

TO MEDIA:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EXCELA HEALTH MARKS NURSES MONTH 2021
WITH BLESSING OF HANDS, LIGHTING OF LUMINARIES**

GREENSBURG, PA, April 28, 2021 ... Excela Health will take a more reflective approach to the annual observance of May as Nurses Month with events that promote introspection as the COVID-19 pandemic remains the focus of healthcare locally as well as nationally.

During the first week of May, the health system will hold brief solemn ceremonies at each hospital that precede the May 12 anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. The events will occur at 6:30 a.m., near the hospital main entrances and include a blessing of the hands as well as the lighting of luminaries.

The Rev. Earl K. Gardner, D.Ed., MSN, RN, CCRN, a critical care nurse educator at Excela Health, will preside over the blessings at Excela Latrobe Hospital, Monday, May 3 and Excela Frick Hospital, Tuesday, May 4. The Rev. Jeffrey Wylie, rector of Christ's Church, Greensburg, will officiate Wednesday, May 5 at Excela Westmoreland Hospital.

Later in the month, a Twilight Walk is scheduled for 5 p.m., May 19, at Excela Square at Latrobe, 100 Excela Health Drive, Unity Township.

“Human interaction is central to our well-being, and the healing power of physical touch cannot be overstated,” noted Excelsa Health Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer Helen K. Burns, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN. “Over the past year we have donned personal protective equipment and limited personal contact to control the spread of the virus. While necessary, these restrictions also deprive us of that very personal connection derived from physical care that is in and of itself part of the healing process.”

During the blessings, anointing oils will be used to acknowledge that importance, while also honoring the spiritual aspects surrounding physical care.

The luminaries hearken back to Nightingale’s designation as the “Lady of the Lamp” as well as symbolize the personal and community losses experienced as a result of COVID. The lights are being sponsored by Excelsa Health staff with donations added to the Friends of Nursing fund within the health system’s foundations which is earmarked for continuing education for the nursing team.

Individuals wishing to honor or remember an Excelsa Health caregiver may do so through Excelsa Health’s public web site, [ExcelsaHealth.org/giving](https://www.ExcelsaHealth.org/giving).