

# Called to Care

## **The Bible Calls us to Love in Action**

Throughout both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, notions of love and care are widespread. It is important to note that the kind of love mentioned throughout scripture was not associated simply with feeling or emotion. Rather, love referred to a decision to act on behalf of others, with their best interest in mind. Understood biblically, love cannot be separated from action.

## **God Demonstrates Love in Jesus**

For Christians, the incarnation of the divine in Jesus Christ is the primary expression and revelation of God's love. Compassion, frequently used synonymously with love, literally means to feel or suffer with another, or to walk in another's shoes.

Traditional Christian belief holds that God, in order to express love, chose to take human form. By God's walking in human shoes, men, women, and children might more fully know, understand, and relate to the Holy One. Perhaps this love is best revealed in the name ascribed to Jesus Christ: Emmanuel, meaning God with us.

## **Jesus Calls Disciples to Care**

The gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry are filled with descriptions of Jesus' of care in a variety of settings and forms. This care was physical (such as healing and feeding others) but Jesus' care and concern was for the wellbeing of the whole person. The disciples of Jesus inherited this ministry:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

—John 13:34-35, New Revised Standard Version

## **Christian Communities Care in Many Ways**

From their beginnings, through the centuries, Christian communities responded to God's call to care as disciples. This response goes beyond the interpersonal, including, for example, the establishment of institutions. Literally



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thousands of hospitals, schools and colleges, community centers, orphanages, and nursing homes have been founded, supported, and maintained by the Christian church. The Christian call to care has also found expression in community action committed to justice and peace.

## **Forms of Caregiving Continue to Develop**

Today, the Christian community continues to concern itself with many kinds of caregiving ministries. Making use of developments in the social sciences, the pastoral care and counseling movement has brought renewed skill and interest. Many people, both laity and clergy, have specific training in caregiving ministries. Publication of books on caregiving themes abounds. Universities and seminaries offer courses and degree programs related to care giving in the church.

## **Christian Care Happens Everywhere....**

Caregiving ministries do not occur only inside a hospital, hospice, or nursing home. Caring is at the heart of our faith and can be expressed in every setting of the church's life (meetings, worship, education, and more). Caring can also be expressed in the workplace, at home, through community involvement, and in countless other settings.

## **.....And Everyone Cares**

Likewise, these ministries rely on varied skills and personal expressions. The call to care is a call to all baptized Christians, and the church's ministries are to be carried out by all Christians, not just those who have acquired professional expertise.

## **With God's Help and Presence**

In short, Christian people are people who are called to care. We are called by a God who cares for us, and who has expressed that care in the person of Jesus Christ. We look to the life and ministry of Jesus and find multiple ways to care. We discover the promise of the presence of the Holy Spirit, as we carry out the command to love one another in this place and this time.

