

CARING NETWORK BULLETIN

November 1991

Now that most of the Southern Ontario Ecclesias have established local "Caring Teams" it was felt that a short bulletin should be issued at this time to apprise you of the status of the Caring Network, its activities to date, and tasks that we all might consider as next steps.

The Caring Network Concept

The Caring Network arose out of discussions which took place in Milton in September 1989 at the "Day Of Reflection". An opportunity was identified to do more work as a community in respect of the command to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. After many meetings with interested brethren and sisters and ecclesial arranging boards, the Network began to take shape. It has two main objectives: to provide a means for brothers and sisters in need to obtain, on a confidential basis, guidance, a listening ear, and spiritual care from brothers and sisters who have some general familiarity and sensitivity to the kind of counselling that lay people can undertake; and to assist in acting as a resource for individuals and ecclesias for information that can help deal with a variety of problems on a proactive and reactive basis.

The ecclesia is the focus of our service to each other and to the Lord, and the ecclesia is also the cornerstone of the Caring Network through ecclesial Caring Teams. The Caring Team serves its ecclesia in respect of the two main objectives of the Network identified above. The Teams are still in their infancy, and ecclesias are still in the process of defining the Team's role and activities.

Role Of Caring Teams

In most cases, the local Caring Teams will have had an initial meeting, and may be discussing what their role should be. For example, the Ossington Avenue ecclesia in Toronto came up with two documents, entitled: "Questions and Answers About the Ossington Avenue Caring Team"; and "Ossington Avenue Caring Teams Terms of Reference". These documents were circulated to those who attended the "Listening/Caring Conference" in Boulton on June 7,8 and 9 of this year (1991) as an example of the types of documents that might be useful as a starting point for an ecclesial Caring Team.

But, **you don't need a document.** As an alternative, the Guelph Caring Team proposed a different approach which was agreeable to their ecclesia: to function without "operating documents" per se. Several reasons were put forth for this position, some of which are as follows:

- This is a new venture (at least in a structured format) and as such, there are a number of "unknowns".
- Documents can be difficult to produce, and can take valuable time and energy which could be applied directly to the job of building the Caring Team.
- With the ecclesia supporting the Caring Team's intent and sense of direction, it was felt that the principles of operation are already very much in place in two ways. First, the members of the Caring Team are familiar with Bible teaching on this important aspect of our walk; and secondly, the Team members would consider the wishes of the arranging board and the ecclesia as they went about their activities.
- Caring Christadelphians have always operated within our ecclesias with no set policy, guidelines or operating documents.

Each ecclesia is unique. Whether you use a document or not will depend on your own Ecclesia's perspective. If you prefer to use a document you may wish to adapt "appendix B - Caring Network Principles of Operation" which was sent to the ecclesias earlier. It may be of some help. In any event, whichever approach is chosen, the key task is to **get the Caring Team up and running**, with its terms of reference and its objectives clearly understood by the ecclesia.

What's Next?

Starting a new venture is always difficult. Where do you start? What do you do? What is there to do if nobody's coming to you with the need for help?

The following are some suggestions you might explore in your next meeting (which we would encourage you to conduct as soon as possible). It is by no means a complete list. The list is premised on the assumption that the Caring Teams will need to play a proactive role, as well as a reactive role responding to those who request assistance. The proactive role is particularly pertinent at this time when the Team is getting established.

Community Resources

- Seek out community resources offered in the area of your ecclesial members
- Identify various courses that are offered in your area that Caring Team members might volunteer to take.

State Your Specific Objectives to Your Ecclesia

- In order for the Team to function effectively, it must have the support of the arranging board and the ecclesia at large. If you have not already done so, state your purpose in an appropriate way to your ecclesia and get them enthusiastic and involved.
- Perhaps some material outlining the sorts of things the Caring Team is available for would help. Make it clear that you are set up to do caring work now.

Internal Education

- Compile materials which are educational and informational on the various issues you may end up dealing with as Team members.

Set Up A Schedule Of Regular Meetings

- In order to remain a vital and profitable resource within your ecclesia, continuing initiatives should be undertaken. This requires leadership and regular meetings. You can decide what the best degree of planning is, but some planning and evaluation is important. Setting specific goals and dates may also help.

Feedback to Support Committee

- Although each ecclesia is unique and autonomous, we are all a brotherhood. If you can provide feedback to the Support Committee on ideas and initiatives your Caring Team is undertaking, we can share them with the other Teams. We can all benefit from each other's ideas. It would be helpful if each Caring Team provided the Support Committee with a status report of its plans and ideas by December 16, 1991.

We hope these ideas stimulate others. As we look at the world around us, we know that the time of our Lord's return is near, and each of us has a responsibility to help ensure that the entire body is healthy and "awake" at that time. The world is increasingly degenerate, and our members are not immune from its problems or from the stresses, anxieties and trials that flow from the effects of the recession and the pressures of modern life. The Caring Network is but one activity we can be involved in to help deal with these problems, but now that it is in operation **let's all work prayerfully and diligently** to continue the growth, vitality and effectiveness of its activities.

Upcoming Events

Seminar, Jan. 18 1992: God willing, a seminar focusing on “The Spiritual Aspects of Caring” is planned at the Ossington Avenue Ecclesia on this date. This will be a one day study which will address the following topics:

- Scriptural and Spiritual Aspects of Caring
- Poor Thinking - the Anatomy of a Problem
- Why People Sin
- Proactive Measures
- Encouraging Caring Ecclesias

The format will combine lectures with discussion and sharing of ideas.

Pending Seminar/Study/Discussion: Although nothing concrete has yet been planned, the Support Committee is considering putting something together as soon as possible on the subject of “Marriage”. The intent is to develop classes or sessions that will be directed at young people contemplating marriage, and, for those already married, will discuss spiritual advice for a healthy marriage.

Ongoing Services

Announcement to Arranging Boards:

Career management counseling is being made available for the Christadelphian Community as part of the Caring Network activities. If any of your members have concerns in the areas of career management, career guidance or job search and would like to discuss them with a brother experienced in these matters, have them call Stuart Moore (416) 822-5862 or Phil Moate (416) 233-9117

Additionally, if any of your members have specific skills in these areas, and would be able to make them available to others in the Christadelphian community, please have them contact brothers Stuart or Phil so that referrals can be made to them where needs match skills.