

Report of the Caring Network Survey – July 2023

The Caring Network began some years ago to support the emotional, logistical and physical needs of the CVUUS congregation. After two years of Covid distancing, the committee chose to undertake an overview of current practices in hopes of improving and expanding its caring outreach. A survey was conducted and offered to all CVUUS congregants and participants. This survey was available in hard copy, online, and hand delivered or mailed to those living in senior retirement facilities. A very good response was noted with most respondents completing the survey in person during one of the coffee hours following services.

An attempt was made to survey use of the “Library of Things” and to ascertain the degree to which folks had reached out or would reach out to the Caring Network for emotional, physical or logistical support. The survey also sought information regarding other ways the committee might offer services, whether participants would be willing to assist the committee, and other thoughts participants might have regarding the work of the Caring Network.

There was an outpouring of support and gratitude for the efforts made by this committee to support CVUUS congregants. A good number of respondents also acknowledged the need for the committee to better publicize what it offers, whom to contact, and to advertise itself routinely. Some had no idea the committee existed but were grateful to hear about it.

Respondents were confused about the “Library of Things” or had no idea it existed. The term “library” became confused with the Blue Room Resource Library. Many folks did not know what was available or how to donate items they might have. Some thought this was an actual room with available things inside. The Caring Network is offering something others are unaware of but would love to know more about.

Most respondents had never sought out support from the Caring Network in the areas of Emotional, Physical, or Logistical need but felt overwhelmingly positive about the Caring Network offering this level of support. Most agreed they would feel comfortable reaching out to the Caring Network if personal needs arose for them in any of the three areas of support. A few questioned or wondered about the committee offering emotional support, expressing the sentiment that necessary qualifications should be considered. They may have assumed all of us on the committee were offering formal emotional support whereas those referrals would have been taken on by pastoral care or certified therapeutic personnel. As a result of the survey, a

list of current needs was generated and provided to the committee for more immediate attention.

A list of all written survey comments was provided to members of the committee and will be shared with the interim Minister. Some suggestions were generated because of these comments. These may facilitate better communication and increased support for congregants as well as new opportunities for the Caring Network to reach out to those in need.

SUGGESTIONS:

1) Caring Network might provide a standard paragraph announcing itself for every monthly newsletter to better bring about awareness. In this manner, new attendees and congregants would know about what the network offers.

2) Caring Network could provide pink cards, like the yellow cards of concern. These cards would be printed with information and available in the Foyer, to be filled out and placed in a private box. Committee members would check weekly to better address immediate needs. The card would include contact information and details of the specific need. This would create an easy and confidential way to communicate needs to the committee. Congregants could continue to notify a member of the committee by email or phone as well should their need be more immediate.

3) Clarify “Emotional Support” ---that only those trained and qualified on the committee would provide this level of *Pastoral Care*, while other committee members would simply visit or “keep company” should emotional needs arise.

4) Consider expanding the membership to include those willing to help with transportation, meals, or visitations. A list was provided to committee members. While these congregants do not wish to be formal committee members or attend meetings, they are readily available to assist. Our committee charge will now include facilitation as well as providing personal support.

5) Publicize a new list of items available in the “Library of Things” and consider what is still desired. The term “library” caused confusion with the Blue Room Library. Consider changing the name, making a list of items and their location, and publicizing this or having that list posted

in the fellowship hall. Those wishing to borrow something would go through our committee and we would arrange for a connection to be made.

6) Establish a way for the Caring Network to acknowledge members providing support on a regular basis outside of the committee; a member delivering flowers to EastView and the Residence, folks regularly visiting others, or folks helping members make major life moves. Perhaps we could create a Caring Network Bulletin Board in the Fellowship Hall where we might post THANK YOU notes as we hear of things. Many in our congregation routinely volunteer to do the same sorts of things as the Caring Network.

7) Facilitate the forming of another group whose purpose is to provide support for families, such as the Parents Night Out gatherings. This would necessitate identifying others in the congregation willing to organize and coordinate volunteers to supervise the children.

In closing, what we do as the Caring Network is very much appreciated, many others wish to help us support fellow congregants, and it would greatly help us to publicize ourselves on a regular basis. We have new and exciting directives that will improve and increase what we envision providing as we care for our fellow congregants.

Respectfully,

the Caring Network Committee