



Great EXPECTATIONS

A Newsletter on Expanding Ministry *With* Older People

Caring conversations lead to new expectations

All of us cherish our privacy. However, as the people of God we are also moved by His Spirit at appropriate times to speak up. Jesus teaches us, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good" (Matthew 12:34-35).

What are the first indications that our hearts are now responding in faith to the richness of God's love and forgiveness in Christ? The words that issue from our hearts reveal that our old selfishness there is being repaired through faith in the Savior. The apostle Paul points to additional evidence, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another" (Colossians 3:12-13).

When we visit and engage in caring conversations with seasoned fellow Christians, we reflect the kindness Jesus has shown us. This is especially true when we intentionally talk about two subjects:

1. In what ways can we be the compassionate hands of our Lord Jesus to help you experience more fully the abundant life He intends for you?
2. What spiritual gifts and abilities has He entrusted to you to help build up and refresh our fellowship in Jesus' church and expand service to others in our community and the world who also need Him?

Mature Christians often face the limitations of aging. They hunger for notice and a loving boost. Some of the help they seek will be short-term, some long-term. As experienced believers, they recognize that they have had personal and family tests which equipped them with new tools to bolster others. Brief but accurate notes detailing our visits with them should be added to their permanent files. They will provide hints for subsequent conversations.

Here are just a few samples of what we might ask our veteran Christians, recording their answers for our congregation's soul accounting files:

1. Do you have a family member living close by? Who helps you in an emergency? Do you have any worries about where you live? What concerns do you have about your health? What help would you like to have with daily tasks? Do you have any financial or legal issues for which we might provide references? Would you like to receive periodic personal telephone calls, visits, or cards from congregation members? What transportation might we provide when you need it?
2. How long have you had a connection with our church? Where were you baptized? What do you remember and cherish most about your childhood? What helps you most to mature in your Christian discipleship? What spiritual gifts have you received? Which do you especially nurture and enjoy using? What activities or ministries would you like to participate in? Would you prefer to celebrate Holy Communion in your home? How would you like to pay attention to and show care for other older people? To which individuals in a younger generation (young children, primary or middle grade children, high school youth, college students, young parents, etc.) would you like to relate to more fully?

Let's volunteer ourselves to help reach adults in our congregation over age 65. It may nudge our Older Adult Ministry Team to flesh out and use the information we gather more effectively. Then we can better serve the needs and use the skills of all the people who make up the mission of Christ.

For a downloadable, reproducible form incorporating these ideas, visit www.lcms.org/library and look in "Box of Chocolates" under Family Ministry.

The Church at Work

DCS
District & Congregational Services

Dr. Vic Constien
■ Vol. 1 No. 6
■ March 2010

A publication of The
Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod, District
and Congregational
Services—Family Ministry
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