

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.



Reflections on Caring Community

Should I become a LutherCare volunteer?

At LutherCare, we regularly need volunteers. Maybe you've wondered what you could do as a volunteer, or perhaps you know of someone who is interested in volunteering and would like to learn more about it.

First of all, the time commitment involved is controlled by the volunteer. You can volunteer as much (or as little) as you want, whether it is two hours per day or two hours per month.

We receive requests for volunteer help from many areas, including Nursing, Spiritual Care, Recreation Therapy and Physiotherapy. Some examples of volunteer work are: providing total or partial assistance to residents at meal times; offering friendly companionship to them; assisting Spiritual Care or Recreation staff with group programs or chapel services; or helping our Physio staff take residents for short walks. Volunteers have a remarkable impact on the quality of our residents' lives, and also enhance the efforts of our staff. Volunteers often tell us about how gratifying their work at LutherCare has been for them:

"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."

Anyone can do it. If you can provide friendship to someone or lend someone a hand, then you can volunteer.

To learn more, please contact Murray Tempel at 306-664-0323 or mtempel@luthercare.com. God bless you for your kind consideration!

Introduction

In 2015, LutherCare Communities is celebrating its 60th anniversary as an organization. In March 1955, a "home for the aged" welcomed the first 58 residents. Several other anniversaries are also taking place this year. The Seniors Centre is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The first group home opened twenty years ago, in 1995. That same year two Community Day Programs (TEMT and Live Smart) were launched. Finally, Luther Riverside Terrace and Luther Tower Intermediate Care Home are each celebrating their 15th anniversary. There is much to celebrate!

Each of the reflections, written by staff, residents, and volunteers, paints a picture of what it means to be a "caring community." Life in community can be messy, especially when there are disagreements, hurts, and misunderstandings. Given our sinfulness, the gift of community can become a burden. By God's grace we are also forgiven which means that we can always begin again. Knowing that none of us is perfect, but nevertheless beloved by God, we can "dare to care" as our vision statement states. We can extend our hand in friendship to another person and be blessed by them in turn.

I wish to thank all of our contributors and to acknowledge Bryan Tastad and Heather Anderson for their assistance with proofreading and Mavis Hamilton for the cover and layout. If you would like additional copies, please contact our Spiritual Care Office at 306.664.0314.

Rev. Renita Falkenstern, Editor

Published by LutherCare Communities, 1212 Osler Street, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 0T9. Copyright 2015.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Peace and Confidence

ST. PAUL SAYS CHRIST WANTS US TO LIVE THE VERY best life possible—with peace of heart and confidence for every challenge of life. We simply need to recognize that we are already “reconciled to God” (verse 20) through Christ! This is God’s GIFT to us through forgiveness! It means God holds nothing against us! Then we can face every circumstance of life with peace and confidence.

Such peace and confidence was demonstrated to me when the first Administrator of LutherCare 60 years ago (known as Lutheran Sunset Home then) was dying in his old age (1984). Dr. Knut Bergsagel lay in his hospital bed when I stopped to visit him. As I entered the room, I saw Pastor Fred Lenz sitting by his bed. Their hands were clasped in an upright position (as if arm-wrestling!) and Pastor Lenz was speaking slowly and loudly and firmly: “What then are we to say about these things? ...If God is for us, who is against us? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ...For [nothing] in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31, 37-39). What powerful convictions between two old men of faith, spoken and ad libbed without a Bible in sight! Reconciled to God! I simply stood silently in reverent awe in the doorway of that hospital room, witnessing the evidence of peace and confidence, now indelibly imprinted in my memory.

Thanks and praise to God for 60 years of constantly nurturing “caring communities” through LutherCare, where God’s reconciliation is announced to EVERYONE, to bring peace and confidence by faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bishop Allan Grundahl is a member of the LutherCare Communities Board of Directors.

Rejoice

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORD! IT IS SO FULL OF JOY and thankfulness. I always start every prayer by thanking the Lord for all his blessings. They keep coming, and if you keep your eyes and heart open, you find more of them every day. It is so easy to find fault in everything and everybody, but those who do that are not happy people. Their lives are not at peace, and they have a negative influence on their surroundings.

And we worry too much. It is such a useless pastime. Most of the things we worry about never happen. For me it has been a great blessing to move into this seniors’ residence. It is so much easier now not to worry. There is no grass to mow or snow to shovel. A dripping tap or a plugged sink will be fixed for you right away. And most of all you never have to be lonesome. There are always loving people around you to lend an ear or share a laugh, people who tell you they will pray for you when you are sick, and those who will slip a birthday card or a get-well card under your door.

You can only rejoice and be thankful!

Thank you Lord for all your blessings. Keep our hearts and thoughts positive so that we may influence those around us to rejoice and be thankful. Amen.

Vibs Paulsen is a tenant at Luther Heights.

Meeting Frances

AS I HELD HER HAND, TRYING TO CARESS AND GIVE her more comfort I whispered in her ear, “Frances, you have been a big part of my learning experience in life. May God welcome you with a warm embrace for you touched a lot of hearts.” Moments later, she passed away in our care, peacefully.

I really admired Frances for her presence of mind. I can say that she had the most outstanding knowledge of humanity – more than anyone I had ever met. As a single mom she said she had learned a lot of things and she shared these things with me. In those moments when I had night duties I would stay in her room for a while and she would give some advice to my kids when they were still awake and would tell them about the value of education. Little did they know that they were talking to Frances Morrison, after whom the main branch of Saskatoon Public Library was named.

Frances loved catching the ball and tossing it back and forth. She loved reading in her spare time and would share some moments with others, especially during their meal time. She never got tired of welcoming everyone and was a very prim and proper lady. She reminded me of my own mother. There were many similarities between them. It was just so sudden when my mom passed away when I was 11 years old. Frances was feeling sad about my story and she encouraged me to keep my spirit strong. Frances was really an epitome of a good leader. She exemplified that until the day she died. I will never forget her.

Dear Lord, thank you for the people who encourage us in our faith and lives. Amen.

Maria Reonal is a full-time personal care worker at Luther Heights Intermediate Care Home.

Imparting Gifts

ROSEMARY LOWERED HERSELF INTO HER FAVORITE chair. It, at least, felt right. She surveyed the room. Her sofa, her favourite lamp, her books were there. All should be well but she felt displaced nevertheless. This building, the city and the people were all new.

She had spent her adult years in a small community, dedicated to family, to gardening, and to serving her church in many ways. She and her husband of fifty years had shared that life. Now he was gone. Her children wanted her to move close to them. With much thought and many tears, she had consented. Now she was here in this seniors’ home. Expecting what? She did not know. Did this mean an end to the life of service that she had known?

Her mind drifted to the Bible. “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...” (1 Cor. 12:4). Her situation was new, but the constant that had been with her all these years was there. “I am part of the body of Christ,” she thought. The Spirit was with her still and calling her into something new. “I have my God-given gifts,” she said out loud. “I will find new ways to use them.” With resolution, she stood up, picked up her coffee cup and headed to the downstairs gathering room. There were people to meet and new things to do! She thought to herself, “The universe is unfolding as it should.”

Gracious God, as we are led into new situations, grant us an understanding that you have a purpose for each life. Give us courage to step forward, knowing you are with us and will guide us through the unknown paths. Amen.

Beth Robertson is a tenant at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Caring Community Is Like Salt and Light

I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF LIVING IN LUTHER Tower for the past six years. It is a lovely high-rise, home, a beacon of light, sitting in a residential area with beautiful trees and houses. Our dining room is the best kept secret in Saskatoon, with its amazing views of the city and beyond, and glorious sunsets.

My first impressions were of a warm, caring place where each person was special. Our staff are true gems, and loving examples for all of us, in welcoming and respecting each person, and visitors. We are blessed daily to live in this caring Christian community.

One lady, who worked in our kitchen for my first four years here, brought such love and joy into her work and interactions with so many of us. She was a light shining for God in our midst. Thanks be to God for her life and loving spirit.

I have been blessed to be a spiritual care volunteer with a lady in the Special Care Home over the past year. She is always so pleased when I come. We talk of many things. She loves to hear news of the Tower and we share family stories. She asked from the beginning if I could read a chapter each week from Mark's gospel, which we completed. Now we are well into Luke's gospel, always with interesting discussion, and ending with prayer. My friend's positive attitude and life wisdom bring light to our weekly visits as we grow in our friendship and our faith.

Loving God, thank you for your constant unconditional love for all of us, as we live our daily lives in these caring communities. Help each one of us to be a light to our neighbors. Amen.

Betty Wood is a tenant of Luther Tower.

Cashiers

I DO THE GROCERY SHOPPING FOR MY FAMILY. AS A result I'm at the checkout counter of a supermarket at least twice a week. On occasion there is a cashier who doesn't make eye contact with me, looks at her watch and makes it apparent that she would rather be somewhere else. She doesn't engage me as a person and there is no conversation between us. She does ring up all my purchases and enables me to pay the bill. I come away from that encounter feeling diminished.

More often the cashier I encounter at the checkout smiles at me and makes eye contact. We have a friendly conversation and have a positive interaction. She also rings up all my purchases and enables me to pay the bill. I come away from the checkout counter feeling good and affirmed as a person.

The first cashier is going through the motions. She's doing her job because she has to. The other cashier is also doing her job, but she does it in a way that shows care and consideration and affirmation. This second cashier typifies (for me) what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he said in Galatians 5:13, "Through love be servants of one another."

As I think about the people I have met who work for LutherCare, I sense that most of the people are like the second cashier. They engage others; they treat others with caring and interest and compassion. LutherCare Communities has always been a faith-based organization, with a commitment to caring. I suspect that's the reason so many employees are people who "through love are servants of one another."

Gracious God, help us to live in your love and be servants of one another. Amen.

Terry Simonson is the Chaplain at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Brotherly Love

SOME DAYS CAN BE VERY TRYING ON ONE'S NERVES. I work in the Special Needs Group Homes and, yes, the scripture verse, "We love because [God] first loved us" (verse 19) is very true for all of us: those who work there, the residents who live there, and their families who visit. I believe that if we did not show compassion for our brothers and sisters, we would not have the opportunity to learn and understand the unconditional love our residents have for those who are involved in their lives.

The residents come to us from their homes, knowing only family who have cared for them, to total strangers now looking after them. I tell staff to care for the residents as they would want someone to care for a loved one of theirs. This is also in caring for their homes, clothing, medical need—the works. I have been with one resident for 14 plus years. I have watched her family grow with all her nieces and nephews. Her family has accepted all the staff as extended family. They are so thankful for the care and love that she receives. This will be a family that I will share in and with after I retire. They have come to mean quite a lot to me.

The family of each resident for whom we care must be able to have faith that their precious child will be looked after as if he or she were home. This is something that we the staff try to show by the care taken and given to all.

Heavenly Father, I ask for you to give us the strength so that, even on those difficult days, we can continue to love one another as you love us. Amen.

Rita Nepper is a Resident Service Manager for the Group Homes.

Love and Respect

CARING FOR OTHERS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MAJOR part of my life. My mother contracted polio at the age of two years and her mobility was very restricted. For this reason, I became her legs at a very early age. As I carried out tasks on my mother's behalf, I came to understand what it means to love and care for someone other than myself. I learned God's truth that it is important to put the needs of others ahead of my own. Still, I find the need to pray daily for his forgiveness when I fall short of the mark.

In Romans 3:23, we are reminded that "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I have worked as the Trinity Tower Manager for more than 25 years and I'm sure that I often fall short of God's ideal. I regularly need a reality check to ensure I continue to serve the Trinity Tower residents and their family members with a joyful heart and mind.

Although I'm far from perfect, I am still grateful that my parents shared with me many valuable teachings from God's Word. I would like to leave you with one of those teachings now: "Stand up in the presence of the elderly, and show respect for the aged. Fear your God. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:32). I'm so glad I grew up in a loving Christian home. Because of the love and respect that I was shown as a child, I am able to love and respect the elders with whom I work every day.

Dear Lord, I pray that your Word will speak to our hearts and bring love and respect into all of our LutherCare homes. Amen.

Dianne Bod is the Manager of Trinity Tower in Estevan.

The Pretty Pink Building

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL WHO lived in a house right next door to a pretty, pink building. The little girl's grandmother lived there and her mother worked there so the little girl spent much of her spare time visiting there. The lady down the hall always had a candy for her and quite often there was a warm cinnamon bun waiting for her in the dining room and the man who cut the grass let her ride along on the garden tractor. The little girl was welcomed by everyone in that pretty, pink building and felt very much at home there.

These are my first and fondest memories of LutherCare Communities. Of course at that time, we just called it the Lutheran Sunset Home and there was no big tower beside it. Even though I was only six or seven years old, I knew that the pretty, pink building was a very special place. Many years later, when my mother became a resident of the Lutheran Sunset Home, I once again found myself visiting the pretty, pink building. Since I was now a little more than six or seven years old, I understood why it was such a special place: it was a place where people "lived together in unity" and cared for each other, whether they resided, visited, or worked there. Whether they were six or ninety-six, each person in that pretty pink building had a unique piece of care to offer. Today, my own little girl loves to come to work with me where she can visit grandpa & nana, aunt & uncle, and whomever else she can find. The man in the puzzle room always has a candy for her, and quite often she can find a warm cheese biscuit in the dining room, and the exercise class lets her join in. She is welcomed by everyone and has come to feel very much at home here. She knows that this is a very special community – a community that all started with that pretty pink building.

Dear God, Please guide this special community as it grows to care for future generations. Amen.

Andrea Cameron is the Administrative Assistant at Luther Heights.

Part of a Great Team

I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING PART OF A GREAT team at Luther Special Care Home. Staff in all departments, working together, continue to write page after page in the residents' book of life stories.

"Love must be genuine..." (verse 9).

I love to see the reaction of joy on the residents' faces when I pull out my mandolin or violin to play along with Stanis, Mavis or Pastor Heather who make the piano beautifully resonate in the dining halls. As everyone sings along with the old songs and hymns, I bet the angels stop and gasp at the sound of this saints' choir.

I love to see the lively sparks in the eyes of the residents when they participate in the activities, games and parties that Cynthia and Char tirelessly throw again and again.

I rejoice to see the ladies grin in pleasant surprise when I refresh their manicure.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice..." (verse 15a).

It's hard to see residents pass away, but our Father in heaven decides when we come, and when we go...

"...weep with those who weep" (verse 15b).

Love is a person. Anybody can embody love through their actions. I grieve when I am the opposite of love. I am the first one to suffer when I do not walk this pattern of blessed humanity. When I am love, I am the most blessed of all.

Happy Anniversary LutherCare! You are a great team!

Father in heaven, without your help and sustaining hand we won't be able to be love to one another. You make it possible. Thank you. Amen.

Rebeca Corlan is a Recreation Worker at Luther Special Care Home.

We Have the Power

WE KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE THAT need loving care and attention, and our community at LutherCare is no exception. I love witnessing a small event or hearing a story about how this need has been met. Happily, where we work, this happens every day!

A student recently told me how he thoroughly enjoys the time he spends visiting a resident of Luther Special Care Home. Then he added, "I love seeing him happy!" It was clear that helping this gentleman made him feel good. His simple, yet powerful, statement reminded me that we ourselves are blessed by the love that we show to another person, just by giving that person our kind attention.

Another time, a young volunteer told of her experience in one of our dining rooms while assisting a resident with his meal. Due to a disabling disease, the resident seemed no longer capable of outwardly showing any sign of appreciation. Still, the volunteer described a very rewarding feeling of "emotional growth." Selflessly helping someone receive such a basic need felt like "giving a gift of pure love."

In 1 John 4:7, we are encouraged to "love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." By seeing this demonstrated at work every day, I take great comfort in knowing that God is alive and well at LutherCare.

God, let us never forget the power of love, and that we all have the capacity to use that power and share it with others. Amen.

Murray Tempel is the Director of Staff Development & Volunteers at Luther Special Care Home.

Actions of Hope and Healing

A RESIDENT ONCE EXPRESSED TO ME SOME AMAZE-ment but thankfulness on the number of cards and expressions of condolences he received after the death of a close loved one. One might feel alone in grief, yet the caring actions of the community showed that he was not alone. There was support and the sharing of sadness. Doubtless all of those giving their care and love also had known sorrow and the pain it can bring.

I have seen within LutherCare Communities an expression of support for those going through difficult times. I myself have been the recipient of care from the members of this organisation, both residents and staff.

The words of Isaiah proclaim an active hope. They are action words, after all. The Lord "sent" his servant to "bring" good news... to "bind up"... to "proclaim"... to "comfort"... to "provide" (verses 1-3). All these words and connected phrases encourage hope, comfort, healing and wholeness. Indeed, Jesus himself echoed the prophets and added, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

Just as the LORD anointed his servant to bring good news, and as Jesus actively fulfilled the good news in his ministry, we are called as God's servants to do the same. Through our caring words and actions in our communities we bring hope, love, strength and wholeness in the midst of difficulty, sorrow, sickness, and situations that oppress.

Dear God, You bring us good news of wholeness and promise. Thank you for the love and life you give us. May we so follow that we, on your behalf, are bearers of hope and healing. Amen!

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

Read Joshua 1:1-9

My Journey

LAST YEAR I WENT THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME. I was diagnosed with low grade cancer and needed immediate surgery. I went through months of doctors' appointments in preparation for my surgery.

For me and my family this was a hard time and difficult news to hear. The verse that comes to mind is found in Joshua chapter 1 verse 5 where God said, "I will not fail you or forsake you." Even though we did not know what the outcome of the report would be, we had hope. Through this journey I am now cancer free.

I, along with my family, am surrounded by a community of people who are still praying, caring and loving us.

Lord, may you help us to always have compassion for those around us. Amen.

Elaine Bleie is a Continuing Care Assistant at Luther Special Care Home.

Read Ephesians 4:29-32

Building Well

"Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up..." (v 29).

SIXTY YEARS OF LUTHERCARE. I FEEL CONNECTIONS. In my student days I had opportunity to see the original building take shape. When the place was operating I got to meet some of the residents and even to conduct worship. Over the years there have been a variety of family connections and now we reside at Luther Heights. It has been a good experience.

In our scripture today, the Apostle Paul reminds us of the power of words in our relationships. There are two directions words can lead us and only one is good. The old verse, "sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me," may be a way to put unkind words to the side, but words can be so destructive. Paul knew it and for him evil talk is the opposite of the words that build up. Just a couple of sentences further on in today's reading, there is a listing of the emotions that govern our words, whether they come from bitterness and anger or from kindness and tenderness. Good words do not always come easily so we are invited to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us.

I am happy that each day I hear many words that help the day go well, because I am hearing the positive side of people's lives. This is encouragement for the day.

Let us pray: May our words this day be grace to those who hear so that both they and we may be built up. Amen.

Rev. Ed Hedlin is a tenant at Luther Heights.

Glimpses of God's Face

ON THE 2ND FLOOR OF LUTHER SPECIAL CARE HOME I read the following from the late Catholic priest Henri Nouwen, written on one of the inspirational message boards. "All (people) hold a blessing, a blessing that each of us needs to receive. Caregiving is, finally, receiving God's blessing from those to whom we give care. What is the blessing? It is a glimpse of the face of God."

A caring community is one in which there is opportunity for every person to give and receive care. In the LutherCare family of communities, people belong in different ways—as residents, family members, visitors, volunteers, staff, and administrators. The care given and the care received is unique to the daily experiences of every member living in this Christ-centered community of people drawn together by accident, by plan, by needs, by God. There are joyful moments and sad ones, frustrations and satisfactions, all the ups and downs of a caring family striving for the best possible experience of living fully for each person.

Sometimes each of us gives care to another, whatever our part in the community. Sometimes each of us receives care from another, whatever our part in the community. The Colossians reading referenced above instructs us to "clothe" ourselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" in our interactions with each other. Then, sometimes in my care given to you, I will glimpse God's face in your need met. Sometimes in your care given to me, you will glimpse God's face in my need met.

Lord, as we live together in caring community, may your face be glimpsed in each of us, and may each of us glimpse your face in every other person. Amen.

Don Byrt is a volunteer at Luther Special Care Home in Saskatoon.

A Blessing in Disguise

AS I WALKED INTO THIS NEW ROLE OF BEING IN charge of Luther Seniors Centre, I had no idea what would be in store for me. I figured that if I remained open minded, organized and a positive leader, it shouldn't be that difficult.

Then I started to get to know the participants and their families...and I was forever changed. I got to know them as individuals. I got to know their stories. I got to know some pretty wonderful people.

I learned how they used to be doctors, world travellers, business owners and housewives. There was Sally who was one of the first women to be involved in the war. Milly who was one darn good shot and could outhunt any man in the area. Then there was Sam. He beat cancer—twice. Now he was on the doorstep of my program in need of help in a totally different way. And last but not least, there were the ever so strong and dedicated family members. They went from being partners to caregivers. They watched their loved one slowly slip away from them, even when they were standing next to each other. Their retirement plans were shattered. Nice suppers were no longer possible. They became increasingly isolated from family and friends. Soon I realized that no amount of being organized mattered. All that mattered was that I listened, learned and loved.

Dear Lord, it is for these lessons that I feel eternally blessed. Not a day goes by that I don't appreciate life just a little bit more because these people have taught me how to be strong and to focus on the good. Amen.

Kim Willick is the Nurse-in-charge of Luther Seniors Centre, a community day program for adults with irreversible dementia.

All You Need Is Love

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).

WORKING AT LUTHER SPECIAL CARE HOME PROVIDES ample opportunity to see selfless love in action, whether it is witnessing the undying devotion of a spouse who comes every day to watch over their loved one, or a volunteer who gives of their talents and time to brighten the day of someone who could never repay them for their kindness. You can witness staff members going above and beyond what is required of their position just to make a resident or co-worker smile and feel valued.

Muriel was a resident in the Care Home. Every day, her loving husband Jack, who lived in the Tower, would come to get her. I will never forget the beautiful smile she had on her face when she and Jack walked arm in arm onto the elevator to leave the building.

In witnessing these acts of love, I have come to the conclusion that love is a decision and proof of that decision is in your actions. In the currency system of love, talk is cheap but walking the talk is priceless.

Lord, help us to be ever mindful of your command that we love one another. Although we may not always see how our actions affect others, help us to trust that no act of love is ever wasted. Amen.

Laurel Janzen is an Administrative Assistant at Luther Special Care Home.

Two Are Better than One

I AM THE YOUNGEST OF SIX CHILDREN; CONSEQUENTLY I have known my immediate family all my life. I have known my husband and his family for over twenty-seven years. Of course, we have acquired more family throughout the years, which we love and care for, especially those cute little great nieces and great nephews!

I also have many wonderful friends that I know and love. Some of my friends I have known since before I could walk. I have many friends that I met as the years have gone by (some of whom feel more like family than friends). I have friends I have met more recently and some that are more acquaintances actually. I love all my family and friends and could not live without them!

But, I also have a very best friend! Someone I do not have to say anything to, but who knows my thoughts, my inner yearnings and desires. This friend actually died for me and rose again! He saved me from myself and my sinful ways. He is preparing a home for me. Yes, I am talking about Jesus! Jesus is the one friend I could not live without. He has helped me through more than anyone else ever could and gives me reason to keep moving ahead, looking forward to tomorrow!

Thank you, Jesus, for being my best friend! Thank you for all my family and friends and how they impact my life! Bless my family and friends that they too may feel your love and care. Bless LutherCare Communities as we look forward to all the wonderful years that lay ahead of us. Amen.

Mavis Hamilton is the Spiritual Care Secretary for LutherCare Communities.

Mercy and Love Live Here

LUTHER RIVERSIDE TERRACE HAS PROVEN TO BE AN environment rich in mercy, giving, and “love in action.” Over the last year, I have been awed by the atmosphere of kindness and acceptance of one another, each with his or her quirks, celebrated as uniqueness, creating a sense of belonging for all.

Seeing people go out of their way to be merciful and giving brings moisture to my eyes and at times a lump to my throat. On one such occasion, a resident, who I will call “Mrs. Smith,” was visiting her new suite in advance of her move-in the following week. Although a very competent woman, nervousness and anxiety crept in with all the changes, including a future without the love of her life.

As she stood gazing into her soon-to-be new home from the threshold, several residents stopped to introduce themselves as they passed by. This in itself gave Mrs. Smith a good feeling about her new home. Then a few ladies from nearby suites came over to meet her and give her friendly advice about “what to bring, what not to bring,” and “what to expect”—very helpful for their soon-to-be neighbour. Mrs. Smith even left with a phone number of one of the ladies to call if she had any questions; comforting indeed. She knew she would be arriving to a warm environment and her anxiety was replaced with a new sense of anticipation.

Lord, help us to be merciful and loving, accepting and giving, quick to forgive and free of judgment. Let your light shine through us that we may be a blessing to all who share our path. Amen.

Teresa Isaac is the Housing Manager at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Building Caring Communities

I RECALL THREE LADIES AT LUTHER SPECIAL CARE Home. These ladies sat together at the same dining table and at church and other programs in the Care Home. The reason for this is that they cared very much for each other and helped each other out. They were seldom apart. At the dining table one resident who could see well would read the menu to the others whose sight was diminished. One of the ladies at the table would orient another to the time of day and what activity was coming up next. They were able to assist each other with some of life’s basic tasks. They were dependent on each other and they became very good friends. The resident that remains told me that she is looking for others to care for.

These residents reminded me of the text for today. Four people brought a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. They couldn’t come in through the door because of the crowd so they lowered him through the roof. They were determined to get help for their friend and would not rest until they saw Jesus. They knew that Jesus could heal their friend and they depended on Jesus’ grace and mercy to do so. Jesus marvelled at their faith. In Jesus’ time, many people believed that physical problems were punishment for a person’s sins, but Jesus did not see it this way. In this text, Jesus showed that he had the authority to heal and forgive sins. He was building a caring community of his own and he is still building it today.

Loving God, enable us to see our neighbor’s need and care for them in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Heather Anderson is the Chaplain at Luther Special Care Home.

Stones of Remembrance

LIFE IS FULL OF MOMENTS THAT WE DO NOT WANT to forget: first steps, first day of kindergarten, first love, and first kiss. These are moments that made that day just a little brighter.

In our text, the Lord commanded the twelve tribes of Israel concerning their first steps into the Promised Land. Generations dreamt of this day since the promise was given to Abraham. Some four hundred and fifty years had passed and there had been times of enslavement, near starvation, and a not-so-pleasant desert detour. The promise was about to be fulfilled and God did not want this day to be just another day. Each tribe was to take a stone from the midst of the Jordan and carry it to the other side. These stones then became a monument to the goodness and faithfulness of God: a tangible memorial to a God who always keeps his promises. Using this as our example today, we need to remember the “Jordan crossings” of our spiritual lives, so that we may bear witness to God’s powerful working on our behalf.

LutherCare is celebrating such a 60th year “stone of remembrance” with a continuing commitment to the founding promise of LutherCare as a faith-based caring community. From its first building in 1955 with 58 residents to the multiple facilities housing over 1000 residents today, may God continue to bless LutherCare Communities.

Dear heavenly Father, we praise you that you are a God who keeps your promises. We thank you for our godly heritage, for past struggles through which you sustained us, and for future blessings which you graciously grant us. May we mark these occasions with stones of remembrance, monuments to you, our loving heavenly Father. Amen.

Lori Budd is a Personal Care Worker in the Intermediate Care Home at Luther Riverside Terrace.

Follow the Leader

THE SCRIPTURE ASSIGNED FOR TODAY IS THE familiar account of Christ feeding the five thousand. Earlier, Christ had sent the disciples out to preach and heal but take nothing extra with them. No snackies! Christ has also been busy teaching and healing and may have heard of the beheading of John the Baptist. He must be tired and heavy laden, but his concern is for the disciples as they return from their assignment. He tells them to go to a deserted area and rest. But thousands of people join them in their “deserted” place. The disciples have some concern for the masses and suggest that Christ tell them to go home. When he hears of the disciples’ suggestion, he calls for action, and through his love and compassion, tells the disciples to feed them. Christ wants them to meet the physical needs of the crowd—a true Servant Leader!

A couple thousand years before today’s leaders started talking about “Servant Leadership,” Christ was the supreme example. In Matthew 20:28 we read, “...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” We, too, are called to serve and in love and compassion to take action, to the degree we are able, to foster Luthercaring communities. Little things soon make enlarging circles of love and care—a smile, a pat on the back, sharing of goodies and talents all contribute to building caring communities.

We can be Servant Leaders. As we seek to live into the role it becomes contagious to those around us. With prayer and practice in following our Leader we can help make a difference.

Lord, in all our walks in life, help us to portray the love and compassion of our Servant Leader, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Muriel Jarvis is a tenant at Luther Riverside Terrace.

A Blessing from God

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF CARING FOR SOMEONE? To me, caring means being concerned about the people around you. Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the last supper. When Peter asked him why he was doing this, Jesus replied "...if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (verse 14). We are to love each other just as Jesus loved us.

When I joined LutherCare, my idea was not only to get a job, but in doing this work, I would have the chance to serve seniors and elders. In my culture, respecting elders is a blessing from God to us. As I serve them I feel that I am receiving blessing and favour from God.

A very simple act like a hug, smile or a conversation can lift their spirits. One day, when I went into S---'s room to call her for coffee she was sitting on her bed. She seemed very sad and she started to cry. She asked me where she was. I told her she was in Luther Heights and that she lives here. She said "No, I live with my daughter." I said, "Yes, you go there only on weekends and on holidays for suppers." I sat beside her on the bed, comforted her, hugged her and ensured her I was going to take care of her. I told her she was not alone here. She felt better, wiped her tears and went downstairs for coffee. She talked to everyone, smiling and having a good time.

Faithful God, teach us through Jesus Christ the lesson of humility and caring for others. Amen.

Rozina George is a part-time Personal Care Home worker at Luther Heights Intermediate Care Home.

Beginning with Prayer

"...that...the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

IN MY TIME SERVING AS A CHAPLAIN, I REMEMBER journeying with Florence. She was in and out of hospital for a number of years for tests and treatments for cancer that was continuing to move through her body. Florence and I visited often. Each time I came, Florence graciously welcomed me with a smile, inviting me to sit down to share conversation, scripture and prayer with her. One day I asked her, "Florence, do you ever get tired of this struggle?" She paused, looked down and then slowly lifted her head and said quietly, "Yes, I did the first year after my cancer diagnosis, but I have learned, with God's help, to begin each day with this prayer – 'Dear God, grant me the faith and strength I need for this day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.'"

She went on to share that she knew she was surrounded by a loving community that cared about her. Florence took great comfort in knowing that people were praying for her, sending her cards, and offering to assist her in any way they could.

This is one of the many gifts of being a part of a LutherCare Community. We are surrounded by a circle of care and we are blessed to be part of that circle.

Gracious and loving God, grant me the faith and strength I need for this day. Help me to care for others, and to be cared for by others. Amen.

Rev. Heather Kleiner serves on the LutherCare Spiritual Care Committee and is a former LutherCare Communities Chaplain.

Encouraging One Another

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

WORKING FOR LUTHERCARE IS A WONDERFUL blessing, but with any job, and at any point in one’s life, we sometimes have bad days. It seems, at times, that everything happens at once. We have many things go wrong at work, problems to solve, children to take to activities or school, or community responsibilities that sometimes make life seem overwhelming. During these challenging times, it can be difficult to remember how lucky we are and to count the blessings we do have.

It was one of those days when I was feeling particularly overwhelmed. So many things were happening at work that needed attention, and life was equally busy at home. It seemed, for a while, I felt like I was drowning. Out of nowhere, one staff member left me a gift of a small angel. She had just noticed it in a store and thought of me and wanted to give it to me. Just because. That same day, a resident stopped me and wanted to tell me that she was grateful that I was here. She felt I was a blessing in the work I do.

These two incredible acts of kindness completely changed my “grumpiness” that day. It doesn’t take much to brighten someone’s day. Words of encouragement or kindness can have such a huge impact.

Lord, thank you for bringing people into our lives who show us kindness. Help remind us each day to share that kindness and bring peace and joy to those who receive it. Amen.

Lynn Szuba is the Housing Manager of Luther Heights.

It’s Not a Competition

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1955, LUTHERCARE COMMUNITIES has been an organization where people use the gifts God has given them to care for the residents. It is one “body” with many members, ranging from a Board of Directors using their gifts of diligently leading the organization, to the employees using their gifts of giving (of their time and energy), serving, teaching, and encouraging.

In my position, I have the unique privilege of seeing many of the ways this is manifested throughout LutherCare Communities. I see Board members from various backgrounds coming together to bring their own expertise and skills to lead LutherCare from a governance perspective. I see senior management representing each of the Divisions within LutherCare coming together to lead from an operational perspective. I see the many departments within each facility coming together to care for the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects of our residents. And I see it being done in a manner of care and compassion.

As Paul cautions in the scripture passage, “do not think of yourself more highly than you ought,” we need to keep in mind that all gifts are important and needed. We are not in a competition to determine how important any gift may be. The gift to lead is not more important than the gift to encourage, but is equally as important. What truly matters is that we use our gift to bring glory to God, which will then benefit the whole organization. In this way we can fulfill our mission “to provide care, shelter, and support in a nurturing Christian environment for all entrusted to our care.”

Father God, please help each of us to use the gifts you have given us to the praise and glory of your name. Amen.

Melody Lewis is the Executive Secretary to the CEO.

Being a Servant to One Another

THE REASON THE BIBLE CALLS US TO SERVANTHOOD is not solely what it does for others, but also what it does for ourselves. A true act of servanthood raises and empowers both the recipient and the person doing the giving.

I am reminded of a story of a volunteer who ministered at a long-term care facility. Over the course of several months, the volunteer experienced a number of personal struggles regarding family and career. Though quite distressed, she chose to honor her commitment and take part in regular visits. On approaching a new resident, the resident noticed that the volunteer's face seemed quite downcast and asked the volunteer what was troubling them. Unable to hold back, the volunteer blurted out all about their recent struggles and challenges. After a short time, feeling better and more relaxed, the volunteer asked the resident what brought them here. On hearing the resident's life experiences and challenges, the volunteer began to see how benign her own struggles were in comparison. Thinking she was there to listen and support the resident, the volunteer started to feel quite embarrassed. Expressing her embarrassment to the Chaplain, the Chaplain said that the volunteer need not be embarrassed since the resident was given the opportunity to give of themselves, providing them with a sense of fulfillment in being able to help someone else.

It is not only about being a servant to those for whom we care, but allowing them to "give" of themselves that we each develop a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

Let us give thanks to God who gave the world the ultimate servant leader – Jesus – to show us the way as we work to make LutherCare a "community" where all who reside and work have the opportunity to serve one another. Amen.

Richard Lungal is the VP of Corporate Services.

A Safe Place to Rest

WHEN ADAM WAS IN THE GARDEN, LIVING IN PARADISE, God saw his loneliness and provided a wife for him. Through them came a family and generations to follow that gave them a sense of belonging. We also have that need to belong.

It is important to have people with whom we can share, laugh, express our feelings, and give and receive support. LutherCare Communities is where this can happen as relationships grow and there is a willingness to be open with one another. In times of deepest pain, or the storms in life, a loving relationship can provide some security and a safe place to rest.

Greater than any human relationship, however, is a relationship with God through finding out what he says to us through his Word, and through praying to him and receiving answers that God knows are best for us.

When the nurses phoned in the middle of the night to say that a dear sister was nearing death, two of her siblings arrived at the hospital to be with her at that crucial time. They knew that the greatest comfort that could be given would be compassionate words of love. Standing by her bedside, they thanked her for the many ways she had so freely demonstrated her love for family members. Then they gave her the assurance that God was present in the room and was preparing to take her home. Since the dying sister was a lover of music, her sister and brother began singing familiar hymns of faith in harmony, and as they continued singing, they witnessed her quietly slip away into the arms of Jesus.

Lord, it is your will that we have loving relationships. Teach us to love you and freely share that love with others. Amen.

Helen Salte is a tenant at Luther Place in Outlook.

Care for One Another

MY DAY HAD BEEN EXHAUSTING: FIRST A MEDICAL appointment, then meeting a friend for lunch and finally a trip to the bank with a problem. And I just missed my bus! Needless to say I was upset, knowing I had to wait another half hour for the next bus. I found a bench to sit on while I waited.

I probably looked miserable, but another lady came up, smiled and asked to share the bench. As she settled down I noticed a walking cast on her leg, so I enquired how this happened. She told me she had fallen on ice a few weeks earlier, but today she had to go downtown for a dentist appointment. Now she was waiting for a friend to pick her up so she could visit a friend in the hospital. She continued smiling as we talked and I realized my life was actually pretty good. Her friend arrived before my bus, so I wished her well and she was gone. I was smiling.

What a good Samaritan she had been for me. I said a little prayer for my new friend and asked for forgiveness for my own selfish thoughts. I went home happy. The love I received from her left me blessed. It was unspoken but I felt it. My hope is that I can do the same for others.

Thank you, Lord, for your loving daily presence in our lives. Help us always to be aware of the needs of others that we may be of service to them and always with a smile. Amen.

Margaret Heffernan is a tenant at Luther Tower.

Priceless Joy

I WORK PART-TIME AT LUTHER HEIGHTS INTERMEDIATE Care Home. Most of the residents have dementia, but by treating them with respect and dignity we are sure to make a big difference in their lives.

One of the residents asked me, "Where have you been? Do you still work here? I missed you!" In that moment, I felt appreciated and grateful. I did not expect the residents to notice my absence. Another resident told me she never had a daughter before and that she would like to have me as her own daughter. I was delighted by her kindness toward me, and how she cared for others, even though she was the one who received most of the care.

Every time I go to work, there is one resident who has a lot of anxiety. Her lips quiver and she has tremors all over her body. She asks for my help every time she sees me. I walk by her room and she asks me to come in. I spend time helping her finish her glass of ginger ale, and while doing so, I ask her how things are going and several more questions. As the conversation continues, I notice that she starts feeling better. I think just "being there" for her helps decrease her anxiety and makes her not feel so alone. I may not be able to cure her disease, but I am able to make a difference in her life in that moment.

When I get home from work, I may feel exhausted, but the fulfillment and satisfaction fill my heart with priceless joy.

Loving God, help us to view each person as a whole person and to abound in love for one another and for all. Amen.

Jayne Bergonia is a Personal Care Worker at Luther Heights Intermediate Care Home.