Care Baskets Help Hospice Patients and Families in West Virginia
November 2015


These sound like simple items, not particularly special or unique. Gathered together and packaged with love, however, these small items can make a big difference.

First Christian Church in Beckley, WV, embarked on its Care Basket Ministry in March 2015, with support from the National Benevolent Association and the Christian Church in West Virginia through the Gift of Years Project, as well as from sister churches in Beckley and First Christian Church itself. To date, they have prepared and delivered 129 of these baskets, full of the items listed above, to the Bowers Hospice in Beckley.

“It is a wonderful feeling being part of the staff here and knowing that these baskets are helping the families and even some of the patients using the items,” says Rachel Smith, support specialist at Bowers Hospice. “Minutes feel like hours, and hours feel like days here when you are watching a loved one die. There is nothing but sadness on the television and newspaper anymore, and this one act of kindness I have seen has made a difference in these patients’ lives and their families’ lives.”

Smith has heard a variety of positive comments about the care baskets:
- “This church doesn’t know my family and they gave this to me?”
- “This makes me want to pay it forward and help another grieving family.”
- “I will take this basket home and when I see it, I will always remember my brother.”
- “Wow! This is so nice.”
- “No one has ever given me anything like this before.”
- “Reading the Bible aloud to Dad will help us both.”
- “I’ve never had my own Bible.”
- “Reading these pamphlets and working these puzzles has helped me keep my mind off my grandmother. These days here with her get so long, and this allows me to keep my mind busy.”

Rev. Don Snyder, pastor of First Christian Church Beckley, says this project was his wife Nancy’s brainchild, after she talked with Rev. Rebecca Hale, NBA VP of mission and ministry, at the 2014 West Virginia Regional Assembly held in Beckley. The ministry team is working on an additional 20 baskets and will continue providing the baskets on an as-able basis, depending on their funding, in the future.

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**Gift of Years** has been part of the NBA Incubate Initiative, in partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia, focusing on ministering with, to, and for older adults in local Disciples churches and the community. To this end, the Disciples in West Virginia are working to:

- Develop theological curriculum for understanding the gifts and challenges of aging
- Develop practical materials that can be used within and by the people of our congregations to attend to the concerns and opportunities of growing older
- Collecting empowering and inspiring stories from our seniors to be shared
- Provide a variety of forums for reporting on our ministries and mutually sharing what we are doing and learning
- Provide congregational grants ($500/congregation) to assist in local, context specific ministry for, by and with “the gifted”

*The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.*