Creating a Culture of Care

Presented by:
The Reverend Esther Hurlburt
A ministry dedicated to old people

revestherhurlburt.com
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Knowing how difficult it is to start and sustain a community ministry, I could not, in good conscience, spend $275.00 to rent equipment required by the convention center to show a PowerPoint presentation. Instead, I made a $275.00 donation to Healing Moments, a UU Community Ministry dedicated to Alzheimer’s/Dementia Education and Advocacy.

I. Defining your vision

❖ Caring ministry rather than caring committee

❖ Goal is to become an ecclesia …an assembly of caregivers
  o This is what it means to be church
  o 67% rule
  o No such thing as a primary caregiver
  o Care receivers can also be caregivers!
  o Inter-generational participation

II. Theology

❖ Worth --- Dignity ---Solidarity --- compassion --- empathy

❖ Inter-dependence: A love of mutual regard
  o Promotes dignity by allowing/expecting to give as well as receive
  o Caring with --- not caring for
  o Decreases self sacrifice and promotes self care
  o Increases autonomy
  o Shared responsibility rather than equal responsibilities

❖ Covenant: What are our response-abilities?
III. Caring with our Heads, Hands, and Hearts

❖ HEADS --- Be willing to learn

- Dementia Care
- Long distance caregiving
- Life care planning
- Accessibility
- Memorial services
- Elder abuse
- Nursing home reform
- Safety at home
- Safety at church
- Lifting and transferring
- Resource fairs
- Legal issues
- Financial planning
- Caregiver support
- Hospital visitation

❖ HANDS --- Physical Presence

- Food
- Visits
- Transportation
- Yard work
- Construction
- Respite

❖ HEARTS --- Spiritual presence

- Greeting cards
- Prayers
- Phone calls

IV. The Community Responds -- The Logistics

❖ Referrals

- Minister
- Family
- Grapevine--- Fact or rumor

❖ Eligibility

- Care for those present within congregational life
- Care for those who are missing from congregational life
  - Care-receiver
  - Partner/Spouse/Primary caregiver
Assessment of Needs

- When to Intervene
  - Life Crisis Forms
  - If in doubt ask
  - Compassionate confrontation
  - When to wait
  - Give permission to receive help

- Home visits

- Support Systems

- Barriers
  - Transportation
  - Accessibility (vision, hearing, comfort, wheelchair etc.)
  - Financial issues
  - Fatigue or exhaustion

- Legal
  - Power of Attorney
  - Health Care Surrogate
  - Advanced Directives

- Confidentiality

- When to cease intervention
  - Dependency
  - Illegitimate need
❖ Establish the Assembly of Caregivers

- Preach it!

- Be the model of care-giving and invite others to join you

- Collaborate
  - Ministers
  - Social Justice Committee
  - Care team meetings
    - Assessment and re-assessment of success of service
    - Prevent duplication of service or absence of service
  - Membership Committee
    - Ensure elders are invited into and can participate in congregational life

- Build relationships ... Create care teams
  - Establish “parishes”
  - Pin-map” neighborhoods by zip code
  - “Get to know your neighbor parties”
V. **Ideas: Just to name a few**

- Care beyond caroling: Every home bound or nursing home resident needs to be visited **throughout** the year.
- Care beyond casseroles: Prepare meals and eat with residents in their homes. Company is as nourishing as the food itself.
- There is no excuse for not visiting elders in nursing homes
  - If it is “too depressing” then work for nursing home reform!
  - Offer worship and religious education in nursing and retirement homes
- Coordinate care with members of neighboring congregations.
- Establish a “buddy system” for those require attention while at church
- Establish a “hello daily” program and a phone tree for emergency contacts.
- Schedule an inter-generational workday to do home repairs or yard work
- Make home safety kits with flashlights, de-icer, and batteries etc.

VI. **A Few Caveats**

- Beware of compassion fatigue. Remember…it takes an assembly of caregivers.
- The needs of caregivers are every bit as important and the needs of care receivers.
- Do not underestimate the power of small acts of kindness and care
- Have compassion for yourself so there is compassion in the room