
Conference Care Facilities Newsletter

Vol. 1 • No. 3 • July, 2010

*“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

One of the scripture verses under the title of this newsletter is from the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke chapter 10. In verses 33 to 37 we read, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

Jesus’ command, “Go, and do thou likewise,” is impressive and still relevant today. May this issue of the Conference Care Facilities Newsletter continue to inspire us in our endeavours to fulfill this command.

Person-Centered Care

Many of you reading this article will have heard the term “culture change.” This is a loosely used term in long-term elder care homes, and among other related entities such as board members, and also in

family circles. I am not sure I can accurately relay the meaning intended with this term, but I will try.

One description of culture from a dictionary is “behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.” One dictionary also states that culture is “the sum total of a way of living built up by a group”.

Since the inception of “nursing homes,” a culture developed in our church facilities as well as in homes across the country that focused largely on the physical “nursing” aspect of taking care of our elders. We did this very well. Our elders were relatively healthy, life expectancy increased and we thought we were doing a good job. But were they happy? Were they as fulfilled in the social and spiritual areas of their lives as they should be? Granted, we were doing the best we knew how with the tools and information available.

The term “person-centered care” or “resident-centered care” is not so important. What is important is that we care for the WHOLE person. This includes the spiritual part of life, social health, and also the aspects of being needed, wanted, and loved. This must be a heart matter. The real essence of person-centered care is relationships. Meditate with me a bit as we think of our father or mother in a long-term care setting, and everything we do with them is task-oriented with little feeling of closeness or caring. Tasks are carried out routinely because requirements need to be met, baths are given, medications are taken, beds are made, hair is combed, and so on. When proper relationships are formed, the same care will be given, but it will come from a caring heart;

encouragement will flow from care-giver to resident. Wisdom, stories, and life experiences will flow from our dear elders and bonds will be formed. The death of a ninety-six year-old sister in Bethel Home clearly demonstrated the strong relationships formed between her and the CNAs. Tears were shed, hugs received, and the CNAs filled the entire front pew at the church funeral. They were involved from the heart level and are more caring and better equipped for the future as a result. Relationships do not hurt, rather, they nurture, and they foster a certain beautiful maturing of character. God has given each of us the ability to make choices and we should be allowed to continue until we can no longer make our own choices or death takes us home. I challenge each family and care-giver of our elders to nurture relationships and we will receive a blessing.

The bricks and mortar of the building are not the most important components of culture change, but the right décor with warm color, adequate lighting, floors and hallways with easy maneuvering for wheelchairs and walkers help to make a pleasant atmosphere. Place wall plaques low enough, and choose ones with large print for our elders to be able to read at wheelchair level. When speaking to elders, always get down to their level and look them squarely in the eyes. Draw from the wisdom, courage, and amazing stories inside of these people who have lived a lifetime of experiences. Learn from them, listen from the heart, and God will bless you in a special way.

Merle Koehn, Bethel Home, Montezuma, Kansas

A Handicapped Child? Why, God?

How many of us have asked this question, or others like it? If God is truly merciful, then why all the death, suffering and sorrow in the world? Did the hundreds of thousands of suffering Haitians deserve what happened to them? Why did God take my spouse from me when I needed him/her so much?

Are there answers? Yes, there are if we will be still long enough to let God speak. The following article will address one of these questions. A brother from Enderby, BC, just recently lost his daughter, Ona. She had Down's syndrome, and it was her life that inspired this article, used here by permission:

Most women become mothers by accident,

some by choice, a few by social pressures, and a few by habit. This year, nearly 100,000 women will become mothers of handicapped children. Did you ever wonder how mothers of handicapped children are chosen?

Somehow, I visualize God hovering over the earth, selecting His instruments for propagation with great care and deliberation. As He observes, He instructs His angels to make notes in a giant ledger.

“Armstrong, Beth, son.”

“Forrest, Marjorie, daughter.”

“Smith, Sally, twins.”

Finally, He passes a name to an angel and smiles, “Give her a handicapped child.”

The angel is curious. “Why this one, God? She is so happy.”

“Exactly,” smiles God. “Could I give a handicapped child a mother who does not know laughter? That would be cruel.”

“But has she patience?” asks the angel.

“I don't want her to have too much patience or she will drown in a sea of self-pity and despair. Once the shock and resentment wear off, she'll handle it.

“I watched her today. She has that feeling of self and independence that is so rare and so necessary in a mother. You see, the child I am going to give her has his own world and that's not going to be easy.”

“But, Lord, I don't think she even believes in you.”

God smiles. “No matter. I can fix that. This one is perfect. She has just enough selfishness.”

The angel gasps, “Selfishness? Is that a virtue?”

God nods. “If she cannot separate herself from her child occasionally, she'll never survive. Yes, here is a woman whom I will bless with a child who is less than perfect. She doesn't realize it yet, but she is to be envied. She will never take for granted a “spoken word.” She will never consider a “step” ordinary. When her child says “Momma” for the first time, she will be present at a miracle, and she will know it!

When she describes a tree or a sunset to her blind child, she will see it as few people ever see my creations.

“I will permit her to see clearly the things I see, ignorance, cruelty, prejudice, and allow her to rise above them. She will never be alone. I will be at her side every minute of every day of her life because she is doing my work as surely as she is here by my side.”

Have you, dear reader, risen above cruelty, ignorance, or prejudice? If not, you need a handicapped child in your life. Grace Cottage in Livingston, California, has become a haven for the severely handicapped with medical needs. Come and volunteer, and you'll never be the same again.

Your brother,

Robert Isaac, Atwater, California

My Job That I Love

As a young girl growing up I watched my mother and saw the interest that she had for people with special needs. My parents would often have children and adults in the home that needed extra help, whether they were mentally challenged or those who needed some extra teaching and guidance. That is when I became interested in helping and working with people. I worked with seniors, but I receive the most pleasure when working with mentally handicapped people. I worked in group homes and also at a work shop with challenged people, but to have them at home with me is what I enjoy and it is so rewarding. I have been doing this type of work for more than 9 years, and 3½ of those years I have had them in my own home.

What does it take to do this kind of work? A lot of patience, which I did not think I had, and I still sometimes wonder if I do. But with God's help and with prayer, it works.

I have 3 ladies living with me right now. I am sometimes asked to take in one more, but with the load I have now it would not be feasible for me to consider that. My one lady is 67, the other is 39, and the youngest one is 20. This youngest one is in her last year in school, in a special needs class, and when she finishes she plans to go to work at Kindale, a workshop for mentally challenged adults. That is

where my 2 older charges work, going 5 days a week. The bus picks them up at approximately 8:40 A.M., and at 4:15 it brings them back home. They buy their lunches at work so I do not pack any meals for them, except for the younger one going to school. A school bus picks her up and drops her off again in the afternoon.

Saturday is our “slow” day where we can sleep longer in the morning and take it easy the remainder of the day. During the week we get up at 6:00 A.M. and I give all 3 of my residents a bath so they start out clean and fresh for the day. I was taught that if special needs people start out clean and glowing in the morning they are easier to teach and more willing to try what comes up in the course of the day. Maybe it is only my imagination, but I notice a difference in them if I send them off spotless and looking their best.

Our morning routine has everybody pitching in and helping, setting the table, getting their shoes and jackets out and ready. With help they make their beds and empty the dishwasher. It is a big help for me, and it makes them feel good about themselves and how they are contributing. I try hard to stick to our morning routine and they thrive on it. By the time they all leave, I am ready to start laundry, make appointments, do the grocery shopping, and always the inevitable paper work. All receipts must be kept and marked down as to where or on what the money was spent, and it must match their bank statements.

Since my place is considered a group home, I have arrangements with Shoppers' Drug Mart that every 3½ weeks they will fill medication prescriptions into blister packs for each of the girls, and they deliver them to my door. I appreciate this service very much.

Social Services comes annually to inspect my home to check whether it is clean and safe, and then I am given license for another year. I only get a license for one year at a time. They always check on my book work, as to whether it is done, on the medication to make sure it is locked up, and whether the girls' appointments have been recorded, and so forth. Fire drills are to be held monthly. People often ask what I do all day, but my days are full and I find lots to do. Everything works more smoothly if I can always stay just a bit ahead of my girls; to rush them frustrates them and me both.

In summer we have spent a lot of time outside, on the swing, on the trampoline, and biking. Each girl

has her own 3 wheel bike with a carrier at the back. We do a fair amount of biking and sometimes pack a picnic lunch, put it in the carrier, and off we go. We have a lot of good times together. On the Sundays they are with me we always listen to the church service, which works very well and they enjoy it, too.

People will make statements such as “you have it made.” I think any of us can “have it made” in whatever state we are in if we put heart and mind into what we do. We have many good times, but as in everything, we have our hard times and our down times. It is hard if one of them goes out to visit and comes home crying, and she can get it across to me that things did not go so well, but she is unable to explain what she really means. There are many times I listen to them and try to understand their hearts, and their hurts. Often we kneel and pray about it together, bringing it all to the Lord, and many times I assure them that God understands and will take care of our troubles. They have that simple trusting faith to accept that. It has often been a reproof to me that they can forgive so easily and go on with life.

There is not a day that I am sorry for going into this type of work. I am single, my family all live far away, my mother passed away some time ago, but I am busy and happy and do not have time to think of myself. I would like to encourage other sisters in this line of work. I know it is not for everyone, but don't be too quick to say that it is not for you. Rather, give it an honest try. Sure, there are dark days, but there are lots of bright days too. Isn't that how it is with every situation? I just find it rewarding and worthwhile.

Please remember us in your prayers. Thank you.

Eva Penner, Steinbach, Manitoba

When Do We Move Ahead?

Someone on the Oakwood Manor Planning Committee asked the question, “Where is the cloud?” Many times when starting something new in the area we wonder, when do we start? How do we move ahead? Who all is involved? The list of questions could go on. In Exodus 13:21 we find, “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.” The cloud or the fire was there day and

night to show them the way wherein they should go. Today, God's Word and the Holy Spirit have replaced the cloud or the fire with which we find our way. The question is not, where is the cloud, because the cloud (Holy Spirit) is always there. The question is, when is it moving?

Moses was told by the Lord about the cloud and the pillar of fire, but unless Moses would get it across to the 600,000 men there in the wilderness that when the cloud moved they moved, there would be total confusion. To move together we will have to understand the moving of the cloud together.

When we as a planning committee were able to present to our support group a master plan, then the people were able to see a total picture. We made power point presentations to all support group congregations. This increased the enthusiasm among the members of the support groups. These projects take large amounts of money to get them to the finished product, but we found that as we broke it down to a cost per member, it looked attainable. For instance, a project that will cost \$2.6 million within a support group consisting of 1966 members comes to \$1322.48 per member. With a five year payback, it comes to \$22.04 per member per month. When looked at in these terms, who would say that they couldn't afford it?

As a planning committee, a group of board members, or a study group, we look at a project from every angle imaginable. The many aspects of the project are searched out, such as the construction, the operation, and the financing. Much time is put into this to come out with a plan that is satisfactory. Then for the project to work smoothly there needs to be a certain amount of confidence invested in the planning group when this plan is presented to those involved.

When is the cloud moving? As we work together, the study group with the support group and all involved (which will include state officials), we will understand and feel comfortable to move ahead with the project. Then we can know we are moving with the cloud.

Roger Boehs, Leland, Mississippi

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.
