



“I Will Give You R.E.S.T.”

Ministry Offers Respite For Those Living With Memory Loss

By Karen Geary

The word “respite” just sounds peaceful, but for caregivers of individuals experiencing memory loss, the word can be a lifesaver. Beginning July 11, Trinity United Methodist Church will become the site of the R.E.S.T. Respite Care Program aimed to provide enrichment, engagement and social contacts for individuals – identified as “friends” – with early to mid-stage dementia and reduce burnout of their caregivers.

The church’s ministry will offer individuals experiencing memory loss with recognized purpose, meaning and hope. The acronym stands for RENEW the lives of Friends, Caregivers and Volunteers (known as “companions”), ENGAGE Friends, SUPPORT Caregivers, and TRUST God as they serve our community.

The R.E.S.T. Program will offer a holistic approach to improve the quality of life for those with memory loss, reduce social stigmas about memory loss and address the well-being of their caregivers.

Research reveals that engagement in creative and productive activities

contributes significantly to the quality of life and well-being of persons with dementia. Respite rewards persons in the early to mid-stages of dementia with enrichment, engagement, and social contacts that tap into the strengths of the brain systems that still work well and ignore, at least for a little while, the reminders of the cognitive systems that don’t work as well.

While offering caregivers a short period of relief from something difficult and demanding, the R.E.S.T. Program wants them to feel at peace

knowing their loved one is engaged and well cared for in a safe environment. “Hopefully, we will fill a community void,” said Connie Wilson, R.E.S.T. Ministry director. “We may not be able to cure Alzheimer’s, but we have a heartfelt desire to cure loneliness. We need your help to connect us with friends living with dementia.”

In addition, the program will offer a bi-monthly support group for care partners to come together with a pastor and retired counselor to share their journeys, challenges, victories and support each other. Caregivers may also request a prayer partner and a private space will be available for prayer time.

R.E.S.T. is not a daycare or a medical setting; it is a “social model” program. Care partners are offered four hours each week for themselves so they are better able to manage the stresses of caring for loved ones. Their loved ones are given the opportunity to socialize, enjoy a nutritious lunch and participate in a variety of life-enhancing activities such as music, pet therapy, exercise, arts and crafts and service projects.



The R.E.S.T. team and trained volunteers provide supervision and lead activities with the dignity and respect every person deserves.

“My goal as a director is for each volunteer to leave respite exhausted, full of meaning and pride that they have given their heart and their best to our friends and can’t wait for the next week,” said Wilson. “If you would like to be a volunteer, contact me at Trinity United Methodist Church.”

“We learned that Alzheimer’s and dementia diagnoses are among the most isolating journeys one can face, both for the individual and their caregiver. That’s why R.E.S.T. ministry is dedicated to offering more than just respite; we’re here to provide connection, foster independence, nurture relationships, enhance their quality of life and infuse fun into the week,” said Emily Walker, minister of Trinity UMC.

The Tennessee Department of Health identified Alzheimer’s prevalence as the sixth leading cause of death in Henry County at 12 percent of the population. It follows only hy-

per-tension and diabetes prevalences as causes of death.

“My grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, so I understand first-hand how difficult this journey is. I hope through R.E.S.T we can offer profound love and provide a beacon of hope for those navigating the challenging waters of dementia and Alzheimer’s,” said Walker. “We have been very excited to see so many volunteers stepping up to help with this ministry from multiple churches.”

The program plans to have a one-month ministry project for participants to give back to the community. Growing food for their lunch and also to share it with others is in the plans.

“This respite ministry, built on a social model rather than a medical one, embodies the essence of compassion and understanding. As Matthew 11:28 reminds us: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” said Walker.

To learn more about the R.E.S.T. Respite Care Program, contact the program at 731-333-3901 or email rest.respiteministry@gmail.com.

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