

BETWEEN THE PEWS

FALL 2013

How important is congregational care? From my experience it is very important. I have been on the giving and receiving end of congregational care and it has meant so much to experience the care and prayers of the people. I have heard the diagnosis of cancer several times and by the grace of God I have been able to regain health and strength for living. I have always had a deep seated desire to reach out to the hurting in whatever way, shape or form. Being sick myself confirms for me that prayer for the sick and needy is a gift



that is available to us as believers. So are the visits and other means of care. Some times I hear that a visit that was made years ago, was helpful. Matthew 25.36 "I was sick, and you visited me" (or grieving or in turmoil) is not a choice but a command.

As I look around in our church I see many caring and committed people who pray for and connect with others in numerous ways, such as visiting, driving, bringing a meal and just asking, "how are you"? We have a prayer chain, that consists of women who pray devotedly for the many needs that arise. Prayer is available after church, on Tuesdays and at coffee break. We are a praying people and that is being felt by many, as we hear time and again: "I could feel the prayers surrounding us." Visits are made by ministry staff, elders and many others. The personal touch goes a long way in feeling supported and cared for by way of a call or a card. Weddings and funerals are well attended.

As I look around I also notice and know of many hurting people, hurting from illness, loneliness and the more hidden hurts, such as broken relationships and the betrayal of trust. Yet we are in all of this together, to carry each others' burdens not only on our own shoulders but lifting them up to our Lord. Some are not feeling included in this family of faith, because of shame or past hurts. Then I would say: try again to receive the care being offered to you or even ask for it. Or get involved by being the one to offer yourself in some way or another. We all need healing which may come in different forms.



As I look around I wonder how we can improve on the delivery of congregational care in Inglewood. One way in which this aspect will be enhanced is the coordination of all our care ministries and making use of the many gifted people in our midst. Some work may be in order to put this in place and discover what needs to be improved on and who has the gifts that are needed. We need listeners as well as talkers, and listening is a skill to be learned, whereas talking may come more natural and may have to be unlearned. We need to have a heart for people and open ears for the nudges that the Spirit gives us.

My hope and prayer is that Inglewood will be a place of grace where people find hope and meaning in the midst of pain and suffering and where all experience being valued, loved and accepted. A place where we can rejoice with others in the good things that are happening and where the gifts of God are recognized and honoured.

Unexpected Care

BY SARAH HOOGENDOORN

Here at Inglewood CRC, our vision and mission statement is this: "Growing together as disciples of Jesus Christ through worship; through fellowship; through reaching out beyond ourselves; and through congregational care. As the Director of Outreach Ministries, my job tends to be focused more frequently on the idea that we reach out beyond our selves as a corporate body, but also in our individual daily lives. I don't necessarily think about congregational care nearly as much as I do about Outreach. Over the last few weeks, I've

Autumnal Chili Dinner in the parking lot. We invited the local neighbourhood as well as congregation members to break bread together. As I watched people sit in fellowship with friends and neighbours, chatting about anything and everything, I realized congregational care was happening. People were "checking in" on one another.

The Outreach Committee is working on creating and implementing an intentional "Welcome Ministry." The purpose of this intentionality is so that visitors, whether they have a church background or not, feel welcomed and *cared for*.

When the Joyful Noise Choir led our worship one Sunday in September, our attentiveness to their leading and our listening to their message was congregational care. We showed, by our attitude and gratitude, that those children are well loved and valued, as are their gifts.



come to see that this has been a weakness on my part. Congregational care is a vitally important component in ALL areas of our church life, including Outreach.

At the end of September, the Outreach Committee and myself held and hosted an

Congregational care is happening all around us, and it's happening in unexpected places. Keep an eye out for it in the coming weeks. And ask yourself, how are you caring and being cared for?