

# ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIAS

Email: secretary@aace.info

## Discussion Paper

### Care in Our Ecclesias

*'And Jesus ... saw many people, and was moved with compassion toward them'. Mark 6:34*

#### **Background circumstances**

- Jesus, his disciples and apostles, showed compassion in many ways. What were some of them?
- We try to be like Jesus – loving; compassionate; understanding.
- In our lives, we can all have many pressures and problems: work; school; sickness; loss - of a family member, of a friend, of employment, by accident or natural disaster. The list can be large.
- Difficulties in life affect all ages – from children, young people, single adults, parents with families, to the elderly.
- A common problem for all people is that of relationships – husband and wife; within a family; within an ecclesia; between ecclesias; and with God.
- We need to be aware of the realities of ecclesial circumstances and each person (brother, sister, young person) within the ecclesia.
- We still need to care for each other when we are well. We all need encouragement and support in the development of our faith and, to be appreciated.
- Are we trying to grow? We need nourishment from our ecclesial family members.
- We are in the last days and the Lord said that we would face strong challenges to our faith. We need to carefully and sensitively teach the Truth as revealed in Scripture and help one another to resist the influences of the world in thought, word and deed. (Prov 15:23; 2 Tim 4:2)

#### **The challenge before us**

How to care for our brothers, sisters, young people and children, in all their circumstances, so that we are all encouraged to be more like Jesus, and grow closer to our Heavenly Father, while we wait for Jesus' return.

#### **Some suggestions**

##### **1 Who cares?**

- Everyone. We all need to follow Jesus' example, and it can be a great pleasure! Caring in our ecclesia is not just something done by our welfare committee.

##### **2 Who do we care for?**

- Families; children; older people, singles; widows; widowers. What might be the particular needs of each of these groups?

##### **3 When do we care?**

- Sunday morning; through the week; any time, all the time.

##### **4 How do we care?**

- By listening carefully: Matthew 20:32-34 – Jesus *stopped* and *listened*.
- By visiting the sick and elderly. However, is visiting always appropriate?
- By showing genuine and acceptable interest in the lives of others (but avoiding feigned interest that verges on gossip).
- With sensitivity – we listen carefully. If we are asked for advice, we might raise some possibilities for the person we are caring for to help their own decision making, but we do not offer or force solutions, nor give false hope.

### ***'Speaking' care***

- 'Be quick to listen, slow to speak'; James 1:19. See also: Proverbs 25:11; Isaiah 50:4; Prov.18:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14.
- Speaking face-to-face – we can gauge something of the way a person is feeling by their tone of voice and body language, and have a better chance of determining the meaning for them of their story.
- Cards, letters, and/or flowers. Each of these has its place and can show sensitive care.
- Phone calls. What are some challenges when we cannot see the person with whom we are talking?
- Emails. This is an increasing mode of communication. We can show our care in this way where a phone call may not be possible, perhaps due to distance or other circumstances. We need to remember that people cannot see our body language or hear our tone of voice. We need to be very careful in what we write because sometimes we may be understood differently to the way we intend. How can we use emails effectively?
- Text messages – SMS. This may be useful when a visit, card, phone call or an email is not possible. What are some occasions where this form of communication might be more appropriate?
- Visits – if convenient to the person being visited. We should remember that the person we visit should be the focus of our conversation. What are some pitfalls we should try to avoid?
- Effective caring can take place when we do not speak. Just being present – silent, loving care – can be very helpful.
- The content of our interaction with someone should remain confidential.

### ***'Doing' care***

- Practical – taking children to school, driving someone to a medical appointment, giving a casserole;
- mowing the lawn... What are some other practical ways we can help?
- How can different groups, e.g. young people, help all ecclesial members?
- Prayer – constant, like Paul; in faith – that God's will be done.

### **5 Accepting care**

- Sometimes we can be too independent. When we are offered help we should, if we can, graciously accept the act of love of the other person. Jesus set an example when he accepted the woman's anointing perfume because she gave it to him for a good reason. Matthew 26:7ff.
- This can apply in general ecclesial life as well as in other circumstances. Do we fully appreciate the work of everyone in our ecclesia, no matter how 'great' or 'small'? Remember each person is handpicked by God.

### **6 Preparing ourselves**

- Work, in prayer, on our personal faith so that we can more ably help others.
- We could then be an appropriate example.

### ***Concluding thought***

Might this be our prayer for ourselves and others, to strengthen each other spiritually? 'Pray that out of His glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your *inner being*, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.' (Eph 3:16)

### ***Resources***

The Australian Adelphicare website contains a large number of resources that will help you in many aspects of your life. Please access the site by clicking on the following address: <https://www.adelphicare.org/>

Another very useful site is that of the Support Network of South Australia. <https://supportnetwork.org.au/sa/>

The Christadelphian Support Network in the UK [Christadelphian Support Network](https://www.chsn.org.uk/) – UK is a very vibrant website that covers many aspects of a caring life. It has many downloadable resources. <https://www.chsn.org.uk/>