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Great EXPECTATIONS

A Newsletter on Expanding Ministry *With* Older People

Finding the Caregiver Who Fits a Family Member's Needs

Our congregation's Older Adult Ministry Team struggles frequently with this concern: How can we effectively equip families who look for the best arrangement to care for a person who wants to stay right at home when health fades?

It may have been King David himself who described his apprehensions in Psalm 71, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life and consult together and say, 'God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him.'" (vs.9-11). "O God from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come." (vs. 17-18)

We already know from our past ministries that David's fears are a plague also among our elderly Christian brothers and sisters. However, we can bolster the decision makers in the homes that are affected. Reliable resources are available to them and to us so that an aging loved one can be cared for at home, even when family members cannot be present. Then we will mirror the instructions the apostle Paul gave the elders at Ephesus, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, *to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28).

Pamela Yip, writing for the *Dallas Morning News* on Nov. 25, 2012, suggests that "one option is to hire an outside caregiver, either on your own or through a home care agency. There are pros and cons to both."

Yip quotes Kathy O'Brien, senior gerontologist at the MetLife Mature Market Institute. She proposes that "you can hire someone based on your judgment... You may have more choices in flexibility in scheduling." Yip adds "the person may be recommended by friends who are using or have used that person as a caregiver." O'Brien cautions that "you need to do your own background checks and references."

On the other hand, Yip notes that a geriatric care manager could be employed to "find the right agency or independent caregiver for your loved one." This manager will underscore the importance and value of choosing a caregiver who understands the work and actually does what is required and anticipated.

So, what might we as older adult ministry team members do?

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