Reflections from Anne Varner, RN, MSN
Director of Congregational Health

**Water, cool, clear water.**

Here we are in the middle of the desert, in the midst of an extreme heat wave. Fires burn all around us. The haze from the fires obscures the sun. Experts proclaim that Arizona is in the middle of an extreme drought that is likely to become the new norm.

What are we all hoping for?

**Rain.**

Water has been revered and held sacred even from prehistoric times, when humans venerated gods and goddesses of water. All of the world’s religions have always held that water is intrinsically sacred. The current major religions have rituals, sacred teachings, and imagery that attest to the supreme importance of water. In *Judaism*, the immersion ritual was symbolic of regeneration and purity. *Christian* baptism has symbolized death over sin and rebirth to new spiritual life. Water is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. For *Muslims*, ritual bathing is also of great importance, giving a state of purity back to the believer. Cleansing and purification are carried out before entering a mosque. *Buddhists* believe that water is a symbol of purity. *Hinduism* has a practice of immersion in water and holds the river Ganges as sacred, even though its waters are currently polluted. *Ancient Egyptians* venerated the river Nile.

Faith community nurses understand the healing, cleansing and sacred properties of water. We utilize it in both prayerful and practical ways. Water and oil are used during the faith community nurse commissioning ceremony.

Some FCNs bring holy water and prayers out to congregants during home visits. Those involved with homeless shelters and food pantries make sure that congregants get the water they need to combat the summer’s heat. They help locate cooling and watering stations. FCNs encourage those over (and under) age 65 to drink enough water each day. Some congregants do not have enough money to pay their utility bills (electric and water)
prompting faith community nurses to locate and help them access utility assistance programs in their region.

Let us continue to pray for water. For cool, clear water. The water that symbolizes life, that cleanses, that heals, that symbolizes the spirit of God.

Reference: UNESCO, Drops of Water 7

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**July Health Observances**

Health topics for July include:

According to Healthline, July offers the fewest number of health topics for any of the months: cord blood, healthy vision, Group B Strep Sore Throat, Juvenile Arthritis awareness, National Cleft Lip and Craniofacial Awareness, UV Safety, Sarcoma Awareness, and Hepatitis Day. UV safety has many links to go to for additional information including FDA, NIH, and National Institute on Aging.

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**The Dog Days of Summer**

Watch out for extreme heat as we enter the dog days of summer. According to the Farmer’s Almanac, the expression “dog days of summer” refers to that time of the year from July 3 - August 11. During this time, the sun is in the same region of the sky as Sirius, the brightest star visible from any part of the earth. Sirius is part of the constellation Canis Major (the Greater Dog) and is often called the Dog Star. Ancients believed that Sirius was able to add heat to that given off from the sun during this time frame, making everything hotter. Thus, the dog days of summer.

Being aware of extreme heat means so much more than making sure we all are wearing our sunscreen and sunglasses. All persons living under extreme heat warnings need to take care. We are in the time of year when hikers are being rescued from our urban mountains and heat-related illnesses and deaths will rise. In mid-June, Maricopa County reported its first heat-related death - an elderly gentleman who had an A/C unit, but it was not turned on.

Exposure to prolonged or extreme heat can lead to hyperthermia, an umbrella term for several heat-related illnesses, including heat syncope, heat cramps, heat edema, and heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion can rapidly lead to heat stroke (a dangerous medical emergency). The National Institute on Aging shares the signs and symptoms of these conditions as well as a list of who is most at risk for hyperthermia.

**How can we advise our congregants to lower their risk of hyperthermia?**

Following are a few National Institute on Aging recommendations to lower your risk of heat-related illness. For a full listing of recommendations, visit the National Institute on Aging.

- **Drink plenty of liquids**, such as water or fruit or vegetable juices. Stay away from drinks containing alcohol or caffeine. If your doctor has told you to limit your liquids, ask what you should do when it is very hot.
• If you need help getting to a cool place, ask a friend or relative. Some religious groups, senior centers, and Area Agencies on Aging provide this service. If necessary, take a taxi or call for senior transportation. Don’t stand outside in the heat waiting for a bus.

• Dress for the weather. Some people find natural fabrics such as cotton to be cooler than synthetic fibers.

• Do not leave a senior, child or animal unattended in a car.

Added Risk of Burns:
Any of the above conditions can also make a person at risk for fainting, tripping, or falling. Here in Arizona, there is the added risk of sustaining second-and-third degree burns due to falling on the hot pavement. **Exposure for even a few seconds to the concrete and asphalt can result in severe burns.** Recently, NPR shared warnings from doctors on the burn risks associated with hot surfaces such as pavement, metal in seatbelts, and the heat from steering wheels.

Other things to remember:
Older people can have a tough time dealing with heat and humidity. The temperature inside or outside does not have to reach 100°F (38°C) to put them at risk for a heat-related illness.

Headache, confusion, dizziness, or nausea could be a sign of a heat-related illness. Go to the doctor or an emergency room to find out if you need treatment.

*Congregations could institute (or expand) a senior-watch program to add visits or phone calls to seniors who live alone. Help them get to an air-conditioned place if their air conditioning goes out. Remind them to drink plenty of fluids (if not contraindicated by a medical condition). The following agencies may be able to help with utility assistance.*

Other Resources:
• [Eldercare Locator](#)
• [Arizona Area Agency on Aging](#)
• [APS Energy Assistance Program](#)
• [SRP Utility Assistance Program](#)
• [Arizona Department of Economic Security](#): utility assistance

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**Virtual Networking Meetings**

July 20, 2021 (12 – 1:45 p.m. and 7 – 8 p.m.): The Opioid Epidemic Continues. Fred Taylor from AZ Attorney General’s office will join us to speak on the topic.

August 17, 2021 (12 – 1:45 p.m. and 7 – 8 p.m.): Open discussion.

The Zoom link is sent the Friday before each meeting. If you have not attended a networking meeting before, please contact Anne at varner@duetaz.org.

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**Fall Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course**

Twice a year, Duet trains faith community nurses through our Foundations of Faith Community Nursing course. We have set dates for the fall 2021 session. This will be a hybrid course, with in-person and virtual classrooms at the
beginning and end of the course, and the rest of the course will be held virtually.
- Saturday, October 16, 2021, from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. (in person/virtual)
- Tuesdays and Thursdays: October 19, 21, 26, 28, November 2 and 4, from 4 - 9 p.m. (virtual)
- Saturday, November 6, 2021, from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. including the commissioning ceremony (in-person/virtual)

**Fall Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Registration**

Continuing education units for The Foundations of Faith Community Nursing Course have been approved by the Arizona Nurses Association through July 31, 2023.

We want to hear from nurses who are eager to share their journey and their role in their congregations. To learn more, please email neff@duetaz.org.

**Additional Resources**

- **Westberg Institute for Faith Community Nursing**
- **The Arizona Faith Network** has several interesting meetings coming up for June.
- **The Black Nurses Association of Greater Phoenix**
- **Arizona Attorney General’s Office of Community Outreach and Education** offers free webinars with speakers on topics such as the dangers of e-cigarettes, human trafficking, elder abuse, suicide prevention, anti-bullying, the opioid crisis, and how to avoid scammers.

Official Medicare Information at medicare.gov.

**Reporting Faith Community Nursing Hours**

Nurses, please enter your monthly FCN hours on our website reporting tool; the field to enter 2021 statistics has been updated. The information requested aligns to the data that Duet congregational health services is asked to report. The statistics are also referenced when Duet applies for congregational health-related grants. If you have questions or need another copy of our web reporting training aid, please contact Anne at varner@duetaz.org.

**Duet News**

Duet is teaming up again with Home Instead Charities for an online giving campaign, exclusively for senior-focused organizations. With the previous year behind us, we’re focused on keeping our family caregivers, homebound adults, and grandfamilies safe, connected, and healthy. A gift of $10 or more to Duet helps aging adults right
here at home. Mark your calendar and don’t forget to give **July 13-16** on the [GIVE65 website](#).

Below are additional links to Duet's full calendar of service-area support groups and events, the Family Caregiver Virtual Symposium recording, and additional information regarding our kinship and family caregiver services.

![Duet Calendar](#) ![Kinship Services](#)

![Family Caregiver Virtual Symposium recording](#) ![Family Caregiver Services](#)

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### About Duet

**Mission**

To promote health and well-being through vitally needed, free-of-charge services to homebound adults, family caregivers, faith communities, and grandfamilies.

**Vision**

A community where every person ages with compassion, dignity, and hope.

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[Donate](#) [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

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