

CORNERSTONE LUTHERAN CHURCH

CARE MINISTRIES



cancercompanions

bringing hope

to the journey

Introducing Cornerstone Lutheran Church Cancer Companions

“Both character and holiness are best found where our need for Jesus is extreme. And our needs are most apparent where life dumps trials on us! To be tested in the extreme is to learn spiritual dependency. When our torn souls settle on the impaling stakes, we can define our need. It comes *in extremis*! We cringe when we think of letting other people gain control of our lives.

Yet the time we best develop character is when we realize we are not in charge of our circumstances. To be under the heel of someone else’s will or to suffer the indignity of crushing circumstances, these incarcerations of body give wings to the spirit.”

Calvin Miller, *Into the Depths of God*, Bethany House Publishers, 2000.



Who Are We?

Cancer Companions is a global organization headquartered in St Louis, MO. It was founded in 2011 by Karen Tripp, a marriage and family therapist practicing in that area of the country. Their website is:

www.cancer-companions.org.

Cornerstone Lutheran Church (CLC) sponsors a chapter of the global group. This chapter was activated in 2018 largely through the efforts of the late Julia Kattner and the generous support of the estate of Julia and Gordon Kattner.

The Cancer Companions **mission statement** is:

“To equip, train, and support caring individuals to provide safe, supportive environments for cancer families to draw closer to Christ.”

Cancer provides us the opportunity to disciple—to care and share and help those who find themselves extremely vulnerable. We have at our disposal the most effective weapon available to change the focus of really hurting people—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Through Cancer Companions we also have some battle tested tools to help us in that caring effort.

In the Great Commission, our Lord commanded us to go, make disciples, and teach. Our church is providing the resources to assist us in fulfilling this commission through the Cancer Companions association, and we are here to share some of the processes that will make us all more proficient in the cause.

Who Is This Lord?

Among the many ministries staffed by the disciples at CLC are a group identified as the CLC Care Ministry Team. We focus on loving people through their pain, whether they are in our church or our community. These support groups reach out to many—cancer victims, those grieving lost loved ones, people who care for the aged or disabled, and folks who need help finding employment. You can find out more about these groups at:

www.cornerstonelutheran.church/support-groups

The force behind Care Ministries is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are empowered by His Holy Spirit to respond to His Great Commission. Our “charter” is God’s Word:

Isaiah 55:10-11

(God empowers His Word—Jesus)

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall **my word** be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

John 1:1, 14 *(Jesus is the Word incarnate)*

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 14:6 (*Jesus proclaims His position*)

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Hebrews 1:1-3 (*This is Jesus*)

“ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

Colossians 1:15-20

(Jesus is Lord and Head of the church)

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

These are but a few of the words of Scripture that make it clear why faithful churches everywhere center their message on our Lord. For exactly the same reason, Cancer Companions centers its message on Jesus.

How We Can Help

In almost every community above 20,000 population, there are organizations dedicated to assisting cancer patients and their caregivers. Most of these exist to facilitate physical needs, financial needs, and psychological needs. Cancer Companions can be helpful in similar areas, but **our primary focus is spiritual**. In the introductory remarks to one of our major publications are these words:

“Imagine churches all over America intentionally reaching out into the lives of cancer families in their community.

Imagine church volunteers being in the midst of a person’s cancer journey to offer companionship and hope.

Whether meeting one on one at a coffee shop or gathering with others in a Christian support group, patients, survivors and their loved ones **find the connections** they need to draw closer to Christ on their journey.

This is the vision of Cancer Companions.”

A foundational verse from Scripture for us is from James 4:8—“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Those struggling with cancer need that assurance.

This program is for anyone in treatment or post-treatment, and their loved ones. So, when we refer to “your cancer” in our meetings or in our literature, we mean the cancer that is impacting someone’s life—whether it is in your body or the body of some person you love. We view our most important role as sitting with others and exploring the role of Jesus in your cancer journey. Our prayer is that through this program you will feel the support of others, find peace through prayer, and above all draw closer to Christ.

In the letter of 1 Peter, the third chapter, Peter prompts us to **always be prepared** to share with others the reason for the hope we have in our hearts. “Be prepared” has the connotation that we should purposefully think, organize, study, practice, etc. whatever it takes to arm ourselves to successfully complete the assignment. We view the mission of Cancer Companions as one of the effective tools available to us in the preparation effort.

How Does It Work

Cancer Companions (CC) volunteers are trained by attending workshops with formal study material and participation labs. Once the formal training is done, volunteers are assigned to selected cancer patients and caregivers as the Cornerstone Lutheran Church office (or the CC national office) becomes aware of them. Volunteers make the initial contact as soon as the church office gives them the green-light. From that point on, volunteers and patients make their own meeting arrangements.

The church CC organization maintains an inventory of supplies, study materials, brochures, and control documents. As items are needed by volunteers for their patient meetings, they are requisitioned through the local chapter and Cancer Companions HQ.

One primary resource is a set of study guides entitled ***Seeing God in Your Cancer Journey***, by Karen Tripp. The set consists of a volunteer manual and a patient manual. They are coordinated so that the patient and CC volunteer can explore together what the Scriptures have to say about the cancer journey. This is done through short readings about faith, questions and answers, prayers for healing and stress reduction, relationship building, and hopeful living. These readings and discussions focus on the peace that comes from knowing Christ as Lord; and the strength, hope, and abounding joy emanating from that relationship.



Other Care Team Facilities

Additionally, our CC chapter volunteers prepare gift bags which are lovingly referred to as Cancer Comfort Bags. Prepared by volunteers for local cancer patients, each bag contains a variety of objects that may be helpful to a cancer patient undergoing treatment. Items include a handmade prayer shawl, a wooden prayer cross, some pertinent scripture verses, a journal, teas, skin protectants, and other soothing items as they are made available. These bags can be requested through the church website:

www.cornerstonelutheran.church/cancer-ministry

Our website also offers references to many resources specific to the cancer journey, including Care Groups at Cornerstone Lutheran Church, community resources, social media resources, and national resources.

If you have questions about CLC Cancer Ministry or Cancer Companions, please contact us through the Cornerstone Lutheran Church website (shown above) or phone the church at 317-814-4252.