
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

The Conference Care Facilities Committee is continuing in its attempt to listen to and feel the needs of our care facilities, trying to share these needs with 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. Many positive comments and encouragements have been received concerning this newsletter. To continue with its publication, we need your articles.

Surely, caring for others lies at the very heart of our Christian experience. Consider scriptures such as the following. “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).

I want to make a comment on the article in this issue entitled “The Evening Sacrifice” which follows. My heart was touched as I read it. Our spiritual contact with one another, old and young, is so important and meaningful. The article reminded me of an experience I had with my father during his last days. He was in the palliative care suite of our local hospital, lying on his bed with an oxygen mask on his face. Something was making him very restless, but he couldn’t anymore tell me what was

bothering him. I didn’t know if he was experiencing pain or if something was on his heart. As far as I knew he was ready to meet his Maker, but since he couldn’t really speak, we couldn’t talk about it. I came close to him and asked him if he would like me to pray. He understood and immediately nodded his head.

I’m sure my dad had prayed many prayers for me in his day, and I probably had prayed with him before, but there in that hospital room, I prayed with my dad, and the memory of it still bring tears to my eyes. As I prayed, he relaxed and was calm. Soon he went to sleep. Within days he went to be with the Lord.

Caring for people, in whatever way the Lord would ask us to, is very rewarding. Many experiences similar to the above can be told by many of you, I’m sure. We thank all those of you who have worked, volunteered, or been involved in our facilities in some way, and may God bless you for it.

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 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.

Take special note of the cry for help in the “Notices” section of this issue of the *Newsletter*, and take the opportunity as the Lord opens the door. Service to our

Heavenly Father really only comes in the form of service to our fellowman. This service is always rewarded with the blessing of a warmed heart.

The Evening Sacrifice

It was a number of years ago that I heard a sermon about the morning and evening sacrifice. The commandment to the children of Israel was clearly that they offer both. However, the minister expressed that though the sacrifices were similar, the tone was distinctly different. He found a great parallel to this in our daily prayers. In the morning we offer an expectant prayer of resolve, focusing perhaps more on our need and desire, but when we approach God's throne at the close of day we come humbly, entreating Him at the mercy seat, realizing we are but "dust."

I often think of that sermon as I walk the halls of Maplewood Manor. I hear the crystal clear voice of a child, see him bouncing along holding Mother's hand, and beside him is the hoarse whisper of Grandpa, steadying his gait as he shuffles along. Both offer oblations to our Father, so at close of day they both offer their prayers. "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." The child, comforted, jumps into bed and falls into a sweet sleep. A lovely ritual, that. The Lord must smile that a little soul is being taught the ground work of trust.

But Grandpa—he knows the reality of that prayer. His soul truly longs for the close of day and as he once more connects with the Father, he feels comfort and welcome sleep comes.

In our discourses with fellow care givers of seniors, one of the topics that comes forward is "sundowning." This would be defined as the tendency of certain elders to become agitated as the sun begins to set. There are various ideas surrounding how to help these folks, like a cup of warm milk, or soft music with sounds of nature. One of our nurses, Edith, has worked at other care facilities and she says this, "Fran, don't ever stop evening devotions. You just don't have the restless folks here at bedtime. After devotions they all go to sleep."

And this is where you folks, the people of the congregations, fit into the picture. Thank you for offering the evening sacrifice. Thank you for the sacrifice at evening, leaving home and work or warmth on behalf of our elders who cannot, of themselves, offer the evening oblation so their sleep can be sweet.

One day a young couple came to Maplewood Manor. They couldn't find others to come with them so they brought their two young daughters and had the devotions

they would have had at home. The little ones were in pajamas, Dad read a Bible story, Mom sang action songs with the little ones, and as the eyes of the senior folks popped open smiles broke over their faces. Father prayed a prayer. Thank you for that sacrifice—a sweet savor to the Lord and sweet sleep for the elders.

Others who have come for devotions have mentioned that so few residents come to listen. Be certain, folks, that the seniors are listening. They may hear better in their rooms. Or maybe it all appears to be beyond their comprehension, but rest assured the soul is listening and is satisfied.

A few weeks ago one of our dear old mothers was distraught, pulling, pushing. Then the folks from the congregation arrived. They sang a few German songs and prayer was offered in Low German. Sweet was the sleep of that dear soul. She had connected with her Lord and was satisfied.

And so on behalf of our workers, we say thank you. Thank you for all of your kind offerings of body and soul to be for the elders what they cannot be for themselves. The quiet sacrifice at evening speaks to the soul and offers a sweet savor to our Lord. Doubly blessed may you be.

Fran Giesbrecht, Maplewood Manor,
Steinbach, Manitoba

Communicating With the Elderly

In the time and age in which we are living, the methods of communication are many. The basic definition of communication would be to impart knowledge, to give information from one person to another. This can be done by words, signs, or signals. Methods used can be by speaking directly, writing a note or letter, or even by song. Modern technology affords us many tools such as the telephone, cell phone, fax messages, and e-mail. Other ways of communication are by using body language such as a smile, a frown, a hug, a gentle touch of the hand, and sometimes even tears. Silence can also communicate something. Many a message is carried by our very countenance, or by looking into someone's eyes.

There are often hindrances to clear, understood communications. Sometimes we do not speak clearly or we pronounce our words so they cannot be understood. At times individuals speak so softly that nobody can hear their words. There is also the problem of speaking too loudly. Others talk so fast one cannot keep up or understand what is being communicated. There are those that will interrupt when being spoken to, or overlap another person's words. In certain social or group settings most everyone wants to communicate at the same time, making for a high noise level. This makes it difficult to speak or hear in a proper manner.

In all respect to our dear elderly folks, the time comes when their bodies age and their senses dull somewhat. The senses of hearing and seeing fade, at times to the point of serious loss. Aging also has a way of slowing down the capacity to think and comprehend. The ears and mind might hear what is being communicated to them, but it now takes a little time to sort out what is being said. The elder is also not up to date on current events and activities. Often they might not relate to subjects and ideas being spoken about. Many of our elders, and especially those living in our care homes, have “worlds” that have become much smaller. To some of them, the care facility where they live is where they spend most of their time. This comes about because of their various handicaps or disabilities that are beyond their control.

When communicating with our elders, be considerate and respectful of their age. Keep in mind that they have sat and they have walked where you sit and walk today. There is much knowledge and wisdom to be acquired by listening to them. If you are needing counsel or advice, some answers to your questions, seek out an elderly brother or sister. If you could enjoy some sound, experienced council on marriage, go and visit them. Many of our elders have had much experience in raising children. Ask them about their families and how they managed to make it all work.

Most of the older folks have interesting and colourful stories to share of how they made their living. Take time and listen to them. A special point of utmost interest is in regard to their experience in finding the Lord, where and when it happened. Ask them about their spiritual courage, the struggles and battles they have faced in their lives. Another area that usually brings good response is questions about their family and friends.

When speaking to the elderly, speak clearly, raise your voice a little, and don't speak too fast. Take time, relax, and be a good listener. If they are in a wheel chair, get down to their level so you can look them straight in the eye. Be gentle and kind, and show them you love them. On occasion, hold their hands and don't hesitate to give them a hug.

Do not be afraid to go as families; they all love children. Most of them enjoy watching the activities of young children. Make some music and sing songs and hymns to them. In selecting songs, older people enjoy the old time favourites. Remember to ask your listeners what their favourite songs are. The good old *Christian Hymnal* will more than likely be their favourite book.

Share some news items with them, possibly some recent local activities in the community. If those you are visiting are members of the church, tell them of happenings in their congregation. At the conclusion of your visit, ask them if they would appreciate a prayer together. Remember, much of their time spent throughout the day and night is without this one-to-one personal communication.

Following are some expressions heard from our elders in our care homes:

When asked the question how they are this evening, the reply was, “You just made my day by coming to see me!”

When asked what their favourite song was, the reply was, “They're all my favourites.”

When apology was made for some noisy children, the reply was, “That noise was beautiful!”

Someone was walking the halls of a certain care home at a later, quiet hour. The following voices were heard calling out of their rooms. “Won't someone please come and be my friend?” In another room, “Won't someone please come and tell me goodnight?” Are you available?

May we be willing to stop in and visit our dear, often lonely elderly folks. Don't forget them and remember, if the Lord tarries, a day will come when you too will be looking, listening, and waiting for someone to come knock at your door, to sit down by your side, and listen to your story, or share some current news. Once again, don't forget them. Take a little time in your busy schedule and pay someone a visit.

Marvin Friesen, Atwater, California

Soon We Will Be There

“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31).

None of us can remember the tender care we received when we first came into this world as helpless beings and were completely dependent on Mom and Dad. God provided for our care. As God's plan unfolds for us and we move into the position and role of responsible adults, we surely, at least in part, begin to appreciate what Mom and Dad have done for us. Think of the sleepless nights, the deep concern for our health and well being, the money and efforts spent to feed and clothe us, the earnest concern for our proper upbringing, and especially the deep concern for our salvation. Only God knows how many earnest prayers and supplications were made on our behalf, and we will never know where we would be today if it hadn't been for Father and Mother's prayers and care. As we mature and grow older, this very likely becomes more and more real to us, and we come to an ever greater appreciation for what our parents have sacrificed for our benefit.

With this realization there surely comes a desire to express that appreciation, and in a small way endeavour to repay what we owe our dad and mom. This can be done in various ways, but perhaps the best way is to care for them when their strength begins to fail. First we were helpless and dependent on them, now the role is reversed, and they are helpless and dependent on us. We have known them in their strong and useful years and appreciate what they have

done for us and it takes us somewhat by surprise when suddenly they are not what they used to be.

Time moves on and God's plan unfolds for us again and again. Soon, too soon, we will be where our parents are today, and then, seemingly too late again, we will understand what they are experiencing today, the loneliness, the slowing of steps, the dementia, the aches and pains, and the realization that our youthful strength is gone, never to return. Is it any wonder that our parents think and talk more and more about the other side, about eternity? As they look at the future in faith they naturally become more and more concerned about what awaits them, whether all is well, whether they are ready to meet my maker. Our senior citizens tell us that Satan knows no retirement, but rather seems to increase his efforts as we near the final crossing.

Even though we have not been there, can we get a glimpse of our elders' needs, their weaknesses, their loneliness, their physical and emotional needs, and now fill the role they once filled for us at our beginning?

In our area there has been a growing conviction that while the physical needs of our elders may be well taken care of, there is and has been a need for more spiritual care. As a result of that conviction, several area ministers have been appointed to serve as chaplains. These chaplains make visits at their discretion, endeavouring to visit every resident periodically, church members and non-members alike, and are on call when residents have problems and when they are nearing the end. The residents are very appreciative of this care and the chaplains have found it very rewarding to sit down and feel the heartbeat of our dear seniors and help to prepare them for that final crossing. It appears that God is blessing this effort and a beautiful bond has developed between residents and chaplains.

We are indeed very privileged to have Christian homes for our loved ones. In another land where there are no rest homes, the writer of this article has seen firsthand where a parent was placed on a crude cot on the street to finish out life. This is not usually the case in our land today, but may we take seriously our responsibility in the area of spiritual care.

May God give us a renewed appreciation for our Christian rest homes, and may He supply the vision and the resources for more facilities of this nature. A blessing of our Christian facilities is that there are situations where residents and workers have been led to the Lord through the witness that these homes have been. At the time of this writing, another resident at Bethel Home has come to a peace with God and has come to know the Lord.

May God bless each one that has in any way contributed to the success of our Christian care homes. All too soon many of us will be the residents and the recipients of this good, Christian care.

Curt Ensz, Cimarron, Kansas

Notices

Moundridge Manor has an acute need for CNA's, part time or full time. If you are available or interested, please call Karla Wedel, DON, or Ron Classen, Administrator, at 620-345-6364 for inquiries and an application form. Health care is a very rewarding experience, so please give this need your prayerful consideration.

The **Conference Care Facilities Grant Fund** has been approved by Annual Meeting. This fund will be used by our facilities for projects that will enhance the care of our elders. Applications for funds for operating costs will not be approved.

We now have a Grant Fund application form available. Contact Ross Koehn, the Conference Care Facilities Committee treasurer. We have some monies available, made possible by a generous donation received through the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, Incorporation Board. In order for this program to continue to work for our facilities, we will need to continue to receive donations. Our motto is "Helping one another in the care of our elders." Donations from you, large or small, will be accepted. As monies continue to come in, applications will be received by the Conference Care Facilities Committee. If the application is approved, funds will be dispersed as they are available.

We are looking to you for these donations so that our older facilities, as well as the new ones that are beginning, may continue to give the care that our fathers and mothers deserve.

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.
