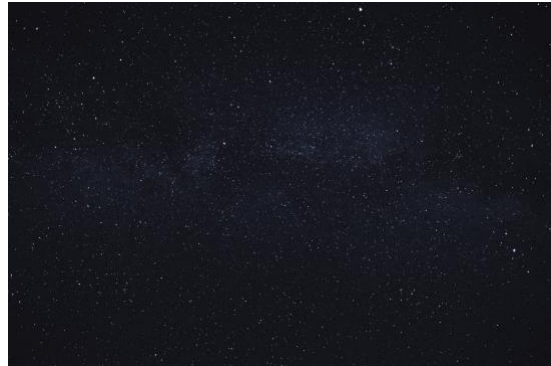


## November 2021 Prayer and Praise

Henri Nouwen is one of my favorite authors. His daily devotionals can both encourage and challenge me. One of his recent devotionals knocked me right off my feet. Nouwen writes:

*I want to say to you that most of our brokenness cannot be simply taken away. It's there. And the deepest pain that you and I suffer is often the pain that stays with us all our lives. It cannot be simply solved, fixed, done away with...What are we then told to do with that pain, with that brokenness, that anguish, that agony that continually rises up in our heart? We are called to embrace it, to befriend it. To not just push it away...to walk right over it, to ignore it. No, to embrace it, to befriend it, and say that is my pain and I claim my pain as the way God is willing to show me his love.*



Most of my life, I was taught to avoid pain...or to numb my pain. I looked for substitutes for the pain I felt internally. After all, pulling our hands back from a hot stove is a natural reflex. But the months of the pandemic has taught me pain should not be ignored. These months have been the most difficult ones of my entire life. Yet, I would not trade these months for anything else in the world. I've experienced God in ways I never thought possible. I have felt the love that's a part of the body of Christ. I've allowed myself to be cared for by others. I've been able to be open and vulnerable with others which has created space for others to be vulnerable in return.

Last week I found myself walking around the block late at night after a difficult conversation with my husband – a conversation we've had more than once. A conversation I've apologized for and tried to make right. Unfortunately, he does not remember the past tears or apologies. His dementia has left him just with his own pain in this particular situation and questions about me.

I found myself talking to God and asking him how I was going to be able to carry the weight of what is ahead for me...for us. But then I remembered a verse from the Psalms:

*He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.*  
(Holy Bible, English Standard Version, 2001, Psalm 147: 4)

I looked up to see a clear, night sky filled with stars. Stars God set in place. Stars God knows intimately and personally. Stars that have a name. I knew in that moment I was not alone. I was not forgotten. I did not have to carry the weight alone ... I couldn't even try to. The pain I felt – the pain I know that is most certainly ahead for me – cannot separate me from who God is. In fact, the pain is drawing me closer to him as my only source of strength and the one, true Comforter of my life. It is teaching me more about

trust than I ever thought possible. Taking time to breathe in his presence and to lean into him gave me the strength and courage I needed to walk in through my front door again.

Pain can teach us so much about ourselves and even more about God. The lessons and presence of God through all the ups and downs have allowed me to pray something I never thought possible – “God, I am grateful for the pain.”

*Christy Secor RN, DNP, CDWF, NCF Professional Ministries Director*

References: *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version. (2001). Crossway.

Nouwen, H. J. M. (2021, October 10). *Befriend your pain*. <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/befriend-your-pain>

### **November Prayer Calendar**

- November 1 – Please remember the people of Haiti and the nurses who provide much needed healthcare to its people. Pray for peace and the protection of communities from the gangs who have taken control. Pray for the safe return of the American and Canadian missionaries who have been taken hostage. Pray for wisdom for NCF Haiti as they seek support and supplies to meet the basic needs of local communities and must navigate extremely difficult circumstances.
- November 2 – A special *Journal of Christian Nursing* COVID-19 vaccination article will be released as an online exclusive resource late in November. Ask God to use the article to help nurses evaluate information about vaccination and answer vaccine questions from others.
- November 3 – We praise God for the support and interest shown for the October Twin Cities webinar, *Who Is Going to Care for Me? Addressing the Challenges We Face in Our Profession Today*. More than 250 people registered with 101 participating the night of our webinar! Pray for God to use this webinar and the two others being planned for 2022 to equip us in providing spiritual care for ourselves and our colleagues. We ask God to use the new NCF web page, [Spiritual Care for Nurses](#), as a way of drawing more students, educators, and nurses to the ministry of NCF.
- November 4 – Today is the quarterly *JCN* Journal Club - *Recognizing the Trauma of Adverse Childhood Experiences*. We ask God to iron out technical problems and enable the two guest panelists and *JCN* editors to work in harmony in presenting how nurses can assist adults dealing with the effects of childhood trauma. May God’s Spirit minister gently with those of us who are confronting the effects of childhood trauma and grow each attendee’s ability to minister to those who have had ACEs.
- November 5 – Pray for registration for the East Texas NCF Retreat that’s scheduled for April 2022. Pray this weekend will be a time of rest, encouragement, meaningful Bible study, prayer, and support among nursing students, educators, and nurses alike.
- November 6 – Pray for NCF Director, Kathy Schoonover-Shoffner, on November 6 as she teaches on *ambiguous loss* at the *Accessible to All? A Faithful Response to Disabilities* symposium at

North Park University. Ask Jesus to give Kathy strength to talk about a painful topic and the ability to offer wise information that can empower attendees to serve those experiencing loss.

- November 7 – Pray for the December 13 Tabletop Discussion, *The Spiritual Discipline of Lament – Drawing Closer to God Through the Difficulties We Face*. Pray for Christy Secor, NCF’s Professional Ministries Director, and Whitney Kvistad as they prepare for this webinar. We ask God to use the content to help us as students, educators, and nurses to better understand this deep and meaningful spiritual practice as a means of drawing us closer in our relationship with God.
- November 8 – We give thanks to God who knows the articles most needed for the *Journal of Christian Nursing* and pointing us to who can author these manuscripts. May God speak through these nurses about what his heart is for nursing and our work. Pray for attentiveness to God’s direction as the editors work with authors on current and future articles that will strengthen and empower nurses to serve with Christ-reflecting skill and mercy.
- November 9 – Ask God to guide NCF staff in preparing more resources for ministry. Give us direction and wisdom to know how to develop the tools He wants for serving student and nurse groups.
- November 10 – Let us *listen well* to the students, nurses, and educators who come to NCF so that we can serve and care for each one as Jesus would care for them.
- November 11 – Pray for the GMHC meetings that begins today and lasts until November 13. God is working through new and old ways to bring about his Kingdom purposes and Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC) will be a significant part of that. We ask God for opportunities for Grace Tazelaar, NCF’s Missions Director, to interact with the nurses and nursing students whom he brings to NCF’s exhibit. May Grace be an encouragement to them and pray with them about how they might partner in his Kingdom efforts.
- November 12 – May our Holy God reveal his great plans for NCF work to all staff members, group leaders, and volunteers, so God can accomplish what he wants through NCF.
- November 13 – November is baby month! Pray for a safe delivery for Jessica Harper, NCF’s Communications Manager, and her husband who are expecting their third child any day now. Please pray for God’s presence as they welcome their newest family member into their family.
- November 14 – Ask God to bring seekers to NCF meetings; people who are wanting something more in life and now sure where to find it.
- November 15 – The *JCN* team needs wisdom from God about how to plan for publishing *Journal of Christian Nursing*, and how to negotiate with our publishing partner God’s best plans for the future. Ask for eyes to see what Jesus sees!
- November 16 – Pray for the national online Student Bible study that meets today. We ask for connections with each other and with God.
- November 17 – Ask God to endow the other NCF marketing team members with the time and thinking needed to accomplish this month’s tasks and challenges.
- November 18 – Sickness will be prevalent in November with flu season and the continuation of the pandemic. Pray for healing and wellness. Pray for nurses and healthcare staff to care for patients well and also to make time to care for themselves.

- November 19 – Holiday promotions will be rolling out this month. Pray that our efforts would reach members, old and new. Pray for the team as we work hard to prepare and pray for people to receive the "gift" of NCF well during this time.
- November 20 – We thank God for those who currently support NCF's staff and ministry. We are grateful for their giving and for their encouragement in the work we do. Pray as we seek new financial and prayer partners to support NCF's staff and ministry. Each of these gifts and prayers make this ministry possible.
- November 21 – Pray for our Sunday evening prayer times as we connect more deeply with God and each other in the challenges we face personally and as a profession. May God draw others to this time of prayer as we lift up the needs of students, educators, and nurses across the country.
- November 22 – Praise God for the new NCF student and nurse groups that he is raising up. Ask God to clearly speak to and through the leaders and to bless each gathering of students and nurses in his name.
- November 23 – Pray for students and faculty to have a restorative break and find meaningful moments to connect to God.
- November 24 – The holiday season is often difficult for many. Pray for God to be near to those who are spending their holidays alone, working, or grieving.
- November 25 – We are reminded today of all we have to be grateful for - especially God's presence that is constant through the ups and downs of our lives. Be with those who are working this holiday and with those they care for. Give comfort to many others who have one or more less places to set at the family table. May we be reminded of the many small blessings that fill our days bringing us joy and hope.
- November 26 – Pray that the Holy Spirit will protect our communication and continue to build unity among NCF staff; and that we will learn more and more about how to truly love one another.
- November 27 – Ask God to supernaturally move through a planned membership outreach for Black Friday / Cyber Monday and bring many NEW NCF nurse and student professional memberships. Ask Jesus to grow NCF!
- November 28 – As we enter the Advent season, may God speak to us... speak as he wants, whisper or shout his messages to us. May we come to him in new surrender and love, as we learn and draw nearer to our amazing Savior.
- November 29 – Pray for students and faculty as they enter the final weeks of the semester. Pray they can have God's peace over any anxiety, and His strength to finish well.
- November 30 – Pray for Jen Wojtysiak, NCF's Student Ministries Director, as she finishes up her sabbatical. Pray for a restful completion of this time and the renewing of strength and vision for the work ahead. We have missed her smile and the insight she brings.