

cancersupport@southbrook.org

by Dave Scharff

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In December 2009 I was diagnosed with stage II tonsil cancer. Surgery was performed on Christmas Eve morning to remove a tumor the size of a golf ball from my left tonsil. Not only was the tumor big, it was Squamous Cell Carcinoma, a fast growing cancer. I was fortunate because the cancer was contained to the tumor that was attached to the outside of my tonsil. After a couple of weeks to let the surgery site heal, I started six weeks of daily radiation to make sure no cancer was left and as a preventative measure. During this period, God showered me with his love and grace by using the people in my life to get me through it. Daily texts, phone calls, e-mails and cards let me know how much people cared. People praying over and for me gave me the peace and calm to face this storm. The body of Christ surrounded me as only it can and gave me a sense of love, protection and mercy like I had never experienced. Every day I prayed that God would use something intended for pain, suffering and destruction for his glory. During this time, he planted a vision in my mind of how to help others have the same experience of support that I did. That vision has been maturing as God continues to give me more and more ideas about what it should look like. I now have a burning passion to initiate a cancer support & service ministry at SouthBrook Christian Church that will offer those affected by cancer help, education, guidance and hope. The following is a draft of what that would look like.

The purpose of cancersupport at SouthBrook is to provide an environment of support, education, service and hope to those who have cancer, are cancer survivors or have been affected by cancer. Teams would be developed based on

an individual's Play style and gift set. Team Leaders would be responsible for coordinating their team members to accomplish their responsibilities. They would also be responsible for recruiting new team members. Each Team would be responsible for their area of support or service. For example, the Quilting Team would be responsible to get a Quilt of Hope to an individual identified in our congregation or community recently diagnosed with cancer. The Prayer Team would be responsible for covering someone in prayer while having surgery or visiting the individual and having "hands on" prayer prior to treatments or after diagnosis. The Resource Team would be responsible for a library of coupons, books and websites relating to cancer. They would also schedule speakers to address the Group, i.e. an Oncologist, Radiologist, Dentist, Nutritionist, Counselor, etc. The Mentoring (or Sponsor or Guide) Team would match individuals diagnosed with a certain type of cancer with someone who is a survivor of that type of cancer or who is farther along in treatment. The Appearance Team would help someone losing their hair from chemo select and fit a wig. They may even shop for a prosthesis bra for a breast cancer survivor. A plastic surgeon that specializes in reconstructive surgery might be part of this team

I envision this ministry as having an Advisory Board made up of local cancer treatment professionals. For example, a local radiologist, oncologist speech therapist or dentist would be possibilities. They would advise on resources and other professionals to support this ministry. They could also help with vision and strategy.

Initially, cancer survivors with Play Styles and gift sets appropriate to this ministry would be recruited to help organize and strategize the vision. From that, we would solicit individuals to administer the structure and head each Team. I see very little resources of the Church being used for this. The Ministry members would do most of the work. A database would be created with Ministry members, resources, referrals and members of the support group. The ministry would be available to those in our church and community in need of its services. Eventually, cancer Dr.'s and Centers could use us as a referral for patients in need. There would be a Ministry Leader, supported by co-leaders as they are identified.

The opportunities for this ministry are endless; we could offer grief counseling, funerals, financial aid, community education and much, much more.

Here are some ideas I have for different areas and the services / support we could offer:

Support

- Group discussion / meetings
- Contact support – cards, e-mails, text, etc.
- In home or hospital visits
- Accompany to Dr. visits, radiation and chemo treatments
- Financial aid
- Education – speakers on cancer prevention, nutrition, depression, book list, website list, etc. (Resource Team)
- Monthly Newsletter – Profiles of Courage
- Quilts of Hope (Quilting Team)
- Hands on Prayer Team (Prayer Team)

Service

- Providing transportation
- Running errands
- A guide or sponsor to walk step by step through the experience with the individual diagnosed with cancer.
- Babysitting
- Housecleaning
- Cookbooks
- Wig fitters, prosthesis shoppers (Appearance Team)
- Provide meals (Meal Team)
- Angel Flight coordinator

- Gift baskets for initially diagnosed with cancer (coupons, devotions, books, Ensure Boost, recipe Book)

Spiritual and Emotional Growth

- Come to know or grow in Christ
- Provide daily cancer devotions
- Prayer – group, offering prayer support (Prayer Team)
- Trusting through experience of someone having already survived cancer
- Mentors or Guides who are cancer survivors (Mentoring, Guide or Sponsor Team)
- Grief counseling

Significant Events

- Why?
- How blessed
- What good has come from it?
- Awakenings
- Closer to Christ and the Body of Christ
- Fundraisers
- Survivor Coins – 1,3,5,10 year – similar to AA Sobriety Coins – Celebration

Additional Thoughts

- Template for other ministries; diabetessupport@southbrook.org, alzheimerssupport@southbrook.org, mssupport@southbrook.org, etc.

- There should be a first responder, a person or team that contacts anyone who approaches cancersupport@southbrook.org, determines their need and has a process to get them connected with help and hope.
- Once up and running and refined, this ministry could be a recruiting tool to draw people to SB.
- Parts of the organization and process are already in place. Capitalize on a window of opportunity that Charlie has created with the “Play” series and “Fanatic” (“Cancer”) series last spring to give people an opportunity to put their gifts into play.
- Launch ministry and refine as it progresses. Much like Microsoft did against Apple.
- This is meant to be a service and support ministry first. The natural progression will be that people come to know Christ and grow in their spiritual journey. “Witness continually and if necessary, use words.”