
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 Wave

The leading edge of the wave is breaking upon us. The impact and repercussions of the wave are yet to be played out. Will the wave be a tsunami, breaking upon us with force, bringing with it unprecedented challenges and changes?

The wave, what is it? No, not a wave of water but a wave of elders entering into a sphere in which they will need care from someone(s). Society has always been privileged to have elders who have reached “elderhood”; so what is new? There are components that are merging even as we read this article that are creating a wave that society as we know it has never known. Simply put, the wave is a group of elders who will need care from you that is greater and more vast than we have ever known.

The converging components driving/developing the wave are numbers and longevity. Couple these two drivers with the living standard and practice of the day and we have a wave that is set to overflow the current infrastructure of elder care. In contrast to tidal waves and tsunami which totally render man helpless in face of their power and magnitude, God has a plan of preparation in place that is already in the works. God’s plan will involve both you and me, which is the burden of this article.

Professional planners have been warning society for some time of the approaching wave. The front edge of the wave we are seeing is coming from our current elders entering into our homes, and most of them are from the “silent generation” (born from 1925-1944) with a population of 55 million. This generation of

elders is greater in number than the previous “greatest generation” (born from 1901-1924). We are seeing firsthand the swelling of numbers of elders seeking care. Waiting lists are growing longer. Marching fast upon the heels of the silent generation is the “baby boomer” generation (born from 1945-1962) with a population of 76 million. The increase of numbers from the “greatest” to “silent” and to “baby boomers” is a clear indicator of the wave that is getting ready to unleash its reality upon us.

Many localities across the conference that were once settled by young families are awaking to the reality that their young families have undergone a major aging process, and today they are on the doorstep of needing care. Many localities are rising to the challenge and responsibility of drafting plans and building facilities to care for their elders. The conference is undergoing an aging/maturing process unprecedented in former times. Many of our congregations that classify themselves as young congregations will be at the threshold of providing elder care perhaps sooner than expected.

For years, the conference has enjoyed the luxury of relying on our existing care facilities in Kansas, California, and numerous places in Canada. This luxury may become quite limited to those outside their regional areas as the approaching wave bears down upon us. As the numbers of elders increase, our existing homes will be full with elders from the respective support areas. The reality of the fading option of using homes outside of our regional demographics are going to call for resources that heretofore we gave little thought to.

Modern medical practice, coupled with godly living, is yielding longevity. Couple longevity with larger

generation numbers and we develop conditions that produce the “perfect wave.”

Switching now to the preparation side, God has provided general prosperity the last number of years across the conference. God has not given financial increase so we can spend it upon ourselves. The challenge of the wave, now and in the future, will not be met or satisfied without the redirecting of funds from personal use to the mission of elder care. May we not belittle or underestimate the value of the mission of elder care.

The wave is a compilation of elders from every sector and walk of life. Every financial stratum will be represented in the wave. We need to make a commitment to our elders who have limited material resources that we will take care of them with dignity, giving them respect and care and supporting them in keeping their faith to the end. May we not discriminate against those of our brethren who have limited resources. This commitment will be tested in areas which do not accept state or federal aid, but let us not back away from providing care to all our brothers and sisters who are in need, lest we become respecters of persons. While some amenities are tied to personal resources, the core needs of our elders must not be denied due to lack of personal funds.

The wave of elders will only be effectively cared for by everyone becoming engaged in the work. The writer attended a conference a couple of years ago which had a theme called “without walls.” The burden of the conference was that not all elders will be able to be in a facility due to an inadequate infrastructure. There may not be sufficient bricks and mortar, and care will need to be brought to them in their homes. This concept opens the door for a huge involvement from us as fellow members.

We must rally to meet the demand that is breaking upon us. The call goes out for a large enlistment of volunteers. This group will perhaps be the most instrumental in accommodating the wave. Anyone can serve in this capacity. Secondly, many will need to give themselves to fill administrative and care-giving roles, making careers in the mission of elder care.

Regions, congregations, boards, and administrations need to give urgent and keen attention in drafting plans of action on how to meet the gathering wave. Strategic planning and fund raising are key components in planning for the future. The wave is coming, ready or not.

The care of our elders is a mission. This mission is instrumental in preserving the faith of our elders. May

it be like the billboard we see across our country that shows a National Guardsman administrating help to someone in need with the caption, “Lives next door.” Each one of us can be a part in accommodating and dealing with the wave that is breaking upon us.

The Place of Our Care Facilities in the Church of God

The Church of God is very precious to God. She was bought with the precious blood of His only Son. He watches over her with a jealous eye. In all of her many functions and outreaches, God would desire that His name be lifted up.

The functions of the church are many. One of the most important is to “buy the truth and sell it not.” God has a set of standards that He expects the Church and her many outreaches to maintain and hold up. These would include the doctrines and ordinances and the many teachings of the Word.

Another important function of the Church is to make a safe haven for those and their families who have been born again and have been received into the Church. It gives our young families a safe place to rear their children, a place where they know the truth is being taught. When we grow old, it gives us a place to live out our life in the security of a Christian atmosphere.

The outreach of the church to those of our community and those around us in a spiritual and physical way is a very important part of the Church of God. When the Church members live the principals of truth and have the love of Christ in their hearts, it will be noticed and felt by those around us.

Our care facilities play a very important part in the whole of the Church. Just as we take care of our children in our schools and youth programs and as we reach out with our mission and humanitarian work, so our care facilities fill in that part of the church of caring for our elders. Our care facilities get their authority to operate from the Church. Boards are elected and commissioned to make the day-to-day decisions to run our homes. They and the administrators need to keep in mind the same principals and ideals of the Church and run our care facilities in a way that does not cast a poor reflection on the Church. This would include the areas of technology, expansion plans, decorating, hiring employees and placing them in correct positions, and all operations of the nursing home.

The people who choose to work at our facilities find

a rewarding work. Our young sisters find a place of employment where they can mature and garner many blessings along the way. Those from the community who find employment at our facilities find a quiet place to work and a chance to see the beauty of God's Church. The quiet and clean atmosphere has spoken many times to government regulators and others who have stepped through our doors. I pray we never lose the atmosphere that comes from having God at the center of our facilities.

The mission aspect of our homes has impressed me many times. Our fathers and mothers and those from the community come into our homes realizing that this is the last leg of their journey of life. This gives them much opportunity to reflect on the past and make changes as the Lord speaks to them. Many songs are sung and many prayers are offered that make it easier for them to reach out to the Lord. Over and over we hear of experiences of those who have found a new rest in their hearts.

There are many ways the conference cares for her elders: private homes, independent facilities, assisted living facilities, and full-care facilities. I feel like each one plays an important part in the caring for our elders in the Church of God. I am blessed to be a part of this work. May God continue to bless the work of caring for our elders.

Deacon Ross Koehn, Montezuma, Kansas

Another Look at Authority

In Luke 9:1, we read as follows, "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." Simon the sorcerer desired that authority and power after having seen Peter and John laying their hands upon the people who then received the Holy Ghost. He desired the same power and offered Peter money. Peter answered Simon and said, "Thy money perish with thee...thy heart is not right with God. Repent therefore...For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." *Power* and *authority* are words that sound enticing to the carnal nature that each of us carries in this body of clay. Jesus had a nice lesson for the disciples when He heard them murmuring among themselves about who would be the greatest. Mark 10:42-44: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall

be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."

I have written previously about the need for authority and responsibility to be equal. If you diminish the schoolteacher's authority by half, then you need to diminish the responsibility likewise. Have you ever taken upon yourself authority when you were not given the responsibility? Or vice versa? It does not and will not work well.

Much thought has been given lately to the seriousness of responsibility, not only in our nursing facilities but, also, in our schools, and perhaps it fits everywhere. Forget about authority for a moment. Authority has gotten us into so much trouble. I am speaking from experience. Sometimes a supervisor will come to me about a misdeed that a certain employee has committed. Too quickly, my spirit reacts with "I will deal with it right now." There were times that I exercised my authority and let that employee know where I stood and where they should stand. Disastrous almost every time. If I would have taken some time to review and consider the responsibility invested in me by my board and my fellow employees and forgotten for a moment my authority, the outcome would have been so much better.

Authority alone tends to diminish good leadership, and when one stops and takes a good look at the responsibility given, the employee will be much more receptive. Does church discipline work the same? I don't know, but I would think it does. First Peter 5:3,4 reminds us of the responsibility of being ensamples to the flock, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive the crown of glory which fadeth not away."

How about the father of the home demonstrating his authority over his child? Oh, to stop and carefully consider the responsibility involved. Authority tends to punish, especially if one is aggravated or impatient. A good review of the responsibility will work redemptive and appropriate discipline. Authority is usually quite well defined and does not have to be explained to a new employee. The name tag does that well enough, as does the pistol on the highway patrolman's belt. However, responsibility will need to be demonstrated. Authority tends to react, while responsibility will consider how to act.

Dear reader, let's take a more serious look at our responsibility and allow authority to meekly follow after, lending its support to responsibility.

Ron Classen – Moundridge Manor

Special Needs Meeting

A meeting for the special-needs children within our conference was held in Inman, Kansas, July 25. There was a request from that group to share the crux of the burden with the conference. This meeting was second of its kind to take place, the first being in 2011.

A cry is coming forth, like the cry of the Israelites when they were in bondage in Egypt, due to the burdens that some of our families are enduring. A cry for support, a cry for relief, and a cry for direction. The meeting was comprised of a gathering of those with special-needs children and those interested in the work. Many shared their hearts' burdens and frustrations. The sharing was heartwarming and heart wrenching.

The cry for support. This group feels a need to have more support from their congregations and their fellow brothers and sisters. While they feel a measure of support, they, in general, are reaching out for more. Many times during the course of the meeting, a thought was left that our people are ignorant, not that they don't want to help but how to help. These families question if their staff and school boards really understand their challenges.

The cry for direction. Challenges change shapes and sizes. Characteristics of special-needs children can intensify as they grow older. How do we deal with anger? How do we implement changes without upsetting my child? Challenges that special-needs children present tend to produce side effects in the home, which may cause a negative response in their siblings.

The cry for relief. This cry was perhaps the loudest of all. Respite, relief—where is it; who will give it? Many children require 24/7 care. These parents and caregivers become bound to the work. We did not sense at all that anyone was wanting to shirk their duties, but, "Could we have some relief?" Some of these families sense their fellow brothers and sisters tend to "look on and go their way." Likely, many of us hide behind the thought, "I don't know how to help." These families don't buy this excuse. They tell us, "If you do not know how we feel or what we need, ask us."

Solutions are not easy to find. A number of suggestions came to the floor, which would, in part, begin to answer the cry.

A) There are those among us who have a feeling and aptitude for working with the handicapped. We could sponsor them in sending them to school to receive training to be more effective in this field.

- B) Create a resource center that would include those who are trained in working with the handicapped. This center could include a hotline, as well as personnel who could counsel in areas such as dealing with anger. An e-mail network and a scheduled conference call could also be an option.
- C) A mobile respite unit comprised of trained sisters which would provide in-house respite relief.
- D) Group home(s) for the handicap.
- E) Educate our congregations on how to help families with handicapped children. There are many little things we all can do, such as, a hand on the shoulder, an invitation for a meal, a piece of candy to the handicapped child.

The cry from our loved ones is growing louder. As a conference, we have a responsibility to "tune in" to this cry. We will need to lay aside the garment of ignorance and get out of our comfort zone. May our prayers and our hearts be turned toward our families with special-needs children. There is support to have another meeting next year. To wait for another year for action is too long. This group is looking for relief today. What do you and I have to offer today?

Sunset Home at Bonners Ferry is nestled in Idaho's scenic panhandle where mountains touch the sky and love is at home. We provide housing and meals for those who are independent and high-level care for those who need something more.

Apartments are available.

We invite folks across our conference to come live at our home. Please call Duane Holderman for more information at (208) 267-0260.

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. Articles and suggestions should be sent to Steve R. Koehn, editor, at 23068 Hwy 45, Brooksville, MS 39739. Phone/fax: 662-738-5325. Send change of address or quantity to Lowell Koehn, Burns, KS; leeprinting@eaglecom.net; Fax 620-726-5222.
