

Dorothy Wagner

2014 Wilkerson-Droege Award Recipient

Insightful, determined, visionary. These are words that can be used when describing Dorothy Wagner and her commitment to the faith and health movement. Dorothy began her nursing career in New York after attending Cornell University-New York Hospital School of Nursing in NY, NY. Her early nursing career focused on the operating room then later in Hollywood, California she became very active in community health. Dorothy became a consultant at Queen of Angels-Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. Her passion for faith and health was evident in that role as she helped other Southern California hospitals see the value of supporting health ministry. Dorothy and her husband John, a Lutheran pastor, had conversations with their friend and colleague, Rev. Granger Westberg. Those discussions helped Dorothy see that by expanding the parish nurse role to a health ministry team approach, more people could be involved, and in turn more would be served.

In 1993 Dorothy and John were instrumental in receiving a Wheat Ridge seed grant to establish the Greater Hollywood Health Partnership (GHHP). In 1998, Queen of Angels-Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital sold the operations of the hospital and QueensCare was established. The new entity retained many of the healthcare services such as QueensCare Health & Faith Partnership (previously known as GHHP) and their many primary care clinics. It also retained its core focus—healthcare for the poor and vulnerable. That same year, Wheat Ridge Ministries honored Dorothy with a Seed of Hope Award and said of her “she has a religious commitment and personal mission to see that health care reaches the underserved.”

Dorothy was one of the early founders of the health ministries movement. She served on the HMA Board of Directors and was a key contributor to *Beginning a Health Ministry Program-A How-To Manual* for the Health Ministries Association. She has spoken at the Interfaith Health Program, Carter Center in Atlanta, GA; at the Vesper Society’s Health and Peace Conference, Bad Boll, Germany; at Lutheran Church in America’s Conference on Health and Healing in Omaha, NE; at the President’s Commission on Health Education in Los Angeles, CA and at the World Council of Churches Conference on Healing and Health in Washington, DC. Dorothy has been instrumental in helping many faith communities develop health ministry programs and has mentored countless individuals in faith and health. Her work has reached many and continues to do so in the ongoing work of QueensCare today.

In recent years Dorothy has continued to serve. She played a key role in establishing a health ministry program at her home church, Bethlehem Lutheran, in Santa Rosa, CA. Their ministry includes a salary for a faith community nurse. She also helped develop (and is actively involved in) the Seniors in Transition Ministry at Bethlehem and three other congregations in Santa Rosa.

Dorothy Wagner is a true example of a leader in health ministry and the faith and health movement. She is extremely deserving of the Wilkerson-Droege Award.