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# Conference Care Facilities Newsletter

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*“And went to him, and bound up his wounds...and took care of him” Luke 10:34  
“But that the members should have the same care one for another” 1 Corinthians 12:25*

## Editorial

This is the first issue of the *Conference Care Facilities Newsletter*. The Conference Care Facilities Committee was organized and made official by the General Annual Meeting in 2005. This committee tries to bring the needs of the conference care facilities to the Church at large, sharing concerns and finding direction. This newsletter is meant to communicate some of these concerns, and also to share ideas, inspirations, and activities with one another.

We, as God’s people, have always tried to take all scripture seriously, and we also take verses such as the following to heart. “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:36, 37). “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God; I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:32). “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). “Finally...having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8). Our facilities are an outreach, and our reasons for having them are based on scriptures like these.

Working in the church’s facilities is very rewarding. Indeed, offering love and care to those who are helpless is rewarding anywhere, anytime. Numerous experiences can be told of residents, family members, and employees being inspired, and even yielding their lives to the Lord. We thank all those of you who have worked, volunteered, or been involved in our facilities in some way, and may God bless you. We also thank those who have encouraged their children to serve in this way.

The Church has many programs, including General Mission, Gospel Tract, Christian Service International, Christian Public Service, Missions Canada, and USA Missions. All these are very worthy efforts and many lives have been touched and blessed by the faithful workers that have given of their time and talent. As you consider where you would like to serve, as you consider a career, or as you counsel and encourage your children, or others of your congregations in their life’s work or in shorter terms of service, do not overlook the possibility of working in one of the care facilities in our congregations. They have been established and continue to operate on the principals noted above, and yet sometimes experience a difficult time finding enough help. We encourage you to consider prayerfully whether the Lord is leading you to some work in one of the care homes of the Church.

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## Update from Bonners Ferry, Idaho

For quite some time there have been passing thoughts and discussions about an elder care facility in both the Mt. View and Woodland congregations. At times there would seem to be a reasonable amount of interest on this subject, and at times it would die down to very little. As our congregations began seeing their parents and grandparents aging, this thread of thought became more of a heartfelt conviction among quite a few of the brethren in our two North Idaho congregations. There began to be more talk of the respect and thankfulness we should have toward our elderly brothers and sisters. When we think of their faithfulness in our congregations and the encouragement they have been to us, it became evident there is possibly more we should be doing to make their sunset years more comfortable. Surely God has a way and a plan that we as a Church want to be open to.

On August 6, 2008, both the above mentioned congregations voted to elect a committee to do some research on this project. I remember so well our first meeting and the first question, “Where and how do we start an undertaking like this?” There was a solemn prayer asking God to lead, guide, and bless this endeavor. Another question that came up was, “Do we really feel that Mt. View and Woodland congregations have enough vision and perseverance to not only build, but also to operate this facility, realizing it will be a lifelong commitment?”

After several meetings together as a board and with the support and input from our congregations, our chairman extended an invitation to our Conference Care Facilities Committee brethren. On October 10, 2008, we gathered as both congregations with four from the committee. This meeting seemed to be a stepping stone in our endeavor. There was encouragement to move ahead as the Lord would open the door. At this time we continue with our committee meetings and we feel we have covered a lot of ground, and yet it seems we have just begun. We have a location by the school that has been supported by our congregations for this facility. The topics of building, operating costs, and income lend themselves to hours of discussion.

We felt it was time to send out an Assisted Living Facility questionnaire to our congregations. There were four questions as follows:

1. Do you feel there is a need for a facility?
2. Do you believe the Lord is asking us to move ahead with this endeavor at this time?
3. What is your preferred location?
4. Are you willing to support this project with
  - (a) a loan?
  - (b) a donation?
  - (c) your time?

We had very positive feedback from this questionnaire. We have had a number of brethren willing to loan or donate monies for this project. At this time, approximately half of the funds are accounted for. We have some building plans drawn up and are in the process now of taking them further.

We appreciate all those who have shared an interest in this effort. Continue to pray for this endeavor; we realize it is the Lord’s work and not our own and we want to continue with this as the Lord opens the door.

David Peaster, Idaho Congregations

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## The Missing Link

Editor’s note: The following article was first given as a talk and has been edited to make it appropriate for this publication.

I have been thinking about our way of life, our culture, our life style. Included in this are Church life, home or family life, and social life. I believe we have a lot of things in our favour. Our homes are comfortable, our churches are comfortable; our whole life style is geared for comfort. And why not? We have the means to make things comfortable, we have standards among us, we watch each other, and we move ahead. We experience a feeling of security, financially and spiritually, because we are members of a church that believes, in part, in the community of goods. You may think that’s taking it a bit far. But really, if we suffer set-backs or tragedies, we have a lot of people behind us, supporting us, and that feels good. We go to church and we enjoy fellowship. We feel secure in the fact that we are God’s children and the experience of being part of the Bible Church makes us feel good. We enjoy listening to the sermons. They speak to us. We have programs and we are blessed and that feels comfortable. We enjoy our social times with friends and relatives and the brotherhood. Yes, it costs and it takes time, but somehow we feel fulfilled. As congregations, we host a boys’ class or a board meeting and we manage it successfully. We do well with big crowds, weddings, reunions. So again, we are comfortable.

But do we sense that there may be something missing? Don’t we feel an element of uneasiness? If not, I believe we should. I would like this article to accomplish two things. I would like it to make us a little uneasy, and I would also like it to be an encouragement or challenge. Young folks, middle aged, and older people, what do we want out of life? Is comfort enough, or are we missing something?

I will take you to my work place at Maplewood Manor, a long term care facility. I am often thrilled by the things I see. I hear fast footsteps coming down the hall. Suddenly they slow down and stop. I glance up and a nursing assistant pauses to make someone just a little more comfortable. Or while making rounds I hear some voices in a room that is normally quiet. I glance in and see one of the cleaning girls, sitting beside a resident, mop in hand, visiting. The kitchen staff spends just a few extra minutes at each meal, putting food onto the plates in an orderly and attractive way, rather than saving the minutes and just slapping it on. Not only are people looking after the necessary things, but doing a little bit extra.

There are fifty people who say they have a job at Maplewood Manor. I don’t think there are any that do not consider themselves as being part of the “family” at least once in a while—a feeling just a little beyond the reality of it only being a job. I think this is true because I often see care givers stepping a little beyond the line of duty. I see it in the concerned faces of the nurses and in the comments made by the orderly. I see it in the good times we have when we brush shoulders with each other. I have worked here for about two years now and have become acquainted with a brand new bunch of people. It’s interesting and exciting.

We have such a tendency to focus on ourselves. What will I get out of this day? How will I enjoy this party? What will I get out of the worship service this morning? These desires are not entirely out of order. When I have needs in my life, I should have a longing to fill those needs. But we want to turn this around and think more about what we can contribute. What can I do to make this day better for my family, for my friends, for my brothers and sisters in the congregation, for my co-workers, and if I am a health care worker, for my residents.

Have we become a self-serving people or culture? Things have gone well for us and we have become used to looking after ourselves. And there we have learned to be comfortable.

Happiness is somewhat synonymous with comfort. We are all in pursuit of happiness. What makes people happy? Someone has said and I quote, "With basic needs for physical comfort accounted for, people of any age and in any setting need just three things to be happy. They are: Someone or something to love, something meaningful to do, and something they can look forward to." This quote is out of a magazine called *Senior Care Canada*. What impressed me was that the article spoke about what could be done to make residents in senior complexes happier, and yet the writer says "people of any age." Notice that the three things the writer lists are not really self-serving. What would happen if each of us spent a little more time loving someone, doing something meaningful for someone, and providing something for someone to look forward to? What makes us happier—serving ourselves or serving others? What makes us happier—being loved or loving? The Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

I will quote from Fran Giesbrecht, our Director of Nursing. "Let us ponder the words of D. H. Laurence. 'Be careful then, and be gentle about death, for it is hard to die.' As we work with each other in a care facility we must be aware of each other. Maybe an employee is pulling hard because of a rough day, it may be a resident who can't make sense out of a chair, or one who asks yet again, 'Where is...?' or 'Who is...?' It may be a down cast countenance. And then we bang our heads together searching for a solution. How can we uncover that buried smile? There lies the challenge. Among ourselves as employees and for our residents we must juggle ways of doing things; we must rearrange our schedules and our duties. And perhaps mostly we must juggle our own thinking so that we can gently ease the journey of those whose latter end is hard." Notice the words *aware of each other* and *gently ease the journey*. We are still talking of comfort but as we ponder the quote we see that it is going outward rather than inward and we are beginning to move outside of ourselves, outside of our own personal comfort zone.

Another quote, this time from Paul Newman, "I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple,

but God declared, come down again, I dwell among the people." This tells us we must look away from ourselves and consider others.

As we do this, by ministering, looking outward, giving, and loving, we step out of our comforts zone, get down from the steeple. Yes, now we are eager to restore or perk up the atmosphere in our facilities, but we don't only need it there. We need it everywhere, in all our walks of life. It's Christian. As we develop the virtue of reaching beyond ourselves, we will not only improve the happiness of others, but our own as well because there is a law that comes into effect. "What goes around comes around." "We reap what we sow." "Cast thy bread upon the water and it shall return to you." Applying this to our lives is a good investment and we tend to forget that.

When we talk about investments, we usually think of money. However, the best investment that we can make is when we invest in people. Make a new friend. Take time to visit someone that is lonely. Our family made an investment, not entirely by choice but it was something that just developed. There was a retired couple that needed some help with house cleaning and yard work and our girls got involved, first one, then the next two. Then the girls got married and the sons-in-law got included in the group. Brenda and I helped along a little here and there and we all became good friends. They were also acquainted with a few others in our circle. The years passed, Mrs. Lyons got sick and passed away. By that time one of the sons-in-law was ordained and Mr. Lyons accepted him as his pastor. He asked if Marshall could have a memorial service for her in our church. So we did that. A few people from the community attended, maybe twenty-five to thirty people. They had moved to town a few years before her passing, and after her passing we continued to see him once in a while. Occasionally he would motor out and stop to see us and stay for a meal. He was a gentleman. He would come to our Thanksgiving service at church and once he requested that someone would sing the song that was sung at his wife's memorial service. So the group sang "Beyond the Sunset" and he stood while they sang. We often wondered whether we were doing for him what the Lord wanted us to do. We talked about spiritual things sometimes. He too passed away and his children had the funeral in their church. A few of our circle went and sang a song for the little assembly and that ended the story except for the memories. The investment was not in vain. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

There are times when we could have done more for others. I am thinking of my wife's parents. We tried to take care of them as they were failing and at the time we thought we were doing fine, but as we think back now we know we could have done better. In the end however, both funerals were conducted in our church and we, together

with our congregation, had opportunity to share our faith and our testimonies with many people we seldom see and some that we may never see again.

Has life become too much of a business of seeing what I can get out of it when really the blessing comes when I put something into it? Is there something missing in your life, in my life? Let's each step out of our comfort zone and get involved in doing something that will multiply true comfort and happiness in the world around us.

Tim Penner, Maplewood Manor

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## Preparing For Departure

I am disclosing in the first sentence of this brief article that I am borrowing some ideas given to me in an article written by someone else and passed along to me. Some of this will be my thoughts and parts will be quoted from that article.

Just as in so many other areas of life, we have a perfect example to follow in Jesus. Early in His ministry He began telling His disciples that He would soon be leaving them. Moreover, His teaching and training program was obviously complete, as evidenced by its effectiveness even until our day. His entire program was oriented toward preparing His followers to successfully carry on His ministry. Are those of us entrusted with various responsibilities in the Kingdom doing our part to prepare others to carry on the work after we leave?

Business schools teach that a good manager's duty is to prepare for and train his successor, but the reality is that few do so. Obviously, everyone is going to move on for one reason or another, whether it is promotion, demotion, dismissal, retirement, or death. But very few prepare for these eventualities properly and in a systematic, unself-conscious way. Talking about a future where the one(s) in charge will no longer be around seems to be somewhat unacceptable among us. Like death, everyone knows it will come, but no one wants to discuss it.

And so a great pretense is lived out. The truth is that most executive tenures are relatively short, and all are finite. But we pretend that the manager, board member, department head, or other responsible person in question will be at his post forever. Indeed, it would be thought unseemly to say, "Well, Bill, retirement is not too far down the road for you. What have you been doing to see that your department continues smoothly after you are gone?" Or, "Bill, knowing the uncertainties of life, do you have a plan in place in case something good or bad happens and you are no longer here?" Instead, we all seem to perpetuate the myth that we are immortal and our presence is permanent.

We should rather face reality. Sooner or later we are going to move on. Discuss your eventual leave-taking openly and frankly with your staff, co-workers, or fellow

board members. Have a plan in place in case you have to leave unexpectedly. And, of course, if your departure is planned, there is no excuse for not making it as orderly and easy as possible.

I believe that one of the greatest potential hindrances to a smooth transition comes about when we have allowed a spirit of possessiveness to influence our attitude toward our position. Our natural human tendency toward pride will cause us to be reluctant to give up the reins. Being protective of our position will likely start long before a transition appears on the horizon. As caretakers of institutions that are an extension of God's Church on earth, it is imperative that we do this with humility. Being protective of a position or title will detract from our ability to effectively fill our places. We need to give it our best, at the same time recognizing that we are just place holders in the God-ordained structure of authority and submission. The day that we allow room for the thought or attitude that our position adds something to our status or rank in society will be the beginning of our downfall.

Because of the awkwardness of addressing this subject properly in real life, we will need to help each other. As board members we would do well to ask each other about our plans for our successors. Maybe an organized orientation plan for new members would be helpful. As a board, we may need to prompt the administrators of our facilities to plan ahead for their successors. And the administrator should be helping his department heads to do the same.

Looking back we can see that Jesus' plan for transition was the most successful in history. Other great leaders have endeavored to ensure that their agendas would continue after their demise, but none have been effective. Jesus prepared His followers well, openly discussing His departure. His associates performed beautifully and we are still reaping the benefits today. Let us follow His example!

David Ensz

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*Conference Care Facilities Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Conference Care Facilities Committee to share concerns, inspirations, and ideas among the care facilities of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. Articles and suggestions should be sent to Roland Toews, editor, at Box 295, Linden, Alberta, Canada T0M 1J0. Phone/fax: 403-443-2215.

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