
Conference Care Facilities Newsletter

Vol. 3 • No. 2 • October, 2012

*“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

We send this issue of the Conference Care Facilities Newsletter out with the prayer that it is accomplishing the purpose for which it was conceived. The original vision was that it would be a way of sharing concerns, inspirations, and ideas in the area of caring for others. The title reflects that as well. It is not only meant to be about caring for the elderly, although that is very much included. What a worthwhile mission to care for those who are about to leave this life and cross over into eternity! The scriptures point us to, and teach us to care for our fellow man, whoever he may be, no matter the age or color of skin.

Sometimes, as I first sit down to prepare these articles for printing, I hardly feel inspired to write an editorial. But by the time I have typed the other articles, inspiration usually comes, a few tears have been shed, and I realize anew how important and God given the responsibility to care for others actually is. That's how inspirational your articles are!

Have you ever noticed how items on a Christian Endeavour program tend to follow a certain theme? I find it somewhat that way with the articles sent in for this paper. This issue includes an article entitled “Growing Old Gracefully”, and right now I have another one with the same title that will be published in the next issue. All the articles in this issue have much food for thought in the area of growing old gracefully. A thought or question has surfaced here in our area as to how we can help our elders grow old gracefully. It is somewhat ironic that we people tend to resist growing old and the changes this brings to our lives, but none of us wants to die young either.

Let us take our responsibility to care for others seriously. We have a great mission around us. How often our deacons read letters from CSI, General Mission, CPS, and individual congregations asking for help. Often we

have requests for workers in the different areas. May we all do our part. I don't think I have ever talked with anyone who has helped out in an area of service, or on an individual basis, who says he wished he hadn't done it. We always receive a blessing when we help others.

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28). Paul lists the gift of helps right along with the other gifts that we deem so important. Let us never underestimate the value of helping someone along on the pathway of life. I would especially like to encourage helping those who have lost the way spiritually. They may be just as lonely and hurting as some of our elders are when they get near the end, maybe just in a different way. I remember a time in my youth when an older brother who has now passed on to his reward put his hand on my shoulder when I was discouraged and asked me how it was going. It really did something for me.

Because of a lack of contributors, we have not been able to print this newsletter as regularly and as often as we had first envisioned. At the time of this writing, we do not have enough articles for another issue, although we do have a few items again that are waiting to be used. We sincerely thank those of you who have contributed. The reason that some of your articles take a long time to appear in print is because we have been waiting until there is enough material to make up an issue of about this size.

Another point about articles sent in may be in order. Generally, we do not print articles by authors who do not want their names published, unless there is a good reason. All articles must come with the name of the person who wrote them. We cannot use articles, especially poetry or other inspirational type writings, that you send in anonymously, because proper credit needs to be given to the author, and/or permission granted by a copyright owner.

(We consider it the sender's responsibility to obtain this permission from a copyright owner.) If a piece comes without a name, we don't know if you wrote it or if it comes from some other source.

May God bless each one as we continue to labor in His kingdom, and seek to inspire one another to make a successful journey to our long home.

Growing Old Gracefully

I grew up in a home where “children early lisp His [Jesus] fame, and parents hold Him dear” (Henry Ware, “Happy the Home When God Is There,” Hymn No. 556, *Christian Hymnal*). When I was little I started learning things about growing old gracefully. My parents did the best that they knew in teaching me. First, it was learning to listen and imitate the actions and sounds that they produced, enticing me to learn how to talk or communicate with them. Soon I could lisp many words and started to know how to get what I wanted by talking. While all this was happening, they were busy teaching me many other things. I soon learned what good behaviour was and what unacceptable behaviour was. If I did something they did not want me to do they had ways and means of letting me know that. Sometimes they used words or actions to help me learn. Sometimes I learned things the hard way; they would let me try things and I would get hurt. Sometimes they hurt me a little to help my little head understand that there were some things that brought unpleasant consequences and I would need to suffer if I did them. I learned to not choose those things. Very soon my parents began to see the results of their efforts and so they felt courage to continue on in a sensible way of training.

When I was middle sized, they gradually started changing tactics and methods to train their growing boy. More often I was left to learn things the hard way. By letting me experiment with rules, they tried to get me to think and understand that for every one of my actions there could be some reaction that taught me the value of the guidelines and rules they had. For instance, at the table at mealtime I had learned not to eat in a way that would create a big mess. I had learned that mother cooked only good, edible food, and that there was never food set before me that was not good for me, and so I learned to like all foods. Some, of course, were better tasting than others, but they all had to be tasted without complaining. What a happy, cheerful boy I was, who could do almost anything I liked because I had learned from my parents what to be and how to act.

When I got married, I had many things to learn that my parents had not directly taught me. This young lady of mine had some interesting ideas that were new to me. We had both learned early in life that not all things had to be so perfect or pleasant absolutely all the time. Now the real test was as to whether our parents at home had got their part of

the job done and how good the students had been. Everything we had been taught got tested here to prepare us for our turn at teaching the next generation.

When our children left home and got married, they started this same process for the next generation all over again with what they picked up and learned at home. It was now my turn to watch! It is hard to think of being finished with that interesting and challenging part of our lives. When the last children leave home it signals the start of a gradual reversal of teacher/student roles. All too soon it seems the phone calls are going in reverse and I am in the position to ask for advice and to get some that is unwanted or difficult to accept. This is the time when the test is on whether I have actually taught submission to my children or just ruled over them. It is now my turn to listen when spoken to and submit to the advice of my children. Can I do that in the same spirit that I tried to teach them or do I now seem to become stubborn and unyielding? Do I still value good manners and proper conduct like I taught my children? Can I now learn the things I had not thought of before? The last phase of life is the most difficult one of all the difficult stages. The strength of the body God gave us may weaken and betray our age, but the good decisions made in younger stages of life have given us strong character. Our limbs and muscles that we depended on earlier in life tend to let us down to where we become weaker and weaker. For some of us, total helplessness will be our lot.

How sweet it is to care for those that have made good manners, kindness, forgiveness, forbearance, and thankfulness their habits through all of life. How inspiring to hear them pray and discuss things about Jesus and what He did for them when they were young. How intimately they relate to God! “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The faculties of the mind also get weak and sometimes even embarrassing to those around us, but when I can readily reply with a “please” or “thank you”, then I grow old gracefully. When we get to know our Saviour personally, cherish that experience, and and follow Him faithfully all the years of our lives, we will have become old gracefully.

Even if my mind and body fail me and let me down and “the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1), at the end of life, with friends around me, I can rest assured that I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and there is now a reward awaiting me (2 Timothy 4:7). Thanks be to God who kept me all along. Through all the stages of life God enables me to grow old gracefully.

Clement Froese, Ridgevalley Home
Crooked Creek, Alberta

Dear Readers,

I have been thinking lately about two words, comfort

and inspire. Comfort has many different meanings. Think about the comfort of a warm home or a soft bed, or think about the comfort of a friend's arms about you as you grieve for a loved one who has passed over Jordan. If someone has had an accident and is taken to the emergency room, the pain may be almost unbearable, but as the family walks in, what a comfort it is to know that they are there! When the hayshed burned down or a tree landed on the roof, what a comfort to know we had someone that cared enough to come and help.

Inspire may not have as many meanings as comfort, but it has just as much or more depth. Our minister inspired us with the sermon he preached or someone inspired us to continue on by complimenting us on our work. We also get inspired by good deeds that are done and by posters, poems, and stories that have good morals. Both words are vital to our lives every day.

I am fortunate enough to have a job at the Moundridge Manor. I work as a nurse aide, and as a medication aide on the evening shift. Each day I am faced with the same choices you are, I can think about myself or I can think of others. I am not perfect by any means. I fight the evil one just like you do, but I find success and happiness when I place my focus on others. I would like to tell you how important my residents are to my well-being. One Sunday evening as I was working I had a little lady come to me and slip her arm around my waist and say, "We just don't see you on our hall much anymore. I've got to give you a hug while I can!" I couldn't resist returning the hug. She reminds me so much of my own grandma that has already passed on. A gentleman will stop by my med cart, shake my hand, and warmly say, "God bless you!" Then he will tell me a bit about the places he used to live and the things he used to do. Occasionally a resident passes by and says, "Oh, you're our nurse tonight? I'm so glad!" Another says, "My day just got made when I saw you!" Do you know, dear residents, how much you make my evening? I can see that you are also striving to place your focus on others instead of yourselves. Thank you for your example! I feel blessed as I tuck you into bed at the end of the day and your arms reach up to give me a hug, or the times I have bent down to give you a kiss on the forehead and you, with tears in your eyes, said, "May I give you one, too?" What a comfort to know you love me!

I walk down the hall in the quietness of the evening hours, lamps are on, and residents are sitting in their recliners. I see them reading their Bibles. How comforting it is to know that it is possible to fight the evil one for eighty or even ninety years and remain faithful. I went to a resident's room one evening to give him his bedtime pills. The door was about a third of the way open. I knocked on it but got no reply. I pushed the door open just a tiny bit more and was about to call his name when I heard him begin to pray and saw him kneeling there by his recliner. He prayed for the workers here at the Manor, for the Church, and others, and I walked away from his sacred place with God.

Resident, your prayer time is much more important than this pill. It can wait for a few more minutes.

I often will hear our residents sing. They usually sing hymnal songs, or other songs with meaning. I asked one of the ladies that I heard singing recently if she had enjoyed singing a lot when she was younger. "Oh, yes," she said, "I come from a singing family!" Then she went humming on her way. Another resident will pick up the hymnal in his room and sing after song. How lovely to fill our hearts with these good things! Those songs inspire me and often stay in my heart for the day.

How special it must feel to the residents to have family come each week on Thursday evening to sit with them during the singing service and have refreshments afterward. Some of you have come for 8 years or more. I did some calculations and 8 years would equal 416 Thursday evenings! What an inspirational support group you are for your resident. I appreciate the time and effort you put forth. There are other examples of families that care. I had a resident one time that loved his Lord. I remember him faithfully reading his Bible and praying. There came a time in this man's life when he was not able to do things for himself any longer. If I remember correctly, we got him up only for meals because he was so sick. This man's son inspired me. He came by every evening after work to have devotions with his dad. When his father was dying and no longer opened his eyes or responded to his words, he faithfully kept coming. We have heard that hearing is often the last thing that is lost before death. Wouldn't it be comforting to hear your family's prayers, or a comforting Psalm, even if you couldn't respond as you prepared to cross over Jordan? There was another couple who came several times a week to be with their mother to read the Sunday School lesson or the Bible as she was bedfast and on her way to her eternal home. Several times I was invited to join them as they had prayer before leaving to go back home. Thank you, dear families. You were an inspiration and a comfort to your family member and to all that witnessed the care you had for them.

Anyone can be a comfort as you come share your evening with a resident! My residents talk about the news you shared, the story you read, and the prayer you prayed before leaving. Thank you! The inspiration spilled out of their room into the hall where I was working. After you left, I got a full, detailed report.

May God also bless and give strength to the families that play an active part in the lives of our dementia residents. Some of you have spent much time and effort in making "memory books" that have pictures and stories of the past that help us staff to connect with them. What fun it is to sit beside a resident that has one of those books and start to talk about this or that time in his or her life, and he or she lights up and says, "Oh, I remember that!" Then they fill in the rest of the story. Sometimes the residents forget that they ate supper, but remember something 50 years ago very clearly. Another family made an Alzheimer blanket that

provides things to handle and finger as it is draped over the resident's knees. It is really an amazing creation! The blanket has buttons to button, a zipper to zip, a hankie to stuff into a pocket, a Velcro piece to stick, among other things. It must have really taken time to make. How comforting to see how you care! We know this is a difficult time for you to go through. It isn't the same as it used to be, but keep telling us stories of the past. It inspires us to keep going and gives us things to visit about with your parents that makes them remember the good old days.

"Death is the loneliest thing I've ever faced," a resident once told me. He told me that he had always had people with him when he was happy, sick, afraid, and so on, but in death he could take no one with him. He and I talked then about the Shepherd. He would go with him through death. That is such a comfort to know! I went to be with him and his family as he was dying. I saw his legs and feet that were filled with fluid that his body could no longer process. He was struggling to breathe even though he was getting help from an oxygen concentrator. It was so hard to see him this way. As I sat by the edge of his chair, I asked him if things were OK between God and him and he said they were. Then I asked if I could go to Heaven with him. He said, "Uh-huh." I put my arms around him and cried. I was told later that those were his last words. Someday I'll be with him there.

As I work in a room with a dying resident, I often feel like I am in the presence of angels that are awaiting God's command to take that soul home. I think it will always be hard on me when my residents die. It always leaves an empty spot, but I know they've gone on to a better place, a place with no pain, no dementia, no strokes or Parkinson's disease or congestive heart failure. I really don't want them to stay. I turn to my nurse friends for a hug of comfort, fight my tears, and bravely go on. Do you know the advantage you have over us, dear resident? You've fought the fight. You've won the crown. You get to see Jesus. I stay here and learn the lessons that you have already learned. I fight the battles that you have already won. You have shown me that it is possible. I can carry through. I can win that crown if I am faithful to the end. Thank you for being my inspiration, my example, and my friend. Dear resident, I love you.

Sherri Dirks, Moundridge Manor

Why I Am a CNA...

So I can learn to care for others in need...
So I can learn to be less selfish and think more of others...
So I can realize the pain someone has to bear...
So I can learn life isn't fair, but I can still be happy...
So I can appreciate sleeping in even when it is only until 6:00 AM...
So I can take care of someone's father and mother so they don't need to worry...

So I can learn to laugh with those who laugh and cry with those who cry...
So I can learn it is not worth crying over spilled milk, that I just need to deal with it...
So I can find that those with nothing can be the happiest...
So I can learn to stomach the impossible and not think of myself...
So I can find the special people God gives us in life to enjoy...
So I can learn to deny myself and get up early without complaining...
So I can find that the looks on the outside have nothing to do with the inside...
So I can learn it is good to deal with my will now because others will have to deal with it when I get old...
So I can learn to be more patient and pretend I have all day...
So I can know the feeling of being truly needed...
Why am I a CNA? Because I love it!

Why Do We Need CNA's

Because someone is lonely and is missing their dear family...
Because someone is crying and has nobody to wipe away the falling tears...
Because someone needs one with whom to share her fears...
Because someone is frustrated because she cannot comb her own hair...
Because someone is in pain and longs for some relief...
Because someone has doubts and fears and wants to know about your faith...
Because someone needs a listening ear in which to confide...
Because someone is confused, lost, and needs your hand to guide...
Because someone needs a backrub so they can relax and rest...
Because someone needs assurance that they will get the help they need...
Because someone could smile if they could see someone laugh...
Because someone may get neglected if we do not have enough staff...

An employee at Moundridge Manor

The *Conference Care Facilities Newsletter* is published as contributions permit by the Conference Care Facilities Committee to share concerns, inspirations, and ideas among the care facilities of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. Send changes of quantity or address to Lowell Koehn, Burns, KS 66840; Fax 620-726-5222; e-mail: leprinting@eaglecom.net.

Articles and suggestions should be sent to Roland Toews, editor, at Box 295, Linden, Alberta, Canada T0M 1J0. Phone/fax: 403-443-2215.
