
Conference Care

Facilities Newsletter

Vol. 4 • No. 1 • April, 2013

*“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

Winter is staying around a long time this year here in the North, but we are very confident that Spring will eventually come. The seasons come and go, and the Bible promises they will do so until the end of time. But the season for caring is here all the time. It stays and never goes away. Jesus cared all the time, even when He would have liked to go into a secluded place to rest with His disciples. The crowds that needed His care kept coming and He never turned anyone away. Often the Bible says that Jesus “was moved with compassion.” May the Holy Spirit move us with compassion as we consider the many opportunities to serve and care for our fellowmen.

When we think of caring and compassion, let’s not just think of it as it relates to work in our “facilities.” They are a wonderful part of our program, and they are a wonderful place for us to put our caring talents to use. But there is a lot more to caring than only that. Caring is of utmost importance in our everyday lives. When you meet someone on the street, you care about that person and you give a cheery greeting. When you see someone who feels down or discouraged, you care and offer a touch or a word of encouragement. When you hear of someone who has lost a loved one, you go visit, or send flowers, or just be there for that person. When someone has a problem or a struggle, even if it’s his fault and you think he should have known better, you care and offer your help. Something touches your heart and you are moved with compassion, and this makes you care right from your heart.

I remember reading a story somewhere of a man who’s friend lost a loved one. He felt he would like to go and be of comfort to this friend and show that he cared, but he hardly knew how to go about it. He was afraid he wouldn’t know what he would say, but he went anyway. When he arrived, there were many people in the house, friends and family of his friend. He stayed for a while, but because

there were a lot of people there, he didn’t have a chance to talk personally to his friend. Eventually he left the house, feeling somewhat discouraged and as if his effort at caring had failed.

Some time later, this friend thanked him for being there that day and told him that his stopping by his house had really made a difference for him and had made his day. The lesson in this story is that it is the “caring” that makes the difference, the “being there” for someone. It is not necessarily the words, and not always something great that we can do that will touch someone’s heart. People feel it when we really care, but people also feel it when we are more interested in ourselves than in them.

Jesus, of course, is the ultimate example of caring. We read in 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” This is a wonderful privilege and promise, but we also have a responsibility to care as He cared. The responsibility to do as Jesus did is expressed in 1 Peter 2:21, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” There may even be some suffering involved in caring for and about people, a denying of self and dying to the flesh. But this is so good for us.

Caring like this about the people around us really opens up our minds and broadens our horizons. It offers us experiences that we will treasure for life. It helps us to grow into people more and more fit for the Master’s use. And you don’t have to go far away; the people are right here around you. And caring grows on you. The more you care, the more you feel like caring.

Our society today is very much centered on serving self. We hear and see such slogans as “It’s all about me” and “We are the world” and “You deserve this.” But the Bible teaches us that it’s not about me, but about Jesus and our fellowman. It’s somewhat of a paradox, and you have to try it to really believe it, but the way to happiness is to make someone else happy. It will work every time. It works in a

marriage, in a family with children or youth, in a school, in the youth group, in the church, or wherever you go. Do something for someone else and you will find that the sun shines brighter, your own burdens get lighter, your problems get smaller, and your world gets bigger.

An area in which we would do well to check ourselves is in how much we appreciate people who have problems of some kind. What is our attitude toward the handicapped, the physically or mentally challenged, or the emotionally unstable people we may come in contact with? This would not only be toward these individuals themselves, but also toward families that have a child, be he young or older, with challenges. These people are God's special children. Do we have hearts of compassion for God's special children, ready to lend a hand or be an encouragement where we can? Or do we find ourselves wanting to walk by "on the other side" like we read about the priest and the Levite doing in the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10. One of the aims of the Conference Care Facilities Committee is to promote an awareness of the need for caring for our fellowman no matter who he is or what his problem might be. Really, this is our mission in life and the reason we're here.

Growing Old Gracefully

Growing old gracefully—this sounds like a place where we would all like to be! But often there is a difference between theory and practice. A saying I read recently said, "Choose the right path and it will take you to the right place." So it would probably best be said that we do not arrive at "old" and then suddenly become a person of grace, but rather it is a journey we choose in our younger years and then, when we are old, we will be in a familiar place.

Grace by definition is a characteristic known for its pleasing charm or refinement or dignified, polite, and decent behaviour. Another definition of grace is a generosity of spirit and a capacity to tolerate and accommodate or forgive people. These definitions go along with some of the thoughts I have had on this subject.

In my years of time spent at the Moundridge Manor I have made many observations about others and also learned to know myself in a new way. I have been impressed with many of our older brothers and sisters, and some not so old, who have faced the closing years of their lives with grace—they have been a joy and an inspiration to be around! I have witnessed some instances where God touched their lives with His grace in certain areas, and what a difference it made! But I have also observed some people where grace was not so apparent in their lives, their joy was missing, and there was an impression made that was not necessarily such a good one. When some of these habits or attitudes are examined or dealt with, it seems like often there is a trail that goes back many years. So when I thought about the importance of preparing now for successfully meeting the

challenge of our older years, four main points came to my mind.

First I want to say something about aging. Our chronological age (or how old the calendar says we are) does not necessarily correlate with our functional age (how our bodies actually are). There are several phases of "old"—most people do not readily admit to being old. It has been said that "Old is fifteen years older than you are." People in their 80's often do not admit to being old! By definition, the young old is 65-74, middle old is 75-84, and the oldest old is 85 plus. Normally there is a decline in physical function as the body ages, but knowledge of events and wisdom often increases. Of course, there are many physical ailments that often go along with aging and sometimes cause a decline in mental function in certain areas. These may present particular challenges to "growing old gracefully".

The four areas that came to my mind to help us grow old gracefully are: Lean on the Lord, Choose to be happy, Be flexible, and Love life.

1. **Lean on the Lord.** Recently, for a Sing-a-long at the Manor, someone chose the song "Cling to the Bible." There is a phrase in the song that reads, "Staff for the aged, and best book of all."¹ I have often heard the elderly talk about reading the Bible through many times and indeed it seems like sometimes there is more time for study and reading of God's Word when one is older. The Bible Trivia activity at the Manor is a well-attended activity and there are many Bible scholars there with the answers. In visiting with someone recently I told them to keep spreading sunshine and the reply was, "I couldn't do it without the Lord!" An article I read about aging mentioned that elderly people have better coping skills when certain things are in place in their lives, and one of those things was spirituality. Oh, the blessing of having a place to lay our burdens down and allowing the Comforter to soothe and comfort.
2. **Choose to be happy.** It has been said that "Happiness is a choice." Often when something comes our way that is unchangeable, we have two choices: to accept and be happy in spite of the circumstances, or to fret and worry and maybe complain and generally make those around us unhappy too. Oh, the difference between these two choices! The person who chooses happiness wins many friends and finds many things to be thankful for and is a joy to be around. But the other choice often brings a sour disposition, an unthankful attitude, and many stresses. There have been those at the Manor who have won many friends—both old and young, and sometimes there are those that you would rather avoid because of their disposition. Submit early in life to those things that cannot be changed and choose to be happy—it's your choice!
3. **Be flexible.** One of the things I have often admired, and not only in the elderly, is the ability to be flexible. I

don't believe this is something we can always just manufacture of our own will, but may take a laying down of our own ideas and wishes and submitting them to God. Sometimes the time comes when our physical bodies can no longer do for themselves what we would like them to, but we may need assistance in a facility such as the Moundridge Manor. Some feel like this is a dreaded step to be avoided at all cost, and they cling to their possessions, homes, etc. Some would almost rather live in dire straits than to admit to needing help. When God gives the grace to accept what needs to be, maybe with advice from family, there is an acceptance that is a blessing to everyone involved. But, on the other hand, if someone is almost forced to take help against their will, it seems like nothing can be done to please that person, or to make that person happy. Another area of being flexible is in tolerating others. Possibly the ability to tolerate others can fade somewhat as we age. This is one thing my time spent at the Manor has helped me to see—that we are not all alike! Working with other employees sometimes tests your love because of the many and varied ways of doing things, and other people's ideas—these are all testing grounds for grace. Sometimes the residents at the Manor are tested in tolerating each other too. Someone's forgetfulness becomes a source of aggravation, etc. But when we recognize that God made each of us and loves us all the same, then we can put "love into action".

4. **Love life.** There was a person in her 90's who loved to tell you how old she was and that she was ready to go to Heaven. It was like she had folded her hands and was waiting for the Lord's return. One day she told her doctor this and the doctor explained that she was no more able to choose the day of her death than she was to choose the day of her birth. She was encouraged to enjoy each day as she waited for her time to go. This is so true—there are so many things to be enjoyed, noticed, and done. Another of the coping skills to successful aging is "an active engagement in life." Generally speaking, throughout our years "loving life" is not a spectator sport, but rather being actively involved in life itself, doing something for others, enjoying each new day. If you are able, be interested in others, keep learning new things. A thought I have heard says, "They may forget who you are but they will never forget how you made them feel." Cultivate a hobby or pastime that you enjoyed in your younger years that you will be able to enjoy to some degree as you get older. I love to garden but this ability will change with time. There are some ladies that still love to observe the flowers and other growing things. Since we have had a garden at the Manor, the first tomatoes and cucumbers are often eagerly awaited. I have even seen cucumbers snuck inside underneath the folds of a skirt. And I have seen them picked and generously

given away or shared with others! I won't forget the look of pleasure on the face of one of our residents at the sight of ripe tomatoes on the vine. There are many small ways to make our own or someone else's life more pleasant.

In closing, it seems like when we can apply these attributes to our lives, then God can bless us and we can be that person of grace. My wish for each one is that "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:2).

Pam Decker, Activity Director, Moundridge Manor

Dear Readers,

I am inspired to leave a testimony of thankfulness for the privilege of working in a church facility. In the state where I grew up I worked at a nursing home, and loved my job. I remember thinking that I could live there and work at the facility the rest of my life and be happy. But there were times I also felt a little nudge that maybe some day the Lord would call me to put in some time at the Manor. When these nudges or thoughts first came, I didn't feel very willing. But the Lord didn't leave me alone. Today I feel like my horizons have been broadened and I have been blessed in so many ways!

Here are some of the blessings that have come by being here and working in this facility...getting to know so many different people and making new friends...getting close to the residents and their families...the privilege of being able to care for someone during his or her last days...the privilege of witnessing the spirit of submission in a sweet old lady admitted to the facility with high expectations of returning to her apartment, but eventually giving in to the reality that she will need to stay...being able to lend a little comfort when the courage is low...working with a great bunch of coworkers...receiving inspiration from others. One morning I got called in to work. I was feeling a bit blue, as I was supposed to be having a day off. In the fairly early morning hours I heard a resident singing loudly and clearly, and suddenly my spirit was lifted!

It is true that not every day is so rosy. Some days are hectic with many demands. But the "not so good" days always come to an end too!

If you are feeling a nudge from the Lord, He will bless you if you are obedient.

Wilma Peight, Moundridge Manor

Carried Home

"Dad," I suggested carefully, "isn't it time for you to have another blood transfusion? I think you would feel a lot better." My dad had chronic leukemia and was getting tired.

"No, I don't want to," Dad countered. When I pressed him for a reason, he explained that he had heard the doctor

say he would need blood transfusions closer together as he neared his death. In his mind, the longer he waited between transfusions, the longer he would be able to live. Somehow, not a one of us really wants to die. We push it off as long as possible, for unexplained reasons. God made us that way.

“So...you do not want any transfusions this month yet?” I asked, eyeing him covertly out of the corner of my eye.

“No!” he exclaimed and then sat and thought for a bit. “And I don’t want to die,” he stated after a pause. “Actually, I am afraid to die.”

I knew that Dad had experienced emotional and mental anguish that many of us are not called on to go through. In a way, he was very handicapped and all the things that he had lived through showed up even more now, with many fears attacking him.

“Dad,” I spoke gently as I faced him in my vehicle, “I really don’t think that you need to be afraid of death. You have given your heart to Jesus haven’t you?”

“Yes, I have,” he said very quietly.

“And you trust in Him and know that He is your Saviour?”

“Oh yes,” he replied with confidence.

“Our Heavenly Father will not abandon you now,” I continued, “for He loves you very much. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You aren’t afraid to go to sleep, are you?”

“No, I am not afraid. Going to sleep is a nice time,” he spoke thoughtfully.

“Well, I believe that dying will be like going to sleep. You will feel tired and ready to rest. Then God will gently, oh so very gently, come and scoop you up in His arms and carry you home. You would not be afraid of that, would you?”

“No, I would not be afraid of that. I think that I would LIKE that. You’re sure that God will be there? And I will be peaceful?” His trusting eyes looked into mine for assurance.

“Yes, I’m very sure,” I told him, my voice steady. “And here is something else. If at all possible, I will be with you too. When your time comes to go, my earnest desire is to be with you at your passing.”

“Oh good,” he sighed, “then I don’t think I’ll need to be afraid any longer.”

As I turned to start the van for our homeward journey, I implored my heavenly Father to comfort my dear father as he neared the Jordan River. I whispered my prayer, asking Him to help me keep my promise to my Daddy that I could be with him when he passed. Our heavenly Father was so very good to us and answered my prayer, allowing me to be there at my dad’s bedside. His passing was beautiful and peaceful.

Every time I think of my dad, I thank God that he is safely home...scooped up in his Father’s arms and carried Home.

Phyllis Ann Isaac, Crooked Creek, Alberta

Peace, my heart, let the time of our parting be sweet;
Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt the memories and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the skies end in folding of wings o’er
the nest.
Let the last gentle touch of your hands be like flowers.
Stand still, oh beautiful end, for a moment, and say your last
words in silence.
I bow down to you and hold up my lamp to light your way
home in the darkness.

Author unknown

Submitted by Bert Wiebe, Enderby, British Columbia

Editor’s note: Some of the articles we have received are poems that we have printed at an earlier date and so we have not included them again. Also, some of them are poems where the author is known, but with no note included by the contributor as to whether the material has a copyright. We cannot print articles without giving proper credit to the author, and/or obtaining permission from a copyright owner. (We consider it the contributor’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. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in this matter.

1. Hymn #140, *Christian Hymnal*, words by M.J. Smith

Conference Care Facilities Newsletter is published when possible 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: leeprinting@eaglecom.net.

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