

Helping a loved one find comfort in faith

ASK THE CARE MANAGER

Dear Care Manager: Formerly my 86-year-old mother lived in a small town in another state, where many people were involved in their churches. A year ago we had to relocate her so I could better monitor mother's care needs. Weekly worship, Bible study, and participating in social groups at her church were a major focus in her life. She formed some wonderful

friendships and misses these folks. Most importantly, I see her spiritual life compromised since the move. She is no longer interested in reading Scripture, listening to religious music or having pastoral visits. Some clergy conduct services at the home monthly, but none from her denomination. I've invited her to attend church with me and my family since we are of the same faith, but so far she has refused. I fear she is becoming more preoccupied with her own health needs and

less interested in the world around her. How should I proceed?

-- Faithful Daughter

Dear Faithful Daughter: Your mother has endured many changes during the past year with her move to a personal care home in a new area. Undoubtedly she is grieving over the loss of her home, friends, and her faith community. Perhaps some physical



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or mental impairments interfere with her ability to function as well as she had previously. She may be embarrassed by her appearance or required needs for support to participate in a church service.

Try to determine why she is reluctant to go to church with you. Is it because she feels like a stranger? Does she feel isolated by her age and infirmity? If your faith community

has predominantly young adults with children, this may be uncomfortable for her. What measures may need to be taken to accommodate her breakfast and personal care needs so she will be ready for church on Sunday morning? Is the church totally handicapped accessible? What adaptive aids are available (i.e. large print bulletins, amplification system)?

Discuss her needs with the pastor or group

Please see **CARE** on D2

Care

From D1

at your church that welcomes new members. Perhaps she could be introduced to a senior "buddy." Invite her to a social activity such as a church dinner or music program so she becomes familiar with the building and a few people. Ask the pastor or lay minister to drop by the personal care home for a short visit with an invitation to come to worship. Continue to provide her personal support with religious literature, music and prayer. Remind her of the past when she experienced comfort and peace by practicing her faith.

Nurturing the spirit remains very important at the end of life. A great temptation of age is narcissism, excessive preoccupation with oneself. A strong foundation of

faith enables individuals to withstand the turmoil and trepidation of illness, frailty, and ultimately physical death. Harry Moody writes in "Aging, Spirituality, and Religion": "The discipline of conscious aging means nothing less than to become more objective (not narcissistic) about who we really are and to become more subjective (compassionate) toward those around us."

Send your questions to Karen Wolfrom at kwolfrom.surrey@thehickman.org with "Dear Care Manager" in the subject line.

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Her column will appear once a month in the Daily Local News.