

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

During this festive, joyful and sacred season of the year, we took time to look back over 2024 and would like to share with you reflections from Canadian nurses who travelled to Malaga, Spain for the Nurses Christian Fellowship International (NCFI) World Congress in June. Nurses Christian Fellowship Canada (NCFC) is a member country of NCFI. NCFI exists to “make Jesus visible in nursing and healthcare around the world”. It is an amazing platform for both nurses and midwives to network at an international conference every 4 years.



from left to right: Dorice Paulémont, Hope Graham, Jacoba Antwi and Phyllis Ferrier

The nurses who attended the NCFI World Congress in Spain include Phyllis Ferrier, our honorary advisor representing NCFC to NCFI; and who sits on the International Board of NCFI. Also included are Hope Graham, former NCF rep to NCFI, and former NCFC Director; two delegates, Jacoba Antwi, a current NCFC Director and Ontario Chair; and Dorice Paulemont, associate of NCFC in Quebec; Claire Meiers, a new nurse in Quebec; Anne Hawes, a past National Director of NCF under IVCF; and Twylla Downey, an NCFC associate from Alberta. Our contributors bring us insights about the Congress from their many years of rich nursing experience; and some from the freshness and enthusiasm of someone just starting on their nursing journey. We hope you will be encouraged by their reflections and observations! Please uplift them in your prayers.

NCFI World Congress 2024:

Blessings & Reflections

Jacoba Antwi

- from Oakville, Ontario.

The NCFI Congress “The Courage and Strength to Care” was a great experience for me. This was my first opportunity to attend. The experience of having Christ-following nurses in different fields of nursing from around the world come together in one place was phenomenal!

The Congress touched me spiritually, professionally, globally and culturally. I witnessed a tremendous display of God’s love and grace. We were able to see and understand how God is using nurses to care for many components of our patients’ lives, caring for the vulnerable in every area of their lives, all for His glory.

During the Congress I realized how all the missions and visions of the various NCF’s are similar to each other and echo that of NCFI. It demonstrated our oneness in Christ. The aim of this Congress which was to create and foster Christ-like relationships among nurses across the world, to strengthen and encourage one another; was indeed manifested.

The daily devotions were in depth, reaching down to the soul, enriching and feeding my spirit. It made the whole Congress which was anchored on evidence-based practice, spirit-filled and Christ honoring. My spirit was renewed every day in this inspiring and Christ centered atmosphere.

I had the privilege of meeting new accomplished nurses and midwives caring for the vulnerable

with love and dedication and sincerity of heart. I made new friends in the Lord, and we shared professional insights and encouraged each other, which I know will continue to grow. I also met those I have only seen on our Zoom meetings and this enriched the experience even more. Meeting Dr. Bob Snyder in person, whom I have only seen on the videos in the Saline Process Witness Training, was also exhilarating.

The Pre-Congress courses were invaluable and very informative, shedding light on our walk with Christ as nurses. In the presentation “The Values Based Teacher: Teaching Like Jesus”, what touched my heart is that teaching without



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values makes the foundation very weak. Jesus taught the way He did because of His holy values. My take away: Do your best to be Christ-like in all you do and say.

One of the presentations that really caught my attention and resonates with what many organizations like NCFC are challenged with, is "Passing the Baton", by Dr. Linda S. Rieg. She talked about the connection between Christ as our source of caring and as our role model for mentoring others. She likened mentorship with discipleship and what the differences represent for us as we look for successors. Succession is an important and sometimes difficult transition, and worthy of more discussion.

An insight from Dr. Wilfred McSherry's presentation titled, "Strength and Courage to Uphold the Nurse/Patient Covenant

to Care" resonated with the core practices of a Christian nurse. He spoke about the Covenant of Care which has been a pillar for nursing: "It requires strength and courage to uphold what is unique, absolute and necessary for the continuation of nursing in the future". He also made a statement for us to remember as we provide health care and spiritual care: "Patients are more concerned that we care for them as humans and persons rather than for sickness treatment."

Finally, it was amazing having Christian nurses from all over the world worshipping the Lord in one place, giving us a glimpse of what the new heaven and earth will be like.



Jacoba has been a member of NCFC for many years. She started as a small group leader, then took on the added responsibilities and then the leadership of the NCFC Ontario Committee, as Ontario chair. She is now also a Director on the NCFC BOD.

Jacoba is at present actively working as an ER nurse in the Toronto area. She has also had the privilege of working with the First Nations in Northern Ontario. "Serving in NCFC is a privilege and a passion, to reach nurses for the Kingdom wherever they may be in their faith."

Twylla Downey

- from Alberta and Florida.

My experience at the NCFI World Congress was extremely profound, and overwhelming; I will do my best to express myself. I am still processing everything that occurred in such a short amount of time. God provided me so many unique opportunities, and it was so nice to meet my fellow Canadians that I had only met previously on Zoom! Worship time was my favorite - to have people from all over the world praising God in unity - it was awesome!

Euthanasia: Even though I knew medical staff in other countries were providing euthanasia to patients, I never realized the extent of similarities other nations had with Canada before in this regard. To hear from Spain that they are also losing the fight for conscience protection in their workplaces was eye opening for me. It appears that there is a world-wide agenda for the accomplishment of many threatening things, which I hadn't truly realized before. For so many years, I had felt such an urgency to fight for issues surrounding sanctity of life in Canada, but sanctity is being attacked on a much larger scale. I met with a nurse from Denmark who reminded me so much of myself eight years ago as she currently faces the possibility that her country may be legalizing euthanasia. She asked me if I would be willing to share my stories regarding euthanasia in Canada with a reporter from Denmark, and of course I said yes.

Meeting Dorice from Quebec was very special. Without realizing it, she helped me to see what God wanted me to discover. Surprisingly this was simply through our practical discussions about similarities in international airports;

and a world-wide perspective on the COVID pandemic.

As I sat down next to Juni, a nurse from Miami, on my first day of the congress, I started to formulate a plan to start a nurses' prayer group at my hospital in southeast Florida moving forward. It is so very important to unite and fellowship together. The nurse at work in the office next to mine, (who happens to be from Quebec), has already told me to count her in!

In one of the concurrent sessions I attended, I received advice to stop publishing in my own country. I was told to send articles to an international journal instead which has greater impact. I'm not sure who said it, but I often think of the following quote, "Your talents are your gift from God, what you do with them is your gift to God." I believe that God has provided me some gifts in writing, and I felt quite encouraged at the conference. I feel that there is something to be said about the current world climate and how to respond as fellow Christians, and with God's help, I will try to say it. This is something I have been thinking about quite a lot and I hope to encourage, prepare, and strengthen others.

The sermon on Psalm 23 was very meaningful to me and provided insights that I had not heard previously regarding this well-known psalm. Just last week, I shared with my Christian patient the words, "The closer you are to the Shepherd, the less fear there is of the wolves." I'm not sure who wrote the quote, but I hope it brought some comfort and direction to my patient regarding the unique situation he had been discussing with me.

I feel so extremely blessed to have been able to go to the Congress and am so very thankful to NCF Canada. I will never forget the experience, nor the generosity shown to me. Thank you so very much!



Twylla has spent most of her nearly 30 years in nursing in palliative care, acting as Christ's hands and feet, being His light and hope to people during their very dark times. Twylla is a certified Saline Process trainer, and has previously filled a small ministry position with the Christian Medical Dental Association of Canada. Twylla has attended the Parish Nursing Institute, and has completed a seminary degree in Christian Leadership.

Phyllis Ferrier

- Mono & Orangeville, Ontario.

The 2024 Congress in Malaga, Spain was the 6th NCFI World Congress that I have attended. I have also had the privilege of sitting on the International Board for the past 12.5 years. Attending the Congress comes with a sense of responsibility, the daily schedule is filled; and so there are only limited opportunities to sit and observe. However, as I reflect on the 2024 World Congress in Malaga, memories come to mind.



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There was a unique opportunity to begin each day meeting with other international delegates and friends, to listen to God and to pray. There is power and encouragement when we pray in community.

The Plenary and Bible Exposition speakers and sessions were excellent, focusing on finding strength and courage to care from a wholistic paradigm. Panel Discussions included topics such as responding to Ethical Challenges, practicing Self-Care, and reaching out to others in the Health Care sector. Panel members were knowledgeable and resourceful. I was impressed by their ability to become appropriately vulnerable as they shared from their own unique lived experiences.

One of the highlights of any NCFI World Congress is reconnecting and spending time with conference friends and colleagues from the past, as well as meeting new delegates. It was great to connect with the six delegates and friends from Canada. What a wonderful group! We were given many opportunities to connect and reconnect, including conversations during

mealtimes, coffee breaks, concurrent sessions, and even on bus tours. It was inspiring to hear stories of vision and passion, living as Salt & Light; being able to witness to those who are broken and in need of the transforming presence of Jesus.

Finally, a significant highlight for me was the Praise & Worship at the beginning of each Bible Exposition & Plenary session. The selections were contemporary songs of worship to our God. I could sense the presence of our living God, which set the tone for the day.

I left with a renewed sense of vision, strength, and passion. God is at work, and we have the amazing opportunity to join with Him in His kingdom purposes, from a strength-based paradigm, looking to Jesus. Our wonderful, beautiful God is more than enough and completely faithful to His promises.



Phyllis is a retired RN, with Toronto Public Health for 27 years and continues to work as a Reg'd Psychotherapist and Reg'd Marriage and Family Therapist. She was on the NCFI Ontario Committee for many years, and a member of the National NCF Committee. Phyllis sits on the International Board of NCFI and through this role has been the Chair of the Caribbean and North America (CANA) Region (2012-2020) and is currently Chair of the IICN Program Committee as co-author and teacher of the "Values Based Teacher: Teaching Like Jesus" Course with Dr. Kamalini Kumar. Phyllis is the NCFI Canadian Coordinator and Multiplying Trainer for the Saline Process Witness programme. "I have learned that one step of faith and obedience often opens the door to many others, and that God is more than sufficient for everything He calls us to do. God is at work and He calls us to join with Him."

Hope Graham

- from Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

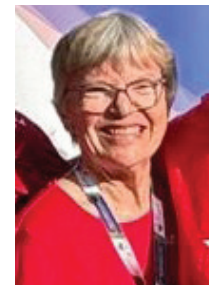
A rush of memories: preparation, journey, congress, extracurricular— People, Places, Conversation Stories: heart-rending, soul nourishing. Grandeur and awe. What words suffice? I'm still enthralled in reflection, months after the event. The visual: picturesque ancient Spanish stone architecture, the vivid aqua Mediterranean, a vast empty early morning beach, a Picasso art gallery, shared coffee in the gallery courtyard with lime green birds joyfully hopping in a puddle; authentic Spanish flamenco dancing.

The Word: succinct and riveting, challenging and inspiring. I watched and listened to pioneers who shared hard stories, embodying

God-at-work. I experienced the consistent care of the teachers in a small group of nurses from 11 nations. We learned up-to-date professional evidence of the how/where/what of providing and documenting the art and science of spiritual care.

In the realistic constraints of time and space, one story: I first met Mia¹ at the Nigerian NCFI Conference (2008). She was the first nurse from Spain who had attended an NCFI conference, in my memory. I found her shy and somewhat hesitant in English. We discovered we were both widowed young. During the Nigerian cultural event, despite my abysmal physical ineptitude, I joined the dancers. I grabbed Mia's hand and pulled her into the throng. We did our best—well, at least, we heartily laughed

a lot! Mia attended the NCFI in Chile, too. Her language was much more at home than mine, this time. She shared a dream that one day we might have an NCFI conference in Spain! What a delight when Mia was one of the first people who welcomed Anne Hawes and me when we arrived at the Casa Diocesana in Malaga. A dream come true!



I am grateful for the treasured life-time memories and friendships of NCFI.

¹Fictionalized name for confidentiality

Anne Hawes

- from Huntsville and Niagara, Ontario.

I have had the privilege of attending 7 NCFI World Congresses since 1988. Canada became a member country in 1992 at the Congress in Fiji. For me, that was a highlight year! There are now over 30 member countries and affiliates in many more. The purpose of NCFI is "to connect Christian nurses around the world, equipping them to live out their faith in professional practice".

As I reflected on how NCFI has impacted me professionally and personally, I thought of these benefits:

- Excellent Bible teaching that has helped me integrate my faith with my nursing practice. From the 1998 Bible expositor, Eugene Peterson, to Fernando Ramos Pena in 2024, I have learned and grown spiritually, as gifted teachers have opened God's Word and applied it to nursing.
- The opportunity to pray for nurses in Canada and in other countries. The example of Fijian nurses praying at a certain time each day, led to the beginning of the weekly Monday Night Prayer in Canada. Praying with nurses from other countries is so very special. In Spain, I had one-on-one times of prayer with nurses from Korea, Denmark, and California.
- The privilege of visiting other countries that have hosted conferences and experiencing different cultures.
- Friendships with nurses from around the world. This is one of the main reasons I keep going back to NCFI conferences. Friendships have led to visits to and from nurses in other countries with rich times of fellowship.

A record number of Canadians attended this year's congress in Spain. It was a blessing to watch each of them engage with other Christian nurses and enjoy the same benefits I have experienced over many years. I am praying that some of you who are reading this, will feel called by God to attend the next NCFI Congress in 2028!

My nursing career has been rich and varied. I graduated from the Mack Training School for Nurses in St. Catharines ON and obtained my BNSC from Queens University. I have worked in a hospital, nursing education, public health and administration. However, my favourite job was being the Canadian Director of NCFI from 1992-2006. I recently retired as Pastoral Care Coordinator at my church in Huntsville Ontario and have moved back to the Niagara area in order to be closer to family.



Dorice Paulémont

- from Montreal and Chisasibi Quebec.

The experience of attending the NCFI 2024 Pre-Congress and World Congress in Malaga, Spain was life-changing. This was my first time, and I was attending as a Canadian delegate.

It was mind-blowing to realize that there were about 42 countries represented. I made new nursing friends from different parts of the world, and it's exciting to think I may in the future be able to go to visit them. Listening to my international brothers and sisters who strive to be a light, and who take a position for Christ even in the face of adversity, encouraged me to go on boldly with what I am doing. I am reminded that I am not alone. It made me think of 1 Peter 5:9 "Resist him, be firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

NCFI is a whole new experience, making me realize through listening to the speakers, that the role that we play locally as nurses actually impacts the world. It opened my eyes to the fact that we are powerful as an international association. Our voice can change the world, by being present and active in various debates. I felt 20 years late because if I had grasped NCFI's vision and goal earlier in my career, I probably would have had a better vision of myself within the nursing field. I believe that in order to have a greater impact as NCFI globally, we individually need to position ourselves as high as we can through studies and involvement, and grow credibly in our professional settings, our societies, our countries.

Coming back home I am now focusing and acting to support the growth of NCFI Quebec (French and English) and the implementation of the Saline Process Witness Training among Quebec French-speaking nurses, with the grace of God and the support of contacts made at NCFI.



Engaged heart and soul with her church, Dorice found out about NCFI while she was studying nursing 24 years ago. She has continued her involvement with NCFI since then. Dorice has the growing desire to know Christ and to make Him known through all means wherever she goes using the gifts she has received, among which are singing and nursing. For the past 3 years, Dorice has been working among the Cree nation in northern Quebec.

Claire Meiers

- from Montreal, Quebec.

As a new nurse, the NCFI World Congress 2024 in Spain was a peak moment in my life both spiritually and professionally! Having just recently become aware of the existence of NCFI, the World Congress opened my eyes to the magnitude of God's power and love, offering a glimpse into how He is working around the world through nursing. What I learned through this experience is first just how amazing it is that through NCFI, Christian nurses are physically brought together from all over the globe. Experiencing it was such spiritual food for the soul, bringing to life a new meaning to the biblical concept of not forsaking to assemble together (Hebrews 10:25).

Also, I greatly appreciated how NCFI endorses a mix of biblically-based and evidence-based content. As healthcare professionals, it is important to attribute value to best practice, and as a Christian organization, I found that NCFI maintains an appropriate balance of biblical teaching and current nursing research.

As a member of NCFI, I saw how NCFI values perspectives from all of its member countries. At one of the public forums at the World Congress

during which delegates from each country attend, I saw how NCFI facilitates connections between various countries, such as through the definition of regional groups. I also joined the "Next Generation" group of NCFI, which includes student nurses and young nurses with up to 6 years of experience, which is also split into regional groups.

In terms of personal highlights from the World Congress, the activity I drew the most out of was the Saline Process Witness Training Programme. The trainers were incredible! I learned invaluable information on how to share the gospel with permission, with sensitivity and respect. I now feel so much more prepared to start my job as a new nurse.

Each day of the conference, I interacted with amazing, faithful people from all over the world. I shared a room with a Nepali nurse whose strong faith was so inspiring to me. I prayed and cried with a Ugandan nurse as we shared and bonded over how the Lord has miraculously provided for us in each of our lives. I engaged in a long, fruitful discussion on Christian nursing ethics with a wise and experienced professor from the Netherlands. I was challenged, encouraged and prayed for

by a missionary dentist from India. I am still in contact with many people I met there, and am continually blessed by the impact of the NCFI World Congress in Malaga. With thanks, and blessings, Claire.



Claire Meiers, originally from the United States, is a recent graduate of the Direct Entry Masters in Nursing program at McGill University. She is currently working as a nurse clinician on a cardiac surgery unit in Montreal. She is honored to serve as a

Bible study leader for young nurses and nursing students at Peoples Church, supported by NCFI.

We'd love to hear from you

Contact us at
www.ncficanada.ca or
nationalchair@ncficanada.ca