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# Conference Care 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 Gift of Helps***

When considering gifts in the brotherhood, the verse that generally comes to mind is 1 Corinthians 12:28, “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.”

The gifts mentioned in this passage, are easily thought of as intended for distribution among ordained brethren in the church, especially the ministry. If that is the only acceptable interpretation, the largest percentage of members are excluded from having gifts.

The gift of helps is often thought of as a gift of the deaconry. Hopefully, this is a characteristic of all deacons. To help the ministry is a worthy work.

This is the only passage in the Bible that uses the word *helps*, except in Acts 27 when the sailors undergirded the ship with helps. The exact meaning of *helps* in 1 and 2 Corinthians may be a little obscure because it is found only in this passage. Translated from the Greek, the word *helps* means “to relieve, succor, participate in, and/or support.” This is not a meaning that can easily be misunderstood.

The gift of “helps” can be defined in two ways. One would be the practical act of helping; the other is the spiritual application of helping.

The people in the church who maintain the building, keep the yard in good order, and “lend a hand,” willingly doing mundane tasks, often in obscurity, are exercising this gift in a practical way. Many assist the less fortunate in the community and in the brotherhood. The widows and

the elderly are not overlooked. Jesus says if you give a cup of cold water in my name, you will be rewarded.

The spiritual application of the gift of helps takes us to a different level of helping. There are those who struggle with doubts and fears. They, too, need help. Thank God there are those who can sense this and identify with these individuals; they can lend a listening ear and speak a few words of comfort. These helpful people can quell anxiety in the downtrodden heart with words of truth and joy.

At a recent Christmas dinner in the care home, it was heart warming to see nurses, aides, and other volunteers assisting the elderly in providing a meaningful Christmas experience with a tasty meal from the kitchen, gifts to each resident from an employee, a short inspirational program, and a lot of visiting. A very good picture of the gift of helps in action.

It is honorable to be an employee who knows his or her job description and plays an essential part in keeping a business enterprise or rest home going. Surely, these people qualify as those having the gift of helps.

There are those who preach Christ crucified eloquently. And there are those who stumble with words but present simple teachings that edify the brotherhood.

Let us thank God for the Christians who have the gift of helps. They often work in obscurity. The Lord will reward them. There are those who have the ability to speak words of encouragement to the weak and weary, to the downtrodden and hurting people. May the Lord bless them.

Praise God that He knows us so well. He knows our needs and challenges and has given the gift of helps to special individuals who can come alongside others in mercy, grace, and love. These precious saints can lift

hearts by helping carry a variety of burdens that we cannot, and should not, carry alone (from Got Questions/ www.gotquestions.org).

Let us never minimize these individuals. They are the “frontline workers.” The majority of them are not ordained or called in a special way. They may not be serving in foreign fields but are busy in the highways and hedges. And they are fulfilled by “lending a helping hand.”

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## ***Caring with Empathy and Compassion***

By Gail Litwiller, RN

The other day a resident told me, “It is so nice to know someone cares, really cares, about you.” I believe this particular resident heard a caring tone of empathy in my voice prior to the comment made. I cannot say that I am always so empathetic, but I think that is what we all need and want—someone who cares, really cares, about us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

What is empathy? Brene Brown said, “Empathy is a choice, and it is a vulnerable choice. In order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling. In order to empathize with someone’s experience, you must be willing to believe them as they see it and not how you imagine their experience to be.”

Caring with empathy means crying with the resident who has come to the realization that they are losing their memory and they cannot do anything about it. Giving them a hug (or many hugs) and reassuring them that you will do your best to fill in the gaps to help them continue in their journey toward living their best possible life enriches the life of the resident and the life of the caregiver.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf said, “Let our hearts and hands be stretched out in compassion towards others for everyone is walking his or her own difficult path.”

Roy T. Bennett said, “More smiling and less worrying. More compassion, less judgment. More blessed, less stressed. More love, less hate.”

American Tibetan Buddhist philosopher Pema Chodron’s words are, “Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It is a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.”

In the Bible, Jesus talks of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. The Good Samaritan is a shining example of compassion for us. Did he feel like stopping and taking the time and money to help the poor man lying in the ditch? Probably not! But he wanted to help him. So should we.

Often in the hustle and bustle of daily life, we lose

sight of compassion and empathy. May the Master Healer live in us as we go about our daily lives. May we have empathetic and compassionate caretakers when we get to the end of our lives and before.

Empathy and compassion are two traits that can be more readily available for some than for others. You can obtain it through your life experiences, which can help you relate on a more personal level to others who are going through the same situation. Sometimes, it is hidden away deep down in your soul, and it does not surface as often as you would like it to. You may need to cultivate it so it can and will surface whenever it is needed. In my opinion, you cannot fake empathy either. You can try, but it will not come across the same.

Daniel H. Pink said, “Empathy is about standing in someone else’s shoes, feeling with his or her heart, seeing with his or her eyes. Not only is empathy hard to outsource and automate, but it makes the world a better place.”

Sympathy is just words without the feeling. Empathy transcends this and is the product of attaching an action or behavior to the feeling. Sympathy and pity go hand in hand, and who wants to be pitied?

Google’s definition of *empathy* is, “The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” Empathy is an enormous concept to grasp. Renowned psychologists Daniel Goldman and Paul Ekman have identified three components of empathy: cognitive, emotional, and compassion. Compassion is more than sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Compassion is doing for others, helping them, not just paying them lip service.

Mark 12:30-31 are the words of Jesus: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second command is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There are no commands more important than these.”

When someone complains about the same old chronic issues for the hundredth (or thousandth) time, they still need to feel that someone really cares about them with empathy and compassion.

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## ***Contending with the Inevitable***

Alfred Isaac

If you think to find “five easy steps on coping with grief” in the following, you will have to look elsewhere. It’s not that simple. I wish it was! We can hardly prepare for such an eventuality, even though we know that half of us will lose our companions and have to travel alone until God provides release and relief.

I was asked by the editor of this paper to write an article on how I had handled my grief. Did he assume that I was coping well after losing my wife (his aunt) after over sixty-two years of married life? Whether I am coping well or just getting along may be a case of whose eyes you are looking through when making that assumption—my eyes or your eyes. I am doing as best I am able, and when someone else remarks to me that I am doing well, it encourages me. About two years after my partner's death, one morning as I picked up the mail at the post office, the postmistress, who loves to chat, said to me, "Alfred, you've got your sense of humor back." I must be improving if other people think so. I was encouraged.

God answers prayers. "I Need the Prayers of Those I Love" (James D. Vaughan, *Gospel Hymns for Worship*), as the poet elucidates in the song we sing frequently. The intercessory prayers of family and friends, and I thank God for them, plus my own faltering efforts are what greatly helped to bring about the return of the more normal, emotional stability after the loss of the one most dear, the one who had shared my life for all those years. I weep as I write! The sense of loss for me, I fear, will never leave in this life.

The emptiness stares me in the face no matter where I look in the house that we designed and built together and she made into a home. The empty chair at the table, her place at the kitchen stove while preparing a meal for the two of us after retirement, or her favorite place on the couch, busy with the knitting, all are aching empty. Nothing, but nothing, can replace that sense of physical nearness after I vacated my recliner in the evening to go and sit beside her on the couch while we clasped each other's hands in our evening devotions, thanking God for the blessing of the day, seeking his forgiveness where we had failed, and imploring Him to keep us till the morning.

My personal prayers were meaningful, maybe because of my loneliness, not only in spite of it. It took some getting used to saying "I" instead of "we" in my prayers. God did not come with such an outstanding revelation of His nearness but slowly, over a few years, it dawned on me very gradually that life could still be not only tolerable but there could be "joy in the journey" (Gorden Jensen, "Joy in the Journey," *Lights of Home*). "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). I even found myself humming a tune as I prepared a lone man's breakfast one morning. Now, even as after her immediate passing and the short period before that, as we saw the end approaching, to acquiesce from the heart to the will of God remained paramount, so needful to avoid self-pity. With that, I would not have anyone believe that it was not difficult, but God never requires more of us, nor loads more onto us, than what with his help we can and will continue to be able to handle.

Though with but extremely limited understanding of the infinite, with the finite mind there is for me an added incentive to successfully navigate what little time (as compared with eternity) there is left for me till I can join her and "make the courts of heaven ring . . . For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings" (Johnson Oatman Jr., "Holy, Holy, Is What the Angels Sing," *Christian Endeavor Songs No. 1*). Praise to God!

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## *Rock of Ages*

Tim Penner

I grew up on a farm that had a lot of rocks on the field. When my wife and I bought her father's farm, we had rocks on the field as well, especially on one ridge behind the woods. I never fell in love with rocks. Sometimes, we would look for them to decorate the yard. I was used to getting rid of rocks, not bringing them onto the yard. However, I admit that stones can make nice rock gardens and fountains.

I was privileged to grow up in a family that liked to sing. It was not unusual to talk about singing with my father. In one conversation where we reviewed what kind of songs people liked, he said something like this, "Who can improve on 'Rock of Ages Cleft for Me'?" This was shortly before he passed away.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed.  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.

Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfil the law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone,  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless look to Thee for grace,  
Foul, I fly to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When my heartstrings break in death.  
When I soar to world unknown,  
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,  
Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

I usually think of my father when this song is being

sung, and I usually don't think of all the rocks I picked in my working years.

You can hide behind a huge boulder and be physically sheltered. You can build a house on solid rock, and it will stand. But that heart of mine longs for something else than rocks in the field or stone in the Canadian shield. Who doesn't long for shelter and safety in this troubled world?

Jesus is the Rock of Ages. The poet must have imagined a huge split rock and what it would be like to hide in that cleft. This can happen when we yield ourselves to the Rock. It was cleft for you and me. It's not my tears and efforts that will provide the shelter and safety I long for. But accepting Jesus, the Rock, as my personal Savior will.

Another similar song has the words, "Hide me, O Thou Rock of Ages, 'Til the storms of life are past. When the storm around me rages, blessed Rock of Ages, hide Thou me."

When you draw your last breath, when you move on to eternity, it will be wonderful to be forever safe in the Rock.

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## ***Meet at the Bench***

Vila Gingerich

Almost all the help I've gotten in life was because I went after it. Sometimes, I've felt like the woman who squeezed through the crowd to touch Jesus's robe, desperate for healing and answers. Sometimes, I've waited by the bulletin board at church hoping someone would come show me the way out of my despair.

Recently, I tried to explain it to friends. "All my life," I said, "I have believed that the key to my mental health and happiness was out there somewhere, if only I could find it." They nodded knowingly. Huh, I thought, maybe I'm not the only one.

"I've always assumed that someone, somewhere had the answers," I went on, "And someday I would know them, too. I still believe that, but now I know I have to hunt it down myself."

When I finished, one friend spoke up. "Yep, I've always thought that sometime, some person would come along, see me in my struggle, and want to help me," he said. "I thought they would guide me along, show me where I needed to change." He shook his head. "But it's never happened."

That realization can feel lonely. Knowing it's all up to us can bring resentment and a victim mentality. But somehow, knowing that can set us free. If nobody is going to rescue me, then I had jolly well better get up, get dressed, and rescue myself. If it's all up to me, and that frees me to

ask hard questions, to daringly dig for that key. Whatever my burden—grief, depression, broken relationships—I have the ability to make the first move, to ask for help.

One friend likes to ask advice after church. "Whatever I've been struggling with during the week, I ask the sisters on either side me about it, whoever they are," she said. "Child training, marriage, health, emotions, whatever. I've gotten such guidance over the years."

Another friend found a recommendation for the book *Switch on Your Brain*. She bought it, read it, and followed its protocol, tailoring it for her particular struggle. With God's help, she retrained her brain and found victory in that area. Was it easy? No. Did anyone offer to help? No. But she pushed through the crowd and touched Jesus's garment.

Ask. If nothing happens, ask again. Be like that persistent widow who troubled Jesus. And, of course, Jesus is with you always. Take that first step, and there'll be two sets of footprints in the sand immediately.

Sometimes, though, just sometimes, some human does come to find you.

I was eighteen, doing closing duties after a day of waiting tables. Our church was holding revival meetings with a visiting minister from Wisconsin where my family used to live. Since I had decided not to be a Christian, I wasn't happy when the visiting minister appeared next to the ice cream machine I was cleaning. He had walked several miles into town from where he was staying, garbed in a suit and dress shoes, just to talk to the rebellious girl who listened to exactly zero of his sermons. As I poured tubs of hot water through the machine, not even looking at him, he asked the right questions to pierce my stony heart. For me, that day, someone came to me and held out the key.

Providing that key often means, simply, being available. "I just want to be that presence in people's lives," a friend explained. "I want to be that auntie who's there if they ever need me."

In Zimbabwe, they have a special waiting place for aunties: the Friendship Bench. There is no word for depression in Shona, but Zimbabweans were suffering from "kufungisisa," or thinking too much. Doctor Dixon Chibanda conceived a simple project: train local grandmothers in the basics of mental healthcare and place benches in the villages where people could share their pain with them. After finding help on the Friendship Bench, people moved on to support groups in a program called Holding Hands Together.

I've heard of situations where the friends of hurting people band together and walk with them on their journey. People step forward to mentor others. Group chats exist for people suffering from broken marriages, infertility, the loss of a child. Holding Hands Together.

Maybe some of us do need professional help, but

maybe we just need an auntie, someone to walk with us for a while. If those who hurt walk toward the bench, hunting for the key, and if those who are stronger wait on the bench and hold out the key, a lot of healing can take place.

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## ***Healing***

There are many renowned physicians in the world. Heart specialists and neurosurgeons have done wonders in setting the stage for the healing of body and mind. We take much for granted in the medical field. Thinking back fifty or sixty years and comparing what was done with health issues then to what is being done today, we have to say the advancement is phenomenal.

The greatest healer of all ages was Jesus Christ. For a few years, He walked the countryside of Judea and miraculously healed the sick, the lame, the blind, and the deaf. There must have been rejoicing in the hearts of the people, especially among the poor and the troubled who looked at life and the future hopelessly. In times of difficulty and stress, people today could easily think, “We need Jesus again.”

Let’s pause for a moment and consider the spirit of gratitude. A writer says, “Count your blessings and enjoy better health and happiness.” This is true. The Bible is full of encouragement to be thankful. The great Healer was sad that only one out of ten thanked Him for restoring his health. In letters to the churches, Paul the apostle writes, “And be ye thankful.”

Gratitude promotes healing. Gratitude is inexpensive. Start the day by thanking God for the night’s rest and the new day. Cultivate noticing the positive things you experience through the day, the good things you notice in the people you rub shoulders with, and be thankful.

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## ***The Balanced Board***

Lester Giesbrecht

The responsibility of a board member in one of our facilities is diversified to say the least. The unsuspecting brother goes to a council meeting one night and then goes home a board member of the local care facility. Somewhere, sometime later, it begins to sink into his heart that the work is great and at times very perplexing. Hopefully, by then he has committed himself to the Lord in this great work and asked for His leading. But the questions still remain in our minds as to how to be of the best service to the

board and to the care facility that we can be. There perhaps is not any one simple article or speech that can be given to provide all the answers.

In my meditation on this subject, a certain thought settled and lingered in my heart, and I will share it and trust that God can multiply it as He knows best. I was recently impressed with the Divine order of “three,” the triune God, the three that agree in the earth, and the three-fold chord, to name a few examples.

The board of directors of a facility is the governing body, and being a board member is being in a leadership position, so we should apply Biblical truths and principles to all our ways. Following the order of “three” mentioned above, we might say that we could divide board responsibility into three categories: Reality, Vision, and The Plan.

Reality is the focus on the everyday challenges, the issues at hand, budget keeping, morale building, maintenance, etc. We, as board members, need to be involved in educating ourselves with the regulatory aspect of our facilities; we need to visit them as much as we can to understand the current needs of the day. This alone can be overwhelming at times. But we must remember that this is only one of the three aspects, and our duties are perhaps just beginning.

Vision, without it we perish. As board members, we need to have a part of our focus on the future of our facilities. Sometimes, it is necessary to expand to stay financially solvent or competitive. Specific needs change from time to time. What about the “baby boomers” that will start needing care in ten to twenty years from now? If your first thought is that that is too far in the future, you might do well to consider your vision.

What about aging facilities? As time progresses, so do our expectations. We may argue that if things were good fifty or seventy-five years ago, they are good enough today. Where else can you possibly apply this thinking and get by with it? Then there is the matter of the current economy. We cannot afford to let our fears and current reality hinder our vision. To do so is to succumb and perish. We need to give ourselves to prayer and meditation regarding the Lord’s will and direction. Current hardships should not steal our vision. It may alter, delay, or speed it up, but defeat is not a part of God’s ability.

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*Conference Care Newsletter* is published when possible by the Conference Care 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 Tim Penner, editor, 64 First Street, Steinbach, MB R5G 2B6; Ph./Fax 204-346-9646; Cell 204-346-4048; e-mail: [timbrenda@live.ca](mailto:timbrenda@live.ca).

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Reality is that there are giants in the land. Vision says they can be overcome. There is a cause. Our care facilities are a mission, a humanitarian service to others, and places where we can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoners of a frail body, and give drink to the thirsty. There is as much or more gospel work to be done in a care facility as in any foreign mission we have. We should look at them on an equal basis. We need to strengthen our vision of this great work.

We must plan. If we do not have a plan to get where we envision going, we will not get there. This is a simple truth. However, it is easy to go on day after day just reacting to every situation as it comes. If we are proactive in our approach and have a plan to go by, we can sometimes avoid, or at least lessen, the difficulty or the issue. If we have the vision to do something major, planning how to get there is imperative to give us the faith that we can reach our goals. God enjoys blessing our endeavors, but can we expect that He will bless our inactivity? Faith is increased by how God has led us in our past experiences and is strengthened by the evidence and hope that is manifested in our plan for the future.

When these three—reality, vision, and planning—work together in harmony, I am convinced that God will bless and prosper our efforts, and we can properly love and care for the aged and needy and fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

Let us not be weary in well doing (v. 9). Sometimes it hurts the pocketbook, and we tend to resist the work, but if we wait until we are the resident to have clear vision, it will be too late. I would like to encourage everyone to reevaluate our vision, our support, our attitude, and our willingness to share our resources with our care facilities. May God bless us according to our faith in His work.

(Reprinted from the August 2011 Care Newsletter)

## ***Notice and Invitation***

The Conference Care Committee is planning a Care Meeting on May 25 and 26, 2023, to be held at St. Marys Congregation. Address is: 2162 Perth Rd 163, St. Marys, Ontario.

We, the Maple View Congregation, St. Marys, Ontario, extend a welcome to anyone interested in attending this meeting. It will begin on Thursday, May 25, with registration at 8:30 A.M. The care meeting continues through Friday, the 26th, and closes at 5:00 P.M.

Recommended airports:

London — 30 minutes from congregation;

Kitchener — 45 minutes;

Hamilton — 1 hour and 15 minutes;

Toronto — 1 hour and 45 minutes;

Detroit — 2 hours and 30 minutes. Detroit may be

cheaper for people from the USA who want to rent a car (hosting congregation will not shuttle Detroit; vaccination certificates may be needed.)

For registering, lodging, and transportation, please contact the Courtesy Committee at:

[stmaryscaremeeting2023@gmail.com](mailto:stmaryscaremeeting2023@gmail.com).

Tentative topics for the agenda are as follows:

- Children Healing from Trauma
- Sleepy Creek Boys Camp Program
- ADHD
- Teen Mental Health
- TBRI/Practical Support
- There will be time for sharing on Friday—open mic
- Thursday evening service—topic will be “Christian Fathers”

The care committee and resource team are open for more agenda item suggestions. Please contact Patrick Hanes: [patrickhanes@outlook.com](mailto:patrickhanes@outlook.com) or any other members of the care team.