Walking with Grace Event – Starting a Congregational Respite Program for Older Adults

Do you have older adults in your congregation with special needs such as memory impairment due to Alzheimer’s disease, stroke, diabetes or other dementias that you have been unable to address? Families, both within your congregation and in your community, may have members who are dealing with the burden of caring for their memory-impaired loved ones. Do you have older adults in your congregation who are looking for a unique way to use their gifts and talents?

If you have answered “yes” to these questions you may be interested in learning about Congregational Respite ministry, targeting older adults with dementia. Did you know that 5.3 million people in the United States suffer from Alzheimer’s disease, and that in 2008 over 10 million people were caring for loved ones with Alzheimer’s? This is only one type of dementia; add to that statistic other dementias from vascular origins, as well as diabetes and other diseases, and the burden of care becomes astronomical.

Congregational Respite ministry is a threefold ministry: It provides care and support to the person suffering from dementia and to their caregivers, and it offers unique ministry opportunities for adults, youth and children within a congregation. Dementia, the cost, and the toll it takes on families, creates a relevant and much-needed ministry that allows “the church” to come alongside families in need. As the Baby Boomers age the need for this ministry will increase.

Join Robin Dill, author and Director of Grace Arbor (Congregational Respite Ministry of First United Methodist Church Lawrenceville) for an informational workshop on Congregational Respite Ministry. Her manual, “Walking with Grace”, was written as a tool to assist congregations in implementing and launching congregational respite ministries. Her experience as director and mentor to other programs, as well as her background as a Stephen Minister, will help churches gain vision and knowledge in the area of respite ministry. This workshop will provide a unique opportunity for you as a church to see a congregational respite ministry in action and will allow you to hear from caregivers about the way in which this ministry has impacted their lives.