LAY CARE VISITATION

A Quick Guide for Home & Hospital Visits

University Park United Methodist Church

THE HEART OF THE MINISTRY

You are not going there to bring God into the room. God is already there.

Your task is to be present enough to notice - and to help the person remember that they are not alone.

ARRIVE PRAYERFULLY • ASK PERMISSION • LISTEN DEEPLY • PRAY SIMPLY • FOLLOW THROUGH

HOSPITAL VISITS

- **Pray before entering.** Ask God to help you listen, notice, and be present.
- **Ask permission.** "Is this a good time for a short visit?"
- **Sanitize your hands and then let them set the agenda.** Begin simply: "How are you doing today?"
- **Listen more than you talk.** Do not fear silence or feel responsible for fixing the situation.
- **Keep their story theirs.** Avoid comparing their illness or experience with someone else's.
- **Do not explain suffering.** Avoid phrases such as "Everything happens for a reason." Offer God's presence rather than easy answers.
- **Honor the hospital rhythm.** Medical staff, tests, meals, medications, and rest take priority. Be ready to step out.
- **Keep it brief.** Often 10–20 attentive minutes is enough.
- **Offer prayer; do not impose it.** Ask, "Would it be okay if I prayed with you?" Pray briefly and specifically about what you heard.
- **Ask before touching.** Always get permission before holding a hand or offering other physical contact.
- **Before leaving, ask:** "Is there anything you would like me to let the church or pastors know?"

HOME VISITS

- **Remember that you are a guest.** Be on time, respect the person's space, and ask whether it is still a good time to visit.
- **Start with the person, not the illness.** Try: "How have you been?" "What have your days been like?"
- **Listen deeply.** For someone who is homebound, attentive companionship may be the greatest gift.
- **Leave church business at church.** Do not recruit, discuss the budget, share gossip, or ask why someone has not attended worship.
- **Notice needs without taking over.** Food, transportation, loneliness, grief, or other concerns can be shared with the care team—with permission.
- **Protect confidentiality.** Treat what you hear with care. Do not promise secrecy when safety or serious welfare concerns are involved.
- **Use Scripture as grace.** A short Psalm or familiar passage can comfort; Scripture should not be used to explain why suffering happened.
- **Follow church guidance for Communion.** Lay members may assist with Communion as authorized and directed by the pastor; do not improvise a Communion service.
- **Watch the length.** Usually 20–30 minutes is enough unless there is a reason to stay longer.
- **End with prayer.** Ask, "Is there anything you would especially like me to pray about?"
- **Follow through.** If you promise to contact a pastor, arrange another visit, or pass along a need, do it.

WHEN TO CONTACT A PASTOR

Contact the pastoral team when someone asks for a pastor; is approaching end of life; requests Communion, baptism, or other sacramental ministry; is in significant spiritual or family crisis; raises a safety concern; or whenever you simply think, "I'm not sure what to do with this."

Presence is the ministry. We remember you. We care about you. You are not alone.