
Conference Care

Committee Newsletter

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“Distributing to the necessity of saints” Romans 12:13

“Be kindly affectioned one to another” Romans 12:10

Editorial

I began a term on the Conference Care Committee in spring. After attending the Annual Meeting organizational meeting, I took part in several conference call meetings, and one meeting planned for special needs people. Through the months, I received information, more or less, that other committee members received. I was fascinated at what this committee gets to deal with.

Everyone has problems. They are sometimes called challenges. Calling problems challenges is supposed to take the edge off the reality of the situation. Everyone thinks their own particular problem is the most significant. Another interesting component about problems is that other peoples' problems are easier to solve than our own.

At a meeting I attended last June, I began to understand that I personally was unaware of what many people with special needs situations in their lives were facing. I think many people in the conference, like me, are not knowledgeable about people who deal with special needs in their lives.

There are more of these conditions in our Church circle than I thought. But I also learned that there are people who give themselves to the challenge of understanding the many aspects of the problems that exist among these disorders. Most of all, I was heartened by the prevailing caring spirit.

At this meeting, the committee met with a handful of people who had been recruited and had volunteered to be part of what at this point is called a resource group. These are brothers and sisters with experience in this field. Noteworthy to me was the attitude these people had. They did not feel they were experts. This group of people, together with the care committee, cannot fix problems at will. However, they are people who, in some way, have worked with physically, emotionally, psychologically, and mentally handicapped people. It was informative to sit around the table with them. It is the committee's idea that

these folks can help guide and point us, at least in a measure, to what can be done for people with special needs and where people can go for assistance.

In a presentation, a speaker indicated that the group of people dealing with the special needs situation today are pioneers. Historically, many pioneers do not live long enough to see the results of their efforts. It was the settlers that really reaped the benefits. It's important to remember that the above efforts may well be in the pioneer stages. No one knows exactly where the effort is headed.

However, one thing we know is that problems exist. And where problems exist, solutions are needed, but again, as history shows, few problems are fixed in a day. We are just setting out.

Where will the needed help be found? No one person knows this. But we now have some resources that may provide a start, at least. There are many assets and gifts in the conference. There are also many knowledgeable people in the country who are anxious and able to help us. And there is a voice behind us that says, “This is the way; walk you in it.”

Not all the help out there in the public sector is good and acceptable, but then neither can we say that everything within our own circle is perfect. Much has been discovered and accomplished in the last decades, but there is still a ways to go. However it also appears as if discoveries and accomplishments in the field of helping special needs cases are not lessening the cases.

In the last few years, it may appear as if the focus of the committee has changed from representing the senior population of the conference to representing the people with special needs. There is an awareness of this at committee level, and a reminder has been tabled. The needs of the aging population are not being laid aside because new problems and challenges are surfacing.

With the help and resources available around us, with counsel, with the spirit speaking behind us, we can continue

traveling the road to success. However, let's remember that success is seldom experienced miraculously. It may be a step-by-step experience and will only be attained completely in eternity.

Compassion for the Aged

“He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he” (Prov. 14:21).

Compassion and consideration are essential ingredients of the art of getting along with each other. But God's children must go deeper than normal interaction—they must go the second mile. As their hearts are emptied of selfish motives, God pours in His spirit of love. Compassion is one facet of that jewel.

All of us hurt sometimes, and I suppose some hurt all the time. How good it feels if someone provides healing for our hurts. Too often people build a shell to protect themselves from more hurts, thereby also insulating themselves from help sources. Compassion tries to look beneath the surface.

A young father tells about a four-year-old daughter who has cerebral palsy and is somewhat mentally retarded. “There's not an hour of the day I don't think about my daughter,” he says. “Sure, I laugh and joke like other people. But always in the back of my mind is my daughter.” A cheerful atmosphere in the home is necessary for the sake of the child and the rest of the family. But beneath the smiling exterior lies a burden. Probably most people have painful feelings hidden beneath a mask. The shell takes other forms.

My better half and I visited Greenland Home, a senior citizens' home, one day. In the parlor sat an elderly lady, silent, listless, and lost in her own world. She seemed uninteresting. Finally I approached her. Where had she lived? Where was she born? Was she married? How had she made a living? Her face lit up. As she told about her childhood in England, moving to Canada in her youth, she became more and more animated.

I decided she was an interesting conversationalist, but I would have missed it had I not made the effort to penetrate an emotionless exterior.

Many people are waiting to share experiences if only someone would provide encouragement. Others, again, could find great personal relief if someone showed enough interest to penetrate the shell and get to the real person. Perhaps you can do something for him; sometimes you can only listen. The important thing: You showed compassion.

(An excerpt from *The Family Bible*, by Lloyd Penner. Used by permission.)

A Worthy Purpose

As care providers to the aged, we have learned how to meet the basic needs for shelter, food, safety, and personal care. In weakness, we also try to be a spiritual encouragement. Understanding how to meet other needs is not so clear to us.

To function and be productive in old age is not only dependent on good care, good nutrition, and a healthy environment but also, on a sense of worth. Even spiritual well-being is tied to this sense of self-worth. We need to know that the Lord has a purpose for our lives. We need to know we are still important and doing something of value. More than we as Christian people like to admit, our purpose in life has often been passively defined by what we have done most. Although we always strove to serve God, there was a time in life where working and raising a family defined who we were. As time passed, and these things were laid aside, we were left with the task of aging successfully.

In some native cultures, the old are highly honored. We have a picture of the younger sitting at the feet of the older, listening respectfully for any wisdom they might gain. The best morsels of meat in the stew are reserved for the elder in the family. We admire this, and it seems right to us. The Bible says, “Honor thy father and mother.”

In America, it was common, in the past, for grandparents to live with their children when they came to the point of needing help with activities of daily living. This gave constant opportunity for children and grandchildren to understand the course of life and learn from their elders. With the twentieth century and prosperity came independence. Both being a burden and being burdened is feared. Too often getting old is viewed as a problem rather than a natural part of life. Great value is placed on youth, and the old may be viewed as having very little to contribute. This is not a healthy sentiment in the young and the old.

It is valuable to understand our purpose in life, but often it is not entirely clear to us. To have a purpose and to fulfill that purpose is what gives life meaning. David prayed with a clear purpose, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Ps. 71:17,18). We all have experiences to tell, things we have learned, blessings received, and how to gain them. There are things the Lord has done for us and things He can do for others. May we demonstrate His power in our lives and point to others who exhibit that power. May we have a desire to tell it to the younger generation to help steer them to the right path. How are they to know the “old paths” unless someone tells them, and how can someone tell them unless they have walked those paths? This and more can be done for the coming generations. Age has not disqualified us

nor given us an excuse for not serving God. There is a deep need for this kind of guidance in today's world.

There are far too many bad teachers today. They are screaming for attention. Sports heroes, movie stars, and wealth have a captivating attraction. Freedom of spirit, selfishness, self-will, pride, and sinful living are taught, along with disrespect for authority. Sadly, too many people accept this style of teaching, and their personal lives are occupied with divorce, dishonesty, abuse, hatred, tragedy, and unhappiness. On the other hand, a teacher who exemplifies self-denial, a faithful Christian life, and a happy demeanor witnesses clearly the power of God.

When we have peace with God, we are able to adjust to the circumstances of age. Old and bitter or old and cheerful are the results of lifelong attitudes. These attitudes have been cultivated long before we grow old. Priorities change, but life's goals and focus do not. We are ready and willing to contribute when and where we are able. "We hold this treasure in earthen vessels." The treasure comes from God, and it is our privilege to pass it on.

Let's pray that young and old can place their hope and trust in God's will and purpose for their lives. We can't help but think of faithful Christians just waiting to go home; we think of the story they are able to tell quietly. Time is short, and the story must be told. It is a story with a beautiful ending. In order for them to fulfill their purpose, someone must listen. One form of respect is simply listening to what they have to say, allowing them to feel that their contribution and willingness to share is valued. There are unchanging, eternal principles in this changing world. These principles will never change. Are we sitting at the feet of our elders and listening anxiously for any wisdom there is to gain, or are we discounting their thinking, thereby hindering both their purpose and our own? There may be other ways, new ways, and seemingly better ways to do things, but the ways that have worked for our parents and grandparents remain a sound path to follow. We should not look back and say the former times were better, but go forward with those same guiding principles that have always represented the "old path." Who is better qualified to tell us? Who has our well-being closer to their hearts? Who has a greater desire to pray for us? There are many new questions today, but the answers remain the same.

Patrick Hanes, Bonners Ferry, Idaho

Servants

In Luke 22:27, Jesus says, "I am among you as he that serveth."

Philippians 2:5-8 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who...thought it not robbery to be

equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant...he humbled himself...even [to] the death of the cross."

Servants of God are volunteers. They follow Jesus' example. Their serving blesses others, and personal rewards are beyond measure—heavenly soul-joy and calm, settled peace.

Servants serve freely and let others be free, because God created humans with the privilege of personal choice.

Servants can take a responsible position and keep a servant-spirit without assuming a controlling attitude or manner over others. Their kindness provokes others to follow what they promote or wish more strongly than if they become forceful or cause others to feel obligated.

Servants who are not God-servants are really slaves-to-self. Their scheme is to manipulate, control others, and have their own way. They give up principle for popularity or doctrine for money—to avoid giving up self. They become irritated and offended with those who they work and live with, because their inherited sin-nature is alive—that self-defense-protection-promotion.

Servants of God are volunteers. They recognize and repent of their selfish-element, which every human carries, some to a greater or lesser degree. Upon invitation, the Holy Spirit moves in. Servants of God are born. They become servants in training.

Servants study the Holy Book and learn from fellow servants. It is vital they improve practice, with the grace of God and guidance of the Holy Spirit, or they become slaves-to-self again.

Servants realize keenly their selfish, independent element and how it hinders true serving.

Servants spend time on their knees before their Master as they prepare to serve. Daily they get in tune with Him and ask His help, knowing all power comes from God.

Servants ask God for help to humble self, for wisdom in responsibilities, to be able to communicate well, to know how and where to go for advice, to do their best. This preparation helps to avoid heart-aches, misunderstandings, regrets, problems, and many difficulties.

Servants readily give God honor and thanks daily for all blessings, answers to prayers and miracles.

Servants carry deep respect for all people—spouse, family, fellow workers, employer, employee, dependant, client, or friend. Their personal dreams are for the benefit of others.

Servants are able to calmly follow directions and suggestions from a less experienced or capable person. However, when needful, servants offer information and act, though kindly, to prevent wrongful suffering.

Servants do not carry personal opinions up front, nor are they propelled by them.

Servants control themselves and are respectful. Their word and deed is to promote truth and love, not to gossip, criticize, and accuse others or themselves, but servants admit their sins and mistakes.

Servants know they need not take it personally how others speak or act. They know each person's response to life comes from the spirit they carry—a slave to self, a volunteer or a peace-loving servant.

Servants feel the need to learn more and are able to receive suggestions from others. Their attitude invites others' ideas, and they are thankful for help, even if they are not able to use it at that time.

Servants can do all this and more “through Christ which strengthens him” (Phil. 4:13).

Inspirations from a servant in training,

Anita Toews

- Persistent disregard of the child's emotional needs for comfort, stimulation, and affection
- Persistent disregard of the child's basic physical needs
- Repeated changes of primary caregivers that prevent formation of stable attachments (for example, frequent changes in foster care).

Submitted by Luke and Darla Martin, Hesston, Kansas

[EDITOR'S NOTE—The home structure and environment today in many homes of the world is in chaotic and dysfunctional state. Out of these homes (or better said lack of homes) children are being adopted by our couples. Some of these children carry disorders that are almost incomprehensible. The article above is only one of the disorders some of our couples with adopted children are encountering.]

Reactive Attachment Disorder

Reactive attachment disorder (RAD) is a condition found in children who have received grossly negligent care and do not form a healthy emotional attachment with their primary caregivers—usually their mothers—before age five.

Attachment develops when a child is repeatedly soothed, comforted, and cared for, and when the caregiver consistently meets the child's needs. It is through attachment with a loving and protective caregiver that a young child learns to love and trust others, to become aware of others' feelings and needs, to regulate his or her emotions, and to develop healthy relationships and a positive self-image. The absence of emotional warmth during the first few years of life can negatively affect a child's entire future.

What are the symptoms of reactive attachment disorder?

RAD can affect every aspect of a child's life and development. There are two types of RAD: inhibited and disinhibited.

Common symptoms of inhibited RAD include:

- Detached
- Unresponsive or resistant to comforting
- Excessively inhibited (holding back emotions)
- Withdrawn or a mixture of approach and avoidance.

Common symptoms with disinhibited RAD include:

- Indiscriminate sociability
- Inappropriately familiar or selective in the choice of attachment figures.

What causes reactive attachment disorder?

RAD occurs when attachment between a young child and his or her primary caregiver does not occur or is interrupted due to grossly negligent care. This can occur for many reasons, including:

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