

faithful healing

*Sister leads
life of service
by praying
with patients*

When Sister Barbara Ann Braun retired from the St. Elizabeth Community Health Center last month, she never intended to leave the hospital.

But she did want to get some young blood into the place.

Sister Braun, 86, was director of St. Elizabeth's pastoral care department until two years ago when she stepped down to spend more time with her patients and give a younger, more energetic sister her position.

But Sister Braun continued coming to the hospital.

She served as staff chaplain for the past two years and gave up that

They focus on the mind and spirit, not on the body.

There are only three sisters who work in the hospital, said Maureen Bausch, coordinator for the Parish Nurse Education Program at St. Elizabeth.

Bausch said she has known Sister Braun for 30 years.

They first met when Bausch was a student nurse at St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha. Sister Braun was the Coordinator of Maternal and Child Health.

"She definitely is an instrument of God, and of peace and love," Bausch said. "When Sister Barbara Ann walks into a room, there's an immediate sense of calmness."

There are different orders of sisterhood, Bausch said. Sister Braun is a member of the Franciscan order, and she follows the rule of St. Assisi.

"St. Assisi is a universal saint who believes in hospitality," Bausch said. "Sister Barbara Ann epitomizes that to the highest degree."

Sister Braun was born in Humphrey in 1913. She lived there until she was 14, when her family moved to Omaha.

As a little girl of 5 or 6, she said, she knew she wanted to be a nun.

But that dream changed as she grew older.

"Like any young girl, I was planning marriage," Sister Braun said.

But just after her high school graduation in 1931, she knew the feeling she had as a 5-year-old was correct.

"The Lord said to me, 'I want you as my bride,'" Sister Braun said.

Two years later, she entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in Lafayette, Ind.

In 1939, Sister Braun received her registered nursing degree from St. Elizabeth School of Nursing.

During the next 15 years, she helped unwed mothers through problem pregnancies at St. Anthony Hospital in Denver.

Sister Braun first came to Lincoln in 1954 after receiving a bachelor's degree in nursing education at St. Louis University in St. Louis.

She was maternity supervisor at St. Elizabeth Hospital until 1958 when she moved to St. Francis Hospital in Colorado Springs, Colo.

In 1965, Sister Braun was elected president of the Board of Directors of the eight hospitals that the Sisters of St. Francis run.

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St. Elizabeth Medical Center

position in January when she retired.

But she still comes to the third floor of the medical center to pray with the patients.

"I've been around hospitals for 66 years," Sister Braun said. "I've enjoyed everything I've done."

St. Elizabeth's asked her to continue coming to the hospital, she said.

So, every morning at 6:45 she is there to do what she loves to do — pray with people.

Sister Braun, a registered nurse, started the Pastoral Care department at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center in 1970. She wanted health care to focus not only on the body, but also on the mind and spirit.

"This is a vision of taking care of the total patient," Sister Braun said.

Pastoral Care is a program that centers on helping people get in touch with the spiritual aspects of healing, Sister Braun said.

Located on the third floor of the Medical Center, Pastoral Care nurses are sisters and priests who pray with the patients.



ABOVE: GIVING PRAYERS to premature babies is a joy to Sister Braun. She said she makes sure to pray for them daily.

She stayed in the position for six years before she went back to Lincoln to help with the planning and development of the St. Elizabeth Community Health Center.

Sister Ann Frances Hoff volunteers at St. Elizabeth's and said she has known Sister Braun for 50 years.

"She is a warm-hearted, gentle, soft-spoken person," Sister Hoff said. "I will always remember her support." Sister Hoff lives with Sister Braun in a convent across the street from St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

"I came here with her (from Colorado), so she wouldn't have to live alone," Sister Hoff said.

After starting the pastoral care program, Sister Braun became associate director of the St. Elizabeth Medical Center.

She then became director of Special Services and, later, director of Pastoral Care Services.

Sister Braun said she feels good about the life she's led.

"I loved nursing, but I found so much joy in helping patients through their crises," she said. "That's why I'm so proud of pastoral care."

The people at St. Elizabeth's are a dedicated, envisioned bunch, Sister Braun said.

"I feel everyone in the hospital is a close friend," she said. "I feel good about following my vocation."

Sister Braun has been helping patients for more than 60 years and can't tear herself away, even now, after she has retired.

"I really enjoy my work here at St. Elizabeth's," she said. "The Lord's been my lover all my life. It's been kind of a divine romance."

RIGHT: SISTER BRAUN touches the hand of a patient while she prays. Part of her appeal to patients at the hospital is her hands-on approach.



Story by Veronica Daehn
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