

*Then the King will say... "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." ~ MT 25:34-36*



## AN INVALUABLE GIFT

As we prepare to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of God Cares, I am reflecting on the way God has led me and others to embrace nursing home ministry as a life-long calling.

Back in 1984, when I first started visiting in a nursing home, I attended a Christmas Eve service at my church. A group of about 30 people came before the congregation to sing a carol. This group - known as "God's Special Children" - were intellectually disabled adults from local group homes. As they waved their wreaths and ornaments, I was troubled at the sight. I could hear others around me saying "Isn't that beautiful?" and "Praise the Lord!" I thought to myself, "What is so beautiful about these unfortunate souls?"

I spent the rest of that service asking the Lord why He allowed such things to happen to people, and why they seemed to be deprived of the health and well-being that I was beginning to experience in Christ. My thoughts also turned to my new nursing home friends. I asked God why he allowed them to spend their last days in a nursing home, suffering with pain and totally dependent on others. These concerns and prayers were based on my naïve perspective at that time, as I had been a Christian for only two years, with much to learn.

Well, I don't remember what gifts I received that Christmas, except for one: a gift that I shall cherish the rest of my life, and perhaps for eternity. The gift that I received was an answer to my questions and prayers. I believe that God was gracious to me because I was truly sincere, and respectfully trying to understand His way. His revelation completely changed my perspective on the people living in nursing homes and those, of all ages, who have any disabilities. This gift transformed my life!

It was a few weeks after the service, while visiting a nursing home, that the Holy Spirit revealed to me that these people were our Father's beloved children. Despite their weakness and brokenness, He was using them to teach His Church to love as He loves. He said to me, "These people have great value and purpose; they are "instruments of love."

When Jesus came to earth, everyone was blind, poor, deaf or crippled in spirit. He came to us and gave us sight to see the Father, He gave us ears to hear the Holy Spirit and He made the lame to walk in the Light. He freely gave life to every longing and willing heart. He did it because He loves us. No one on earth had *anything* that they could have given Jesus for what He came to give us.

The Lord continued to reveal to me that when you come to the least of these and give of yourself so freely, you are learning what cannot be taught in schools or learned from reading the Bible ten times over. You are learning what true love is. When you learn what true love is, you learn who He is.



Because God is Love! Though the least of these seem to have little to give, He is using them to teach His Church some of the most important things: compassion, love and grace. **Continue on page 2**

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## **INVALUABLE GIFT** *Continued from page 1*

This revelation was one of the greatest gifts that I have ever received. It has compelled me to stay in this mission field for 35 years. It has enabled me to see how God's love and His word raises people above what we might consider unfortunate circumstances.

It has enabled me to learn that no one is out of God's reach or lacks value in His eyes. And it has enabled me to learn that He can use His willing servants to help anyone grow closer to Jesus. It has opened my eyes to see that they are indispensable.

I continue to grow closer to Jesus and His elderly children, and am growing amazingly rich in spirit along this journey. I am also watching God pour out this same heavenly wealth upon so many other nursing home missionaries. What a gift!!! ~ Bill Goodrich

***The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...***

***~ 1 Corinthians 12:21-22***



## **YOUR GIVING IS LIFE-GIVING**

On behalf of the thousands of nursing home residents who are finding hope and peace in Jesus, I want to thank all of you who give to share God's love and word with the people in care homes. Your time and resources are resulting in life-giving relationships with Jesus and His caring servants. May all your year-end giving be from a cheerful heart and result in much fruit for God's glory. ~ B.G.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

I am recently retired and had been praying about where the Lord wanted me to serve Him and His people. I had never been in nursing home ministry, but a couple at my church visit a nursing home, and they sent email invitations to some church members, asking if we wanted to go along with them. The next Sunday during communion, I felt the Lord ask me, "Are you humble enough to go to a nursing home?"

So, when I got home, I googled nursing home ministry, found God Cares Ministry and watched some of the videos.

Then I went to the nursing home with the couple from my church and sat down among several residents. It was obvious that they were hungry for conversation. Oh, the smiles and appreciation I received from these lonely residents! By the time we were ready to leave, my heart was snagged.

Back home, I watched and loved every video on the God Cares website. They fueled my heart and encouraged me. I ordered the ministry book, took the online training course and got the first chapter of the Bible study curriculum.

I started calling homes to see who wanted volunteers to hold a service. The first home I called said they used to have someone, but he had to leave for health reasons and the residents really wanted "Sunday School", which is what he called his time with them. The Activity Director was very welcoming and said, "I can't tell you how long I've been praying for this."

The week before I was scheduled to start, my church bought socks for the residents and we went from room to room handing them out, and telling them what church we were from and that we would hold Sunday School at 2:00 the following Sunday.

One woman asked if we would find her a pastor so she could be baptized. I visited her twice and asked about her faith and got her testimony. I told her step-by-step what we would be doing at her baptism so she would be comfortable. She was bedridden, so after the service we went to her room. Our pastor and his 3 kids were there and some others from our church, so we had 11 people at her baptism. I brought some towels and a measuring cup and our pastor baptized her right there in her bed. Then we all sang Amazing Grace.

I had heard that between 60 and 80% of residents don't get visitors, so I asked at the home, and they told me that about 100 out of their 135 residents usually don't receive visitors.

These people living a forgotten life behind closed doors have become dear to me. I want to see love in their eyes. I want the nursing home to be a happy place because Jesus is there. May every nursing home be adopted by a church. May there be so many churches wanting to adopt a nursing home that we run out of nursing homes to adopt!

Here are a few Scripture verses that touched my heart as I was looking for nursing home ministry information online:

- ***Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. ~ Psalm 71:9***
- ***The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did to me". ~ Matthew 25:40***
- ***If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. ~ James 4:17***

~ Cathy Englehardt, KY

## RESIDENT MISSIONARY

I requested an order of large print Bibles from God Cares and have been praying that God will show me who to give them to. There is a man in our church who hadn't been able to attend services for a while due to illness. I gave one of your Bibles to his daughter to give to him. He was so thankful because he hadn't been able to read the Bible due to his impaired eyesight. Then, he had a bad fall and had to go into a nursing home. He is using his new Bible as a tool to share the love of Jesus with other residents. He is winning souls in the nursing home! He wants to know if he can have a couple more Bibles to give to other residents who would like to have their own. This Bible has been such a blessing for him...and he is not keeping this blessing to himself, but is sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with his neighbors in that home. ~ Anne Slater, OH

## CHRISTMAS CHEER...ALL YEAR?

Christmas brought cold, rainy weather to the Texas hill country, but it was warm and cheery inside the nursing home. A week before Christmas, the staff outdid themselves with a Christmas luncheon for the residents, their families and volunteers. Each



resident's family was contacted and the administrator made sure every resident had at least one guest or friend to sit with them. Everyone was dressed in red except a few non-consenting males. The staff worked into the wee hours of the night before and started back at 4:00 a.m. the next morning cooking, ironing clothes, fixing hairdos,

makeup, decorating tables. The visiting families each brought a dessert. It was a feast. The hospice chaplain even had the staff in tears when he said, of all the nursing homes in his area, this is where he would bring his loved one.

Seeing empty faces light up at the sight of family members touched my heart. For a few hours they weren't alone. However, later, while a resident's son and I were commenting on the large turnout of visitors, he cynically (but compassionately) spoke the words that had been lingering in the back of my mind. "You're too nice," he said, "to have thoughts like this, but where are all these people the rest of the year?" I sadly shook my head, "No, I'm seeing the same thing you're seeing. We're on the same channel."

Late Christmas Eve afternoon, I stopped by and visited each room, leaving cards for the residents, little personal gifts for my Bible study class and other resident friends. And I left a tray of cookies with a personal note to the night crew telling them the angel brought news of the birth of Christ first to those working the night shift -- the shepherds tending their flocks in the fields -- just as they were doing on this night. (I read that in a devotion.) Peace, ~ Sheryl Watt, TX

## LIFE GIVING RESOURCES

It is our mission to enable Christians to share God's word with the people in senior adult care homes. As you consider giving your resident friends a gift, we want to encourage you to share the same gift that God shared with us: His word through His love. To help you share this life-giving gift, we have two resources available:

**Giant print New Testament & Psalms Bibles:** In 16.5 bold font with several pages of topical references. New Living Translation (NLT).

**God Cares for You ministry book:** 80 pages, large print, with color photos. Addresses the most common emotional and spiritual concerns of residents. It is Biblically based and each of the seven chapters point the reader to Jesus.



**Janet Meade**  
From Fran Palffy

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From his wife, Carol

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## IN HONOR & APPRECIATION:

**Jesus Christ**  
From Fred & Rosemarie Zdeb

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Mary, Chris, Shirley, Carol,  
Joan & Dale**  
From Kathy Archer

**25th Anniversary of God  
Cares Ministry**  
From Steve & Linda Buechling

## LEGACY PARTNER:

Sandra Schneppe

*We are grateful for the 15+ years of ministry which Sandy gave in the nursing home mission field. So many lives were eternally blessed through her.*



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*Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you... May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. ~ 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5*

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*The first Christmas gift is still the very best gift ever!*



**PLAN TO COME AND SHARE IN A TIME OF FELLOWSHIP AND CELEBRATION!**

Each spring we have an appreciation banquet for our volunteers. This event, *PowerNight*, is intended to encourage and inspire those who invest their time and/or resources into the nursing home mission field. On May 16, 2020, we will be holding a very special event, similar to *PowerNight*, that will include a celebration of 25 years of God's blessings in care homes.