



Prayer Chain Guidelines for Volunteers

Saline, MI - April, 2016

Thank you for your willingness to participate in Christ Our King Lutheran Church's PRAYER CHAIN. Your role in the Prayer Chain is important.

Definition: The prayer chain is the spiritual alarm system which communicates and takes prayerful action on the needs of the parish, community and global needs. All prayer request information is **CONFIDENTIAL**, so don't leave messages on a machine, discuss the request with anyone or approach the person(s) about which we are praying (they may not know you are on the prayer chain and we don't want them thinking that people are talking about their request).

Below are a few instructions that should help ensure that everything runs smoothly. Should you have any questions regarding your role in the Prayer Chain, or a particular situation that arises, please do not hesitate to contact Gretchen Schneider at 734-429-2334 or email her at gretchen.5050@gmail.com.

1. Be Prepared to Receive Prayer Requests

Some volunteers prefer to be contacted by email; others by phone. Either way is fine and both ways require that you be prepared for the request.

Via Email:

- Be sure to keep your email current with the church office and with Gretchen Schneider
- When a prayer request or prayer of thanksgiving is received, it might be helpful to print out the call for prayer, so as to have a list of active prayer requests.

Via Phone:

- Be sure to have paper and pen nearby your phone in order to record the request or thanksgiving as it is given to you.
- It is a good idea to read back what you have written for the sake of accuracy before you conclude the phone call.
- **Immediately** call the next available person in your network. If the name listed is not home and there is voice mail or an answering machine, **DO NOT** leave the

request due to prayer chain confidentiality; instead leave a message for them to call you back to receive the prayer chain information.

- There may be people on your list with no answering machines. In this case, try to get back to them later that day with the requests.
- If you are unable to reach the person you are calling after a short period of time, skip over them and contact the next person on the list. Continue calling the skipped person until you make contact with the designated person; consider the time of day you are calling.

PRAY! It is important to establish the discipline of praying immediately upon receiving notification from the chain. This might mean that you need to excuse yourself to find a quiet place at work or if you are in the company of others. If you are receiving a request as you are walking out the door, pray out loud while driving. Be creative and **MAKE A WAY** to honor the discipline to pray immediately.

2. Confidentiality

Keep in mind that prayer requests are to be kept confidential. If you cannot honor that, please step down. We need to be sensitive to the hurts of those for whom we are praying. If your spouse is not on the Prayer Chain, **DO NOT** share the information with them. Though you may think that you are sharing this information so that they too can pray, it is still gossip. "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips". (Psalm 141:3)

NO CHATTING and **NO ADDING DETAILS** beyond those passed along. Period.

Chatting and added details are the stuff of rumors and a prayer chain must never become a rumor mill. If you know (or think you know) further details, keep them to yourself no matter how strong the urge is to share them. It's the coordinator/leader's or church office's responsibility to speak to the person being prayed for as to what details they would like to tell the prayer chain. If it's not in the message, assume there's a reason it's not. Stick **STRICTLY** to the message. Also, no word should be spread on or off the chain about who asked for the prayer; that too is private information. Such tight limits may sound unfriendly, but experience shows that it's extremely important.

3. New Prayer Chain Requests

As a member of the prayer chain, you may receive a direct request from someone to add their petition to the prayer chain. It is important that **ALL** prayer requests be started with the prayer chain leadership - so have that person call Gretchen or email the details to her. She will forward the information on to the email group and call the first person in the phone chain.

4. HIPPA

Today's world requires that any type of medical information be protected with a great deal of privacy.

The prayer chain leadership will be very careful in the phrasing of all prayer requests. If the caller is requesting prayer for themselves and chooses to provide specific medical information, then it may be included in the prayer request. However, if the caller is requesting prayer for someone else, the Prayer Chain leadership will present the information in a general fashion.

For example, if Mary calls and requests prayer for herself for her hip replacement surgery scheduled for Friday and states that's the way she wants the prayer stated, then the request will be passed onto the chain as such. If however, Mary calls and asks for prayer for her mother's upcoming gall bladder surgery, the request will be rephrased on the prayer chain and will be for "medical treatment". Many times names will be omitted and the request will be for 'brother', 'friend' or 'child'. God already knows who we are praying for - even if the members of the prayer chain do not.

5. How Long Do I Pray?

The answer to this question is not hard and fast; it depends on the circumstances. For example, in the situation above, if you've received a prayer chain call to pray for Mary's surgery scheduled for next Friday, then pray for Mary as soon as you get the call, plus try to remember her in your daily prayers through Friday. If however, you received another call to pray for Bill who is fighting cancer, you will want to pray right away and then try to keep Bill and his intention in your prayers for some time. This is one of the reasons that keeping a log or notebook or a folder in your email is important. It enables you to routinely look back at the requests you've received and recall those who still have an active need.

6. What Do I Say When I See the Person?

Nothing is the short answer. Let's imagine that you've received a prayer chain request to remember Jim who is going for an important job interview. Although no last name was used in the prayer chain, you have a pretty good idea who it is that you are praying for and lo and behold, you see Jim the next day. Should you walk up to him and ask? **NO!** Jim has no idea who is even on the prayer chain so he would be caught totally by surprise by your comment and would likely feel that the prayer chain had betrayed his confidence.

Prayer Chain Volunteers need to stay vigilant to these types of issues. You certainly still want to be a caring and compassionate member of the parish when you interact with other parishioners, but you will need to always stop and ask yourself: **How do I know about this?**

If the answer is that you only know about it through the prayer chain, **YOU ARE ADVISED** to say nothing.