‘Teaching the class has been such a joy'

A nutrition class that takes place at Cross Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, has had a transforming impact not just on its 20 participants, but also on its teacher, Linda Radder, who serves the congregation as a faith community nurse.

“It’s been gratifying to see how the class has helped so many people change their eating habits and improve their health,” said Linda, also known by congregants as “Nurse Linda.”

For example, one student has better managed her diabetes, needing less insulin to maintain her glucose levels. Another class member has lost weight, while another regularly shares the healthy recipes she receives with other residents in her apartment building.

Twice a month, participants gather at Cross Lutheran to discuss a topic, such as how to manage high blood pressure, and they prepare and eat a healthy meal together. Afterwards, they receive the recipe and ingredients to make the meal at home. Students also receive such items as measuring cups and spoons, freezer bags and grocery gift cards to support them in preparing healthy meals.

In addition, most class participants have recently had the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine through a free community clinic, located in the church basement, where the nutrition class takes place.

Last December, Linda asked participants, “If you could have anything for Christmas from the nutrition class, what would it be?” They all agreed: each one wanted an air fryer.

“It was so much fun to see them open their air fryers,” Linda recalled. She looks forward to hearing about the healthy meals that students prepare with the gift they received.

“Participants are so grateful,” Linda said. “But I’m getting nurtured, as well. Teaching the class has been such a joy.”

The nutrition class has taken place since 2019 at Cross Lutheran Church, a diverse congregation located in Milwaukee’s central city, and is funded by a grant from the American Cancer Society and Kohl’s Fit Families.