

**We are
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.



Team Reflection - Huddle

No. 16 – Long-Term Care Workers

A CNA veteran in a nursing home, Kim Sangrey, describes the stress of caring for residents amidst the COVID-19 outbreaks as completely devastating. She explains, “Tears are flowing under your mask as you watch this person that you loved dying – and the family mourning their death through a tablet.” [16.1]

Difficulties such as these stayed with them, as many long-term care (LTC) workers struggle to detach from the memories of their shifts. Holistic support for their well-being is in high demand as the pandemic has taken a heavy toll. As caregivers in their work, more than 60% of LTC workers also care for at least one other outside of work, often at home such as a child or an older adult. They commonly hold second jobs. [16.2] The vast majority are female, more than a quarter Black, and among personal care workers, almost half are Black or Hispanic. Where Black workers represent 13% of all jobs across the U.S. economy, they fill 35% of nursing assistants positions, with a mean hourly wage of \$14.22. [16.3]

Their work entails the ordinary routine of daily living—folding, cleaning, bathing and toileting. In many of the world’s spiritual traditions, the sacred resides in the ordinary. In the Christian calendar, many months of the years bear the label “ordinary time,” where God’s divine life in Jesus is experienced in daily living. Despite the label, it is no less holy.

Spiritual writer and poet Kathleen Norris reflects on the sacredness of everyday life. Norris writes, “we also need the daily love of other people to reassure us that our lives have value.” [16.4] Daily, LTC workers extend countless gestures of loving care to residents. Leaders of health systems and individual LTC facilities are called to show loving care, appreciation and gratitude for individual workers, especially through the provision of just wages and workplace protections.

Consider

If I am a caregiver to another, what can I do today to strengthen my own sense of the inherent goodness in the care I offer?

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Let us pray together,

God, who is anything but ordinary, grant we pray that we might find you in the most ordinary of places. In the folding, cleaning and bathing, in our everyday care of your most precious children, help us to see your face. AMEN.

[16.1] <https://khn.org/news/long-term-care-workers-grieving-and-under-siege-brace-for-covids-next-round/>

[16.2] Van Houtven CH, DePasquale N, Coe NB. Essential Long-Term Care Workers Commonly Hold Second Jobs and Double- or Triple-Duty Caregiving Roles. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2020;68(8):1657-1660. doi:10.1111/jgs.16509

[16.2] <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-and-workers-at-risk-examining-the-long-term-care-workforce/>

[16.3] <https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-essential-workers-lives-matter-they-deserve-real-change-not-just-lip-service/>

[16.4] Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and “Women’s Work,”* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 68.