

Vision

Dare to Care:
Building Healthy, Faith-Based
Caring Communities

Mission

Our mission is to provide
excellence in care, shelter, and
support in a nurturing
Christian environment
for all entrusted to our care.



Kindness is the

LANGUAGE

that the **blind** can **see** and

THE DEAF CAN
hear



Introduction

“When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.” – Abraham Joshua Heschel

This quote from Abraham Heschel is very true. When we were young, the important thing was to achieve, to make the grade, to prove oneself. As we grow older, we come to see the value of simple acts of kindness done out of a sense of genuine caring and concern. We learn to cherish the gift of compassion. Since I arrived at LutherCare a year ago, I have witnessed countless acts of kindness by our staff and residents: a gentle embrace, a thoughtful word, a friendly smile, a cheerful greeting, a simple “thank-you.” These seemingly small gestures, taken together, can add up to a world of difference. To someone who is lonely and vulnerable, kindness is as nourishing and life-sustaining as food.

Kindness is rooted in the love of God. In his life and death, for our sake, Jesus revealed that God is merciful and loving. When we understand that we are deeply loved by God, we spontaneously respond in a spirit of thanksgiving. But God does not need our expressions of thanks; our neighbour does, especially those in need of care and support. We give thanks to God by loving those around us.

Each of the devotions written by staff, chaplains, residents, and volunteers is a reflection on the gift of kindness. I wish to thank all of our contributors and to acknowledge Bryan Tastad for his assistance with proofreading and Mavis Hamilton for layout. If you would like additional copies, please contact our Spiritual Care Office at 306.664.0314.

Rev. Renita Falkenstern, Editor

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Values

To achieve our vision and mission, LutherCare Communities focuses on shared, deeply held values that govern our behaviour and guide our actions. These values have been foundational to LutherCare Communities since the development of the first seniors’ home in 1955. They reflect a dynamic, caring, and growing organization.

LutherCare Values:

- Excellence in care and service;
- Focus on clients, residents, and guests to whom we provide care and services;
- Integrity, fairness, and principles of ethical conduct as reflected in the social principles of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;
- Diversity within an inclusive, dynamic, collegial community;
- Openness to change through seizing opportunities with passion, creativity, and innovation;
- Nurturing positive, healthy working relationships between staff and residents, and among staff;
- Exercising responsible stewardship of our resources;
- Maintaining pride in our history and traditions, including contributions of Lutheran and other faith and community groups.

Devoted Volunteers Needed at LutherCare!

I have been blessed to be in the position of managing volunteers for LutherCare Communities for over 14 years. During that time, I've met hundreds of the most altruistic, loving and kind-hearted people you can imagine. It's true! Just look at this quote that a recent volunteer shared with me:

"This volunteer experience has opened my eyes to the incredibly positive living environment that can exist in a special care home. Having a resident say that you've made their day is extremely heartwarming and the residents are so appreciative of your time, which encourages me to commit more to volunteering in the community."

I've got dozens more, but you get the idea. If you've volunteered somewhere before, then you know that you will likely receive more out of the experience than you can give. And the great thing is, anyone can do it! If you can provide friendship to someone or lend a hand to one of our employees, then you can volunteer.

Just a few examples of what volunteers do at Luther Special Care Home include: friendly visits; helping the senior residents to and from chapel services; playing favorite hymns or songs on piano; assisting residents with their meals; helping them go for walks; providing help during our various group programs, and so much more.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering at Luther Special Care, please contact Murray Tempel at 306-664-0323 or mtempel@luthercare.com. If you wish to volunteer at any other site, please call the facility and ask to speak to the manager. And God bless you for your kind consideration!

Clothe Yourselves with Kindness

WHEN I GO TO WORK AS A CHAPLAIN AT RIVERSIDE Terrace, I wear a clergy shirt—the shirt pastors often wear with the little white tab at the neck. I want to be identified as the Chaplain, so I put on that particular piece of clothing. Though there are a few retired pastors living at Riverside Terrace, I am the only one who puts on that piece of clothing.

In this Bible reading, the writer speaks of putting on things as if they were clothes. He says, "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (v. 12). I see people where I work clothed with these things all the time. I see people who exude genuine kindness. People who respond to others with care and concern. People who keep their eye out for those who are having a hard time and make it a point to be supportive to them. People who read aloud at our reading group for those who have impaired vision. People who check on their neighbors to make sure they are okay. I could go on and on.

These people don't have to do these things, but they do them without hesitation. Somewhere along the line, these people clothed themselves with kindness and those other attributes. And now those attributes have become a part of them. It's a wonderful thing to see. It makes my clergy shirt look superficial in comparison. These people embody—they live out and "wear"—what LutherCare wants to be all about. I thank God for them.

Gracious God, thank you for these people who clothe themselves with kindness. Thank you that you call us all to do that. Amen.

Rev. Terry Simonson is the Chaplain at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Read Luke 14:12-14

A Country Drive

MR. M LIVED IN A CARE HOME IN GLASGOW, Scotland, where I worked. He had no family, few friends and little financial wealth. Mr. M was a bitter individual who often hurled insults at staff, and belittled those who attended to his needs. He would often comment that the nurses only cared about him because they were paid to do so. One bright Saturday, a few staff decided to take some residents on a country drive, and to a rustic restaurant several kilometers outside the city, in one of their own vehicles. Mr. M was asked, and he eventually consented. Green grass, wee stone fences, and multitudes of sheep whizzed by as the group navigated the winding road. Mr. M wiped a tear from his eye as he gazed out the window. After the staff treated the residents to a small meal at the restaurant, Mr. M. quietly thanked them for taking him on this trip, especially on a weekend that these individuals were not required to work. Mr. M mentioned how he had not been out of Glasgow for years, and how the countryside had brought back several fond memories of a single childhood trip his family had taken.

There would be no way for Mr. M to ever repay the kindness that was shown to him that day by a few staff who wanted some residents to know they were loved. Jesus said, "You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you ..." (v. 16). What an awesome responsibility we have to help the needy of our society. Many times it only takes but a moment to make a lasting impression on someone's life forever.

Lord, help us to help others. As we encounter those who have many individual needs, help us to give willingly, expecting nothing in return. Amen.

Colin Wiebe is a R.N. at Luther Special Care Home.

Read John 4:1-15

Liberating Love

WITHIN LUTHER SPECIAL CARE HOME, "TEMPERANCE and Munroe" is the name of the "neighbourhood" where residents with dementia make their home.

Today was the day for a sing-along. The tunes were mostly oldie moldy melodies like: "Yellow Rose of Texas" and "Roll Out the Barrel." I noticed "Margaret" sitting in a wheelchair. Her hand was flailing uncontrollably back and forth, back and forth. Her head hung slightly to one side. As we began to sing, "Tea for Two," I slowly approached her, made eye contact, and mouthed the words: "You for me, and me for you." As I sang "me" I pointed to myself. Then I pointed to her as I sang "you." Then it happened. The clouds which shrouded her face parted and a beam of light shone out through her eyes. A beautiful smile suddenly broke out across her face as she started to quietly sing along with me. I couldn't help but smile too. Even though the sky outside was bleak and wintry, inside the room at that moment, it felt like summer.

Perhaps this is not so different from the encounter between the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus. Given the taboos of their time, both cultural and religious, they should never have even spoken to one another. But Jesus ignored the social conventions and reached out to her in love.

People living with dementia, and their families, still experience stigma in our society. As a result, they can feel isolated and alone. Only love can reach past barriers that separate us. Kindness is the universal language that everyone can understand.

Thank you, gracious God, for the gift of your kindness which frees us from all that gets in the way of our loving one another. Amen.

Rev. Renita Falkenstern is the Director of Mission for LutherCare Communities.

Read Joshua 2:1-6

A Hero

A HERO WHO SHOULD GET MORE PRESS IS RAHAB. She provided shelter, protection and information to two Israelite men who came to search out Jericho for Joshua and the tribes of Jacob.

Rahab is probably not the person we think would do the will of God. She is a foreigner and prostitute—probably not someone we would immediately peg as “godly.” But in her simple, brave act of kindness, keeping safe the Israelite men, she is, in fact, acting in faith: trusting that God is at work and desiring to be a part of that effort. She couldn’t know it at the time, but her simple act of kindness to those sojourners was part of God’s great work.

Rahab can be an inspiration to us. She didn’t have a great past. She wasn’t someone well regarded, but she knew that she had a role to play in God’s drama. That trust led her to provide shelter to those strangers which set in motion events that would change the world.

Maybe that sounds pretty lofty, but, in truth, we don’t always know how our small acts of kindness will impact other people, and through them others still. We may not feel important, but we can be the grace, the peace and the love of Jesus Christ to those around us in many ways every day.

We have already received the kindness and mercy of God through the One who has come through the lineage of Rahab—Jesus Christ.

May we grow in the fruits of Christ’s Spirit, especially kindness. May our kindness, in words and deeds, share in the work of God to the honour and glory of God’s Holy Name! Amen.

Rev. Mark Hedlin is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Saskatoon and on the Board of Directors for LutherCare Communities.

Read Hebrews 13:1-3

Welcome to Your New Home

WHEN I JOINED LUTHERCARE COMMUNITIES ALMOST 19 years ago, I was extremely excited to welcome seniors who had made a decision to join our community at Luther Heights and Luther Tower. I soon realized that these individuals were in many cases leaving friends, neighbours, a lovely garden and many other parts of their lives behind. In short, moving from a home they perhaps lived in for 40 plus years was a huge adjustment for them.

On one occasion, a couple had made the decision to leave their home of many years in Moose Jaw and move to Luther Heights in Saskatoon. This was not an easy decision, but, rather, one based on health reasons and proximity to family support. The physical move got off to a difficult start with the moving company unable to get them to Saskatoon during business hours. I sensed the family’s anguish at arriving late in an unfamiliar place; however, I was able to calm that somewhat by indicating I would wait for them to arrive. I stayed as long as they needed me—to help with the loading doors, elevator keys and giving them a tour of their new home. I could see and feel their relief from the earlier anguish I sensed over the phone a few hours earlier.

Since then, over the years, I have done my best to stop and say “Hello,” to ask residents how they are doing and to attend resident functions to make sure everyone feels welcome while adjusting to life in their new home. Some kind words or small acts of kindness can warm the hearts of many, knowing that we care.

Dear Lord, thank you for our caring communities. Please help and encourage us to show hospitality to strangers.

Donavon McLean is the Director of Housing for LutherCare Communities.

Read Romans 8:35, 37-39

We Are More than Conquerors

WE ARE FORTUNATE SENIORS TO BE LIVING IN A residence like Luther Riverside Terrace that provides good care and concern from both kind staff and caring residents. We are people from all walks of life—diversified interests, occupations, politics, beliefs and faiths. We are known to each other on a first name basis which makes our acceptance of each other more personal. We have every reason to be grateful for the advances in technology and resources we in our generation have experienced and witnessed.

How then do you respond to the lifestyle which is now yours? Someone has said, “Life cannot defeat the person who is truly grateful.” In his letter to the Romans, Paul named the many concerns of his readers: hardship, persecution, distress, famine, peril and sword (Romans 8:35). He answered by saying, “...in all these things...I am convinced that neither death nor life...nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God...” (Romans 8:37-39). We are “more than conquerors.”

In our present situation we can be thankful for the many opportunities we have to fill our days—friendships made over a cup of coffee, birthday or anniversary celebrations, worship services, crafts, workshops, library, surprise events provided by the staff, a garden, gifted entertainers, games and outings. Our response to the question needs to include both appreciation and gratitude! And we can respond with the same kindness we have received from others.

We pray that we may show kindness in our daily life by good deeds, kind and thoughtful words of encouragement, and love and concern for others. Amen.

Aubrey Edworthy is a retired United Church minister living at Luther Riverside Terrace in Saskatoon.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Trouble at the Gas Pump

MY DAY WAS WORKING OUT EXACTLY AS PLANNED. As I pulled up to the gas station, the elderly gentleman waiting in line in front me got out of his car and looked back at me through my windshield. He gave me a warm smile and a nod.

“That’s unusual,” I thought. “Do I know that guy?”

I pulled up to the pump on the other side. Soon, the old man was looking under the hood of his car, and seemed puzzled. It was minus twenty-something that day, so I thought I’d better go over and see if I could help. “This lousy car, it happens all the time!” he exclaimed. “Can you help me push it out of the way?”

After I obliged, he said, “You know, I live nearby. Could you drive me home? I can look after getting the car fixed from there.” I still had a few minutes, so away we went. On the way, John and I had a nice chat about our families, the weather, the Saskatoon Blades, and who knows what else. As I pulled up in front of his house, he thanked me, smiled and said, “It’s nice to know there are still some good people left in this world.” This time, I smiled back and nodded.

I don’t know who benefited more from this experience, John or I. As Paul wrote, “...as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way... by patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love...” (2 Cor. 6:4-6).

Lord, thank you for all the times that you show us how a simple act of kindness can enrich our lives when we least expect it. Your presence opens our hearts to the many unplanned opportunities we have to care for each other. Amen.

Murray Tempel is the Volunteer Coordinator at Luther Special Care Home.

Read Isaiah 61:1-4

Just Being There

IT TOOK A LONG TIME FOR “ANN” TO ANSWER THE door. “Dianne,” who was just there to drop off some papers, was turning to leave when the door opened slowly. Ann was pale, her hair unruly, and she had clearly lost weight. Normally a meticulous individual, her clothing was stained and in disarray, and there were dishes piled up in her sink. Ann invited Dianne in and proceeded to tell her that she’d not been well. The winter had been long. Her body ached. She’d given up her car, so couldn’t readily get out. She didn’t feel much like eating and was loathe to go down to the dining room, and always, *always*, she missed her family. Ann’s husband had died 15 years ago, and in the time since then she had buried all three of her children. Staff in the building had all marveled at her magnificent faith and strength in dealing with these losses. She turned to her Bible every day, and continued to make her beautiful knitted baby blankets for charities. She seemed to have coped so well. But now here she was, very alone, very sad, and simply looking forward to the day she would join them all again.

Dianne came in and put her papers aside. She listened as Ann talked, wept, and laughed at her memories. She made a slice of toast and peeled an orange for her, as Ann lacked the energy to do so herself. While Ann nibbled and chatted, Dianne quietly washed up the dishes in the sink. As they visited, Ann brightened visibly, and said that “she felt so much better.”

Isaiah talks about the spirit of the Lord sending us out to bind up the broken-hearted and comfort all who mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2). In performing our daily tasks, what is often the greatest kindness, and surely the spirit of God, is our gift of time and presence.

Lord, help us to be sensitive to the suffering of those we serve. Grant us patience and compassion, and be with us as we care for others. Amen.

Read Philippians 2:1-11

The Power of Kindness

“...be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

WHEN JESUS CAME TO THIS EARTH, HIS GOAL WAS not to be admired, or envied. His humble coming was an act of love to humanity whom he loved. We see him reaching out to the poor, the ill, the blind and lame, and each time he not only healed, but blessed and strengthened these beloved children of God.

The Apostle Paul is so caught up in the love and attachment which the Lord Jesus has for people, that he encourages us to “be of the same mind.” Each person we encounter is a precious, precious child of God’s creating.

Kindness is not complicated – it begins with seeing a person as God’s child, and reaching out in friendliness, affirmation, assistance, and, of course, patience.

In my years working with seniors, it never ceased to move me when someone would say, “Thank you for noticing me,” or “Thank you for talking with me.” It taught me that so many people are forgotten in this busy world. The kindness in a greeting, a handshake, a few moments of conversation can mean so much in a lonely person’s life. By the way, this holds true whether that person is 80 or 18.

Lord God, you love every person born upon this earth, and your desire is that each person will come to faith, love you in return, and serve you in all they do. Help us to see people as you see them, and reach out in Christian love and kindness. Amen.

Gene Grant is a retired LutherCare Chaplain and a resident at Luther Heights.

Read Mark 5:24-34

Remarkable Faith

THE WOMAN IN OUR GOSPEL READING HAD suffered physically, emotionally and spiritually for years. She would have lived in physical pain and discomfort, and she would have been shunned by the synagogue since she was ill and considered unclean. She probably did not know where she belonged, but then she met Jesus. Somehow she knew that Jesus could help her. This woman had faith in Jesus to meet her pressing need for healing. She was so determined to get his help that she touched his cloak, in effect, rendering him unclean as well. But Jesus did not concern himself with that; he cared about her as a child of God. He cared about meeting her needs. Jesus' response to her act of faith changed her life. She was made whole again. She realized that there was one whose love was unconditional, that one was Jesus.

The woman's physical healing was very important, but, I believe, what really changed her life was her spiritual healing. Jesus said it was her faith that made her well. When many others had written her off, God had not. She trusted in the kindness and goodness of Jesus to make a difference in her life.

I think of one woman in the Care Home who has various health problems and when one health issue or another problem arises in her life she inevitably says, "I'll just say a prayer." She trusts in God for her present and future. Her faith makes her well. Our faith makes us well for we know that God's love and care for us makes all the difference in the world.

Thank you, loving God, for all the different ways you bring healing into our lives. Amen.

Rev. Heather Anderson is the Chaplain at the Luther Special Care Home.

Read Mark 12:28-34

Ripple Effect

FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS MY WIFE AND I HAVE resided in an assisted living place for seniors where there are close to 200 residents. We see gestures of kindness many times each day: a listening ear, a word of encouragement, a pat on the back, a gift of home baking, and many others. What kindness boils down to is a generosity of spirit. It can have a ripple effect: provide an uplift to the recipient, provide a sense of well-being to the initiator, and it can beget kindness in those who witness or hear of the interaction of the two individuals.

These expressions of kindness and ripple effect also happen on a larger scale. An example of this is the care and consideration shown by the staff of Riverside Terrace toward the residents. Staff truly care for the people in our building, and it shows. In response to this, the Resident Council gave a significant amount of money toward the staff Christmas dinner. Kindness begets kindness.

"Faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Our Lord God, we pray that each of us may continue to grow in generosity of spirit. Amen.

Percy Olson is a resident of Luther Riverside Terrace.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Let Me Help You

“YOU SHOULD TRY THIS CHICKEN, YOU’LL LOVE IT.”
“I just love my new car!” In a world where we throw around the word “love” so easily, the Bible takes a more serious approach. In 1 Corinthians 13, often cited as the love chapter, it speaks about how God understands love. Who better to speak about love than One who *is* love (1 John 4:8).

This chapter speaks about what is love and what it is not. One thing we discover is that love is kind. Kindness itself has an element of helpfulness. To help someone is to be kind. Those three little words, “I love you” can easily be interchanged with “Let me help you.” In our profession it is so easy to lose sight of what we’re doing as we “help” people every day. True help is surrounded by kindness and kindness is pure love.

The world glorifies selfish behavior, where God values selfless behavior. It takes a special person to step away from the world and show true kindness (love) to another.

Dear God, let me be kind to all around me each day that you give me here on earth. Amen.

Rey Beriault is the maintenance person for the Group Homes.

Read Sirach 6:14-17

Faithful Friends Are Beyond Price

BECAUSE THEY ARE PHYSICALLY CONNECTED, residents of Luther Tower and Luther Special Care Home (LSCH) can travel between the two facilities any time of day or night and in any kind of weather without fear of the elements. It is a great arrangement that has allowed many spouses, relatives and friends to keep in close contact when one is continuing to live independently in the Tower and the other is receiving care in LSCH.

My office is on the well-travelled route between the Tower and LSCH so I get to observe, and sometimes talk to, the Tower residents who walk by, either on their way to visit a loved one in the Care Home, or returning home afterwards. One lady from the Tower frequently visited a Care Home resident to converse in German. These visits were a great relief to the resident because she spoke only German and the staff could not understand her. When an especially popular and good natured Tower resident needed to move to the Care Home herself, there was a steady stream of her friends and neighbours who went to return the good cheer that she had provided to so many.

Often the passing visitor is going to help his or her spouse at meal time. The visits are not always easy. The visitor may come away worried about the spouse’s health or concerned about an aspect of the care being provided. Sometimes the resident doesn’t recognize the spouse or objects when it is time to part. Still, the visits go on. It is easy to see that “faithful friends are beyond price.” May we who have received the life-saving medicine of friendship, also remember to extend it to others.

Lord, we always have a friend in you. Help us to share your faithful friendship with those around us. Amen.

Bryan Tastad is Director of Development for LutherCare.

Another of God's Miracles

"...and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,' – this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (v. 33).

MY OFFICE WAS IN A QUADRANGLE WITH ABOUT A dozen government and village offices, and staff in each. As I walked into the office one sunny, Botswana morning, I discovered my usually cheerful secretary in tears. When I asked Matudi what was wrong, her reply was that it was useless to tell me because I didn't have any money anyway. The problem was that her sister in the private secondary school needed eighty Pula (about eighty dollars) that day, in order to finish the year and write final exams.

I admitted that I couldn't give her eighty Pula but I could give her twenty and maybe others in the offices would help her too. With a doubtful look she asked if I really thought they would. I replied that she would never know until she tried. So off she went.

Twenty minutes later she returned, all smiles. She had eighty Pula and a list of all the people who gave her money so she could pay each one back. She said she hadn't realized so many would help her. Several of them said that she was their neighbour and the Bible said they should love their neighbour so they wanted to help her. Thoughtfully, she said it was another of God's miracles.

Matudi's sister wrote her final exams, won a scholarship to the teacher training college and became a successful teacher, thanks in part to Matudi's neighbours.

Merciful and loving Creator, we pray that we, too, would be ever mindful of the needs of all our neighbours. Amen.

Laura Lawson is a resident at Luther Tower in Saskatoon.

All Are Welcome

I'D LIKE TO SHARE THIS STORY WITH YOU WHICH I originally heard from one of our residents, Dorothy Cameron.

The girl was young, only about 12 years old. This was to be her first meeting of the Canadian Girls in Training. As she sat waiting for the meeting to get underway she snacked on sunflower seeds. Snapping off the shells and dropping them on the floor, one by one they fell, carpet like around her feet.

When the supervisor came along she was a bit astonished! One young girl and all that mess! She casually and in a quiet, conversational tone asked the girl if she ate her sunflower seeds like that at home. "Not really," was the answer to her question. The supervisor very calmly informed the young lady that there was a broom and dustpan in the cupboard. "I don't sweep" was the response to her information sharing. Not one to rattle easily, this very kind and understanding lady simply, calmly and quietly informed the girl where the broom and dustpan were kept once more. Then off she went to take care of other things.

When she came back later the girl was still there waiting but the floor was clean as a whistle, not a shell in sight! Letting the girl see that she was impressed, the supervisor thanked her and told her she did a wonderful job. No answer came from the 12-year old, only a shy duck of her head and a huge beaming smile. That meeting was the first of many for that young lady and she always showed up happy and with that smile.

Lord, please be with us as we welcome new people into our lives with kindness and understanding. Amen.

Linda Hotvedt is the Food Services Manager at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Read Isaiah 58:6-11

“Hobo”

I WAS WALKING OUT OF A MOVIE THEATRE recently and right outside the doors was a man who said he was hungry and asked me if I had any change to spare. I checked and did not have any change at the time and said so, but as I continued walking I thought... “You just came out of the movie theatre having spent money on tickets, popcorn and drinks for five people and you can’t give him something?” So I stopped, reached into my wallet, pulled out some money and then returned to the man and handed it to him. He responded by saying, “God Bless You.”

Little did I know that with this simple act I had created a teachable moment as my oldest son who had been watching what had transpired asked, “Is that man a hobo?”

I immediately responded by saying, “No, he is a **person** who is hungry.”

I am aware of the controversy of providing money to individuals who ask for it on the streets of our city and what they might use it for, but am so glad I took the time to do so. It provided an opportunity for me to teach my child about looking beyond the appearance and seeing a **person** when someone is begging for money, along with the importance of sharing what we have. (It also provided the opportunity for my wife and I to reminisce about the television classic we watched growing up “The Littlest Hobo.”)

What are you doing to create the spirit of giving in your child or grandchild?

Lord, may you open our eyes to see the opportunities to teach our children as we walk together through life with them.

Ivan Olfert is the Operations Lead, Health Services, for Luther Special Care Home and the Seniors Centre.

Read Luke 10:25-37

A Helping Hand

JESUS USES PARABLES TO TEACH US ABOUT LIFE – TO help guide us in our actions and give us a foundation for the decisions that we make each day. In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus talks to us about the Good Samaritan. He shows us that when we come upon a fellow human being who is experiencing personal distress we have a choice to make.

Personal choice allows us to overlook or disregard someone who is disadvantaged and needing a helping hand. However, Jesus asks us to be Good Samaritans. When we demonstrate love, compassion, mercy and helpfulness to our fellow humans in all of life’s circumstances, we abide by Jesus’ teaching to “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

A gentleman came to the wellness clinic one day for a health appointment. During our conversation I couldn’t help but notice how smeared his eyeglasses were. As I asked him about his glasses, he acknowledged that they had never been cleaned. Once into the eyeglass project I realized it was going to entail far more cleaning than a swipe of the lenses. I returned the glasses after a thorough nook and cranny cleaning and the gentleman left the office with a smile on his face. I’m sure he was glad he had a health concern addressed, but I know he was most grateful for the newly cleaned glasses.

Even the smallest act of kindness is worthwhile. Each of us has the power to make someone else’s day.

Lord, thank you for your gift of love that you shared with all of humankind. As we interact with people each day, let our actions reflect your love, compassion and mercy. Amen.

Cathy Turner is the Wellness Coordinator for LutherCare Communities.

Dilemmas

SHIPHRAH AND PUAH WERE DEALT A PRETTY BAD hand. They were told to do something that went against what they believed. Life is precious. A new baby was to be welcomed not killed. But they had been commanded to kill certain babies. And the command came from no less than the Pharaoh. They had a real dilemma to deal with. What was the right thing to do? Being clever and wise they found a way through. They made it seem easy, but it's not easy to work through some of the situations that come our way.

Every day I see people trying to make the right decision. Can I still manage on my own? Should I move or can I get more help? Should I try something different or stick with what I know? How can I juggle work and all the other responsibilities that I have? What is the right thing to do? Life is full of dilemmas and it's hard to know if we are making the right decision. Like us, the midwives probably wondered how their decision would affect their family and their future.

There are no easy answers to most of the dilemmas that we face from day to day. But we do know that God has promised to walk with us as we face the questions that come up along the way.

Loving God, you have called us to deal with dilemmas that are beyond our understanding, to face situations that seem to have no ending, to travel on paths that we have never been on before. Give us faith and courage to continue on. Help us to know that your hand will lead and guide us and your love and kindness will support us. Amen.

Rev. Marilyn Fowlie-Neufeld is the Chaplain at Luther Heights in Saskatoon.

A Simple Feast

AT A CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR CARE HOME RESIDENTS, A 90 year-old woman listened to the music, and visited with her neighbours, smiling and laughing. She was physically quite frail, but clearly enjoying herself. Being restricted to a diet of clear fluids, she had hot water and Jell-O to eat while everyone around her was being served cheesecake. I asked her how she was enjoying the party, and, indicating her meagre snack, she smiled and said, "This is coffee, and this is ice cream." She had obviously decided to look on the bright side, even if it took some imagination to find a bright side of her situation.

This woman was old and sick; she did not have much life ahead of her. She could easily have, as the widow of Zarephath intended to do, eaten her Jell-O, gone back to her room, and waited to die. Instead she chose to live in community for the remainder of her life. The widow of Zarephath fed Elijah first, and there was enough grain and oil to feed the entire household until the end of the famine. Similarly, this Care Home resident did not turn in on herself and become bitter because she had nothing to eat. Nothing was going to stop her from making the most of the last Christmas party of her life. She had chosen to party with her neighbours, and party she did.

Gracious and loving God, thank you for the gift of life in community. Help us to recognize your love for us expressed through those around us. Help us also to share your love with others by living our lives to the fullest. Amen.

Sarah Dymund is the Intern Chaplain serving at Luther Special Care Home and Luther Tower.

A Glimpse

IN THE PAST I HAVE WATCHED REALITY TELEVISION shows that have had accused criminals speaking of the horrific crimes they committed. It seemed the only two people in the world that never gave up on them were their lawyer (as they were paid to represent their client) and their mother. I always wondered what kind of mother would have something to do with someone who had done such horrible things. Then my children were born and I understood. I love my kids because of who they are; they are mine. It's not what they have done or not done. It is not what others think of them or not. I may not like what they do sometimes, but they are still mine and for this reason alone I would do absolutely anything for them.

Through this experience I feel like I am able to get a glimpse of God's love for us—unconditional love. It is a rare gift that we as humans find another human being that is willing to offer us this kind of love, even on a minimal level, which is still rather difficult to understand and accept. Yet, because of God's love for us, we are able to taste this love, sample it, accept it for ourselves (which is often the hardest part) and offer it to others. God doesn't mind if we have messed up; he loves us simply because we are his. How profound and unfathomable! "We love because He first loved us!"

Thank you, God, for all here at LutherCare Communities and how unique and special we are not only to you but to each other as well. Bless us as we bless each other. Amen.

Mavis Hamilton is the Spiritual Care Secretary for LutherCare Communities.

Winter Rescue

THE SNOW WAS COMING DOWN THICK AND HEAVY. The wind was strong with drifting snow, a good time to stay home and be safe. But a commitment to serve in the Lord's house had been made for Ash Wednesday. I had agreed to run the PowerPoint program for the service.

Slowly, we backed out of the driveway onto the street and got stuck in the deepening snow. Our hearts sank. The shovel was needed. After several attempts at driving, the car only sank deeper into the snow. Concern and frustration grew as it looked impossible to move ahead without assistance. Prayer for help was constant in my heart as my husband attempted to dig us out.

Then a voice asked "Do you need a hand?" My husband replied, "Yes, thank you." The young man proceeded to push the car as my husband was steering and bouncing back and forth. I suggested that if we get unstuck we stay home. Suddenly, the car inched forward and then out, and instead of staying home we continued on in the snowy streets to the church.

The drive was silent and the roads were difficult, but my heart was full of gratitude for the intervention of a stranger who helped in a time of trouble. We did not know this man, where he came from, but thanked God for his timely appearance.

Lord, you promised to be near to those who call upon You. You hear our cries and You help us through adversity. You send your children to help one another. Thank-You for the constant blessing of Your abiding love and care in all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Marion Neufeld is a resident at Luther Heights in Saskatoon.

Read Acts 28:1-10

The Fires of Kindness

ST. PAUL WAS ON HIS WAY TO ROME AS A PRISONER to meet with the emperor. He and his shipmates had been travelling in heavy seas for more than 14 days. Blown off course, without supplies and desperate, they ran aground on a reef near land. It was the island of Malta, south of Sicily. Imagine the relief of finding safety, warmth and a hospitable welcome. It became a welcome of three months. While there, St. Paul practiced the hospitality of healing.

The Greek word translated here as kindness is, "*philanthropos*," meaning "lover of humanity." In my ministry, I have heard stories of people welcoming strangers, serving meals and offering a place to stay. The stories I've heard of the people of Gander, Newfoundland and environs, welcoming stranded airline passengers and crews after the terrible events of September 11, 2001, are heartwarming and inspiring. It is a good thing to be a "lover of humanity." So many of our fellow travellers in this world need safe haven and welcome. We as residents and staff of LutherCare Communities facilities have the opportunity and call to be a welcoming, supportive, and kind presence to those in our respective communities.

God is the ultimate "lover of humanity." God gave us God's Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ, we are part of a world-wide family and we welcome each other. Not only do we welcome each other, but strangers, too. In so doing, we share God's love of humanity and we are blessed.

Gracious God, we ask for hospitable, kind hearts. As you welcome us, may we welcome others in Jesus' name. Amen!

Rev. Greg Fowlie-Neufeld is the Chaplain at Luther Tower, Luther Tower Intermediate Care Home, and the Group Homes.

Read Matthew 25:37-41

A Touch of Kindness

"Just as you did it to the least of these you did it to me".

(Matthew 25:40)

HE WAS DISHEVELLED WITH A SHUFFLING GAIT. Dementia had robbed him of all abilities to communicate verbally. Brilliant blue eyes twinkled among the deep wrinkles etched by the prairie sun. It was Art's first day at the day centre. He was a gentle soul, who required cueing with all aspects of daily living.

At lunch time his bright blue eyes followed me around the dining room. When I walked into the room his eyes searched for me. Time to go home. He held my hand tightly and firmly, an unwillingness to let go made me look up to Art's face. A twinkling in his eyes and a smile! He came back the next day.

Lord, help us to share the kindness to all as we provide care, shelter and support, in a nurturing Christian environment. Amen.

Vivienne Hauck is the CEO for LutherCare Communities.

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Kindness Is “Grace in Action”

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN GALATIONS HAS NINE facets: love, joy, peace, patience, KINDNESS, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It is no accident that kindness is listed as the center of the fruit. Kindness IS the action through which God’s grace is made visible both in those sharing and those receiving kindness.

My mother was a resident in Luther Special Care Home from July 2009 until her death in December 2011. Prior to her move, and from her first day, helping her move into her room, I was aware of an “atmosphere” about the whole place and people and interactions among them all ... administrators, staff, residents, family visitors and volunteers. The atmosphere was, in a word, “kindness.” The caring, respect, dignity, inclusion and love Mom gave and received were all the activity of kindness. I’m not blind to errors, hurts, disappointments or disagreements that occur among people working and living closely together. Even in those (hard) moments, kindness was the undergirding strong active vehicle of grace, God’s grace, for those involved. I helped with a few activities that involved Mom and then found myself wanting, being invited by the kindness I experienced, to volunteer even when Mom wasn’t part of an activity. I wanted to be part of this place where Christian kindness was breathed in and out, and where I would be nourished and encouraged even as I found areas to nourish and encourage.

So here I am, a year and more after Mom’s death, still coming, still volunteering, still being enriched by kindness, God’s grace in the action of residents, staff, administrators and other visitors. I am blessed with kindness.

Lord, help us to be kind people, to practice being kind in action and in receiving the active kindness of others. Amen.

Don Byrt is a volunteer at Luther Special Care Home.

Read Peter 1:5-7

Above and Beyond Kindness

THIS BIBLE PASSAGE BROUGHT TO MIND A WOMAN WITHin our housing facility. She is a resident who puts her friends and neighbours first.

She makes kindness a part of her everyday life and gives from the heart. I know when she has been to visit someone in the building. I do not even have to ask. When she visits, she leaves a taste of her baking behind to spread cheer, and will even stop in on residents she scarcely knows. She is an angel who seems to simply appear when others are in need. She both appreciates her friends and knows how to be a good friend. She tells me that when she goes to worship, there is a friend who stands by her side. This helps her keep her balance, due to not being able to see that well. “Everyone is so kind,” she says, to which I reply, “They are just like you.”

While I was visiting, her phone rang. The call was from a friend whom she hadn’t talked to in a few days and about whom she had been worried. The call was to reassure her that her friend was okay. She shares a similar history and deep connection with this dear friend and with others whom she keeps close in her heart. She mentioned that she prays for her friends and the staff in the building every day.

To borrow Mother Teresa’s words...

“Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”

God, teach us to be loving and thoughtful towards our neighbours and friends. Amen.

Carla Kuchma is the Tenant Services Coordinator at Luther Heights.

Love Kindness

THE PROPHET MICAH URGES HIS COMMUNITY AND us to pause and discern what commands our time and treasure. Micah urges all to align their priorities in obedience to God and service to God's creation.

Our actions and our intent proclaim our priorities. Our interests are either narrow and selfish or expansive and embracing of the world, for the good of the world. Micah recognizes that true happiness comes from faithfulness to God and God's creation. Micah urges us to wait for and upon the Lord and to cherish and protect the vulnerable. Micah urges us to live lives of faithful service.

Jesus, the Christ, healed and reconciled creation not merely by dying passively but by willfully taking the world to and into himself. Jesus submissively waited and yielded to the Holy and in so doing transformed the prevailing narrative of hate and exploitation and abandonment and death. Jesus may have submitted, but he was not passive or inactive.

We are urged to change the prevailing narrative of our time and circumstance. We are urged to similarly wait and yield, and thereby to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. Truly, this is not passive. It is in doing this that we can stand before God in the sure knowledge that we have given all. There is neither more for us to give nor more for us to do.

Lord help me to wait and yield to you, and all that is holy in your creation, even the soft stirrings of my heart. Grant me the humility to hear your call and yield to your command. May love for you feed a desire for justice, prompt a life of gentle service, and quiet me in your presence.

Richard W. Small is a community representative on the Spiritual Care Committee for LutherCare Communities.

Gifts-in-Kind

I WAS HIRED TO FILL THE RECENTLY VACATED position of Maintenance Supervisor at Luther Heights in April 1994. As a journeyman plumber and pipefitter working at industrial projects and commercial buildings throughout the province I was used to a much different work environment where safety was a constant concern while working with cranes and there were strict deadlines imposed to complete assigned work to stay on schedule. As a foreman I often had a crew of 10 pipefitters and welders to supervise.

I recall in my early days at Luther Heights having a bag of birdseed thrust in my hand and being instructed to sprinkle the seed at the south end of the building. In my eyes this task fell under "other duties as assigned" in my job description. I was clearly focused on other aspects of maintaining a 120-suite building, rental homes and Luther Seniors Centre. However I said "Ok," rather than, "It's not my job." I became a quick study on the impact of kindness.

During my first Christmas season at Luther Heights, I witnessed kindness from residents who left gifts of chocolates, muffins and cookies for staff. I learned quickly that taking the time to stop for a chat with a resident while working in their suite was just as important as fixing a leaky tap. When the 2nd floor dining room at Luther Special Care Home was renovated last year, like other staff, I volunteered to serve breakfast and dinner to residents. The kindness I demonstrated turned into an opportunity to be enriched through conversation.

Lord, thank you for the many ways in which you express your kindness toward us every day. Teach us to both receive and to spread your kindness to others. Amen.

Darrell Utley is a Property Manager for LutherCare Communities based at Luther Special Care Home.