

Congregational Care

From the Parish Nurse

Advance Care Planning

It is common hope that most people share: that their end-of-life wishes will be respected if something happens, and they couldn't make their own health care decisions. Illnesses and accidents can happen, an advance directive is a plan that let others know how you want to be treated when you need medical care and aren't able to choose for yourself. Do you have advance directives; so those around you know, what you would want done? No one wants to think about what could happen if they become incapacitated due to a life-threatening illness or injury. Advance care planning is a process of documenting your medical care in the event you can no longer communicate. Advance directives are written instructions about how you want your medical decisions made if you can no longer communicate your wishes. Documents include health care proxy form to designate someone to help make decisions, and health care treatments to outline what you want. The goal is to insure care consistent in what you want in the event of a life-threatening illness that incapacitates you. This practice guides physicians and caregivers and prevents treatments that prolong life. Have you completed your Health Care Declaration (Living Will) and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

What is the difference between a Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

A living will is a good starting point to help you plan end of life medical decisions. A living will tell medical professionals and your family which end of life treatments you want to receive; life support, CPR, feeding tubes, pain management, etc. It is a document that covers how you want to be treated at the end of your life. In most states, this only applies to terminal illness or near-death situation in which the patient will die shortly without interventions. A living will does not allow for a surrogate to make decisions for you.

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is a document in which you appoint someone else to make all the medical treatment decisions if you can't make them yourself. It is usually a family member, trusted friend, or a trustee.

Advance Directive laws give doctors and others immunity if they follow your advance directives. Therefore, it is so important to discuss your values and wishes about the health care you want to those around you. Make sure they understand what you want and are willing to support your wishes. Advance Directives can express what you want and don't want. Don't think it means "Do not treat." Even when you decide against certain medical treatments you should be offered palliative or hospice care.

The Living Will gives you choices about Life-Sustaining Treatment and other care that you would want to receive if you are not able to make decisions or communicate. It is the policy of most medical facilities to honor your Advance Directives within the limits of the law and guidelines of ethical directives. There are forms to fill out for Durable Power of Attorney, and Health Care Declaration (Living Will). Once the documents are completed, you should give a copy to yourself, doctor, trusted family member/friend, hospital, or nursing home.

Our pursuit of a Christ-centered, God honoring approach to the end-of-life care begins with faithfulness to his word. We needn't fear death! Even as our lives draws to a close, we cherish the promise of new life. If you do not have your advance care planning think about getting it done. If you would like some assistance in getting advance care planning contact ULC parish nurse and we can get your plan in writing and have it notarized.

PSALM 23: Yeah, though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for though are with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Advance Care Planning Part Two

FIVE WISHES

I hope members of ULC checked on what they have for their advance directives. Have you talked to your loved ones about what matters most? Every person has a right to age with dignity. If you have not completed your advance planning, consider getting yours done. Five Wishes is the first living will with a heart and a soul that talks about your personal, emotional and spiritual needs and your medical wishes. Five wishes lets you say exactly how you wish to be treated if you get seriously ill. It lets you talk with family, friends, doctors so you can let them know what YOU want. Five Wishes is for anyone 18 or older. When we make health care decisions ahead of time and put those wishes in writing, it can give Peace to our families and friends. Five Wishes can help you and your family, friends, and doctors talk about how you want to be treated if you become seriously ill. If you already have a living will or a durable attorney for health care, that is great. If you have not completed your living will, think about doing the 5 Wishes. Five Wishes is a traditional printed booklet completed by hand or you can go onto the computer. (www.fivewishes.org) All but a few states legally accept the 5 wishes. Arkansas honors it along with most of the United States. In Kansas, New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas, and the District of Columbus, Five Wishes can legally be used but a few extra steps are needed.

The Five Wishes are :

- The person I choose as my Health Care Agent.
- My wish for the kind of Medical Treatment I want or do not want.
- My wish for how comfortable I want to be.
- My wish for how I want people to treat me.
- My wish for what I want my loved ones to know.

In the booklet you can fill in what you want. If you want to use the Five Wishes booklet, just fill out the form, sign it in front of two witnesses. In a few states: Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia your signature should be notarized in front of a notary. After it is signed The Five Wishes will be legal and valid. Give your doctor / health care provider, health Care agent, a copy of the Five Wishes so they can have it in their records.. Keep your original in a safe place where someone has access to it. United Lutheran has some booklet available for members, Check with Charlotte or Wanda. If you want help in filling out what you want in the Five Wishes, please contact Charlotte Spencer.

Psalm 32:8 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; will counsel you with my eye upon you.”

Charlotte Spencer