Our responses to these community issues need to come from, and communicate, our understanding that the practice of our religion includes metaphysical healing of physical disease, and also metaphysical care to meet what appear to be physical needs.

### Let your light shine.

When I think about our relationship with our community, these words of Christ Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount have special meaning, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

How might we let our light shine? Of course we need first of all to heal — to heal sin and sickness in our own lives and offer that same healing to those we live among. What else might be included in letting our light shine? As we take our places as active community members, working with those we meet in various activities — our employment, schools, the arts, politics, recreation, sports, etc. — won't we find many we can reach out to with the tender touch that characterizes Christian Science nursing?

In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy assures us, *Millions of unprejudiced minds — simple seekers for Truth, weary wanderers, athirst in the desert — are waiting and watching for rest and drink. Give them a cup of cold water in Christ's name, and never fear the consequences.*

George Strong



## Standards and discipline

What are the standards for Christian Science nursing? Where are they found, and how are they enforced? Is it our task to devise procedures and practices which define a nursing standard, perhaps based on what is currently considered in our culture to be the right way to maintain a healthy body? No, as Christian Scientists we have the guidance provided by Mary Baker Eddy who wrote, as the first tenet of Christian Science, *We take the inspired word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life.*

### Our Pastor's message

The Scriptures and our textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, give us an understanding of how to live. It is not asking too much of these books, which our Leader ordained as Pastor of her church, if we seek their guidance to ensure that our nursing practice is Christian and scientific. In her *Message to The Mother Church, 1901* Mrs. Eddy wrote, *The Word of God is a powerful preacher, and it is not too spiritual to be practical, nor too transcendental to be heard and understood.*

Members of The Mother Church also have the benefit of the by-laws in the *Church Manual*, which Mrs. Eddy states were written *to maintain the dignity and defense of our Cause.* Article VIII, Section 31, *Christian Science Nurse*, requires that a nurse have the ability to demonstrate healing prayer, practical wisdom in a sick room, and proper care of the sick. The Bible and *Science and Health* deal with each of these requirements. In them we find the rules for practicing Christian Science, and we can learn how to heal, how to gain wisdom, and what is included in proper care for the sick.

The search for the nursing standards provided by our Pastor is richly rewarding for all who undertake it in humble sincerity, seeking *their own in another's good.* Christian Science nurses are glad for opportunities to share what they have learned, and in this way church members help each other to maintain nursing standards.

The means for maintaining the purity and effectiveness of the practice of Christian Science nursing are found in the *Manual* and Mrs. Eddy's other writings. It is important that church members fulfill the by-laws and rules of the church, lovingly and without dissimulation.

### "Help us to help each other..."

Many by-laws require that we examine ourselves to see if we are living up to what Mrs. Eddy asked of church members. Some by-laws ask that we help each other to maintain the standards set for us. They require that church members treat each other charitably and honestly, following Christ Jesus' instructions to lovingly handle departures from church rules. As we accept responsibility for fulfilling and enforcing the *Manual* by-laws, we can expect to see nursing standards upheld. Then Christian Science nursing provides examples of true, spiritual nursing which comforts and heals individuals and communities.

Lack of a program for training Christian Science nurses or inspecting nursing facilities does not mean that we lack standards and the means of meeting them. Our Pastor and the *Church Manual* provide daily guidance, inspiration, and discipline for each of us. As we pray for the spirit of our Master to guide us, we will conform to the Christian standards for thought and action, and we will be able to demonstrate the spiritual affection which allows us to be corrected and to correct others for *the dignity and defense of our Cause.*



## Your contribution to Fern Lodge

Are donations still needed to meet requests for financial assistance for Christian Science nursing care at Fern Lodge? Yes, they are. We have heard comments which indicate there is a misunderstanding of benevolence given here. Recently we learned that some believe contributions made through Rainbow's End Thrift Shops, owned by the independent group, "Fern Friends," have made the need for gifts from individuals, branch churches and other organizations unnecessary. This is not true. We are grateful for the significant, regular donations from "Fern Friends," but these supplied less than 5% of the funds needed for benevolence we gave last year.

Rather than looking for one human source of money that would meet all our current and future financial needs, we pray, *Give us this day our daily bread. Give us grace for today; feed the famished affections.* Like Moses and the children of Israel, we are grateful for the manna which we find each day

meeting our needs. Tender thoughts from God, some in the form of generous donations from friends, continually nourish and sustain the Christian Science nursing work we do.

### Thank you for your care

Fern Lodge demonstrates the care that is felt and expressed by those who support us as well as by those who work here. Maintaining the facility is not just the job of the Fern Lodge board and staff, it is an opportunity for all who understand the value of Christian Science nursing and the comforting presence it provides for those in need. Yes, the work we do needs your continuing involvement. We acknowledge that we all are joyously in this mission together, cooperating to supply Christian Science nursing in our community. We appreciate all you do!

The Fern Lodge Board of Directors

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