

Called to Care

Care-giving is at the heart of our Christian life together, and *Called to Care* is useful for a variety of different purposes and programs. First, it helps a church explore the nature of its own caring role and what may help support or expand that role. It provides assistance with organizing those care-giving ministries. It outlines a basic training program to develop the skills and abilities of those providing care. It also gives suggestions for ongoing enhancement in each of these areas: identifying caregiving needs, maintaining appropriate organizational support, and supporting and training caregivers.

Called to Care can help answer questions as diverse as these:

- ◆ What are some practical things our church can do to demonstrate its caring?
- ◆ My pastor has asked me to assist with visitation. What do I need to know to get started?
- ◆ My friend's mother has Alzheimer's disease. I'd like to get a better idea of what she is going through and how I can be helpful.
- ◆ I've been given responsibility to plan a lay care-giving program. How can I train the members of the team?
- ◆ Several members of our church have been living with cancer. How can we reach out to them, and to others in the community who are dealing with this disease?

Because care-giving is at the heart of our life together in the church, these are but a small sample of the ways that the training, resources and supportive materials in *Called to Care* can assist a congregation or other program.

Users appreciate the flexibility of *Called to Care*. It can be used by congregations of every size and description. It can serve a wide variety of needs and programs, such as visitation ministry; parish health programs; support groups; or other specialized service programs. Or it can simply help a congregation understand community needs and develop supportive networks and relation-



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ships. It can support congregation members serving in community based programs, or can be used by independent service organizations.

When a congregation or program decides to buy and use *Called to Care*, it may be a result of very specific ideas of program needs. But most congregations find they have to spend some time clarifying not only needs, but opportunities to grow in caregiving. The manual supports this planning period and helps design an organizational structure to support the effort. It provides basic training and ongoing resources.

Called to Care assumes that the nature of each program is unique and each will begin, develop, and redevelop in its own ways. Congregations and communities will change. The resource provides a starting place from which each program grows. A visitation program may reveal a need for transportation services to appointments. A prison visitation may lead to family support groups in the community.

Likewise, caregivers will need training and support depending on their beginning knowledge, the demands of their roles, and the scope of the care they are called to give. One may find a special talent for supporting parents with high risk children and may get specialized training, and go on to develop a parenting class for a community

center. Another may become a hospice volunteer, and may then fill a new role in the congregation's program as well. This resource is meant to ground and support a program but in the end, is not a template. Each congregation or program will live into its call in different ways. The call to care is universal, but the ways it is lived out are as varied as human lives and needs.



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