

April 2012

Health Topic

Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church
Carol Moellenberndt, parish nurse

April is Parkinson Disease Awareness Month

As Easter is drawing near the word "Hope" comes to the forefront for me. The Lenten journey has been pensive. I have learned things about myself and have asked for God's forgiveness. One thing I have learned is how very much I take for granted every day! When I tried to eat like some people in third world countries, I always had a refrigerator full of food that I could turn to the next day. And when I am participating in the Parkinson Support Group I am reminded that everyday I take for granted that I am able to walk and run and do my activities of daily living without even thinking about them. People with Parkinson Disease often have to think about every action that they take. The word "hope" brings to mind what all of us have to look forward to in Easter. Jesus came to free us from all the worldly things that we deal with each and every day. Hope, I believe, is looking forward and taking action towards that freedom we have. In the case of Parkinson Disease, it is the hope of figuring out cause(s) of the disease, working on treatments and for people to learn how to best live with the disease.

Parkinson Disease is a degenerative disease of the human brain that progresses slowly in most people. People often come to a plateau in the disease and have the same symptoms for even 20 years. Parkinson Disease is primarily a movement disorder including tremors, slowness of movement, muscle rigidity or disturbances of gait. But other symptoms often precede the disease and lead to more problems with the motor symptoms. Some of these symptoms are depression, anxiety, loss of smell, sleep disorders and constipation. The people in the support group at our church are very interested in the research being done on the cause of the disease. If the cause(s) can be discovered, the hope of a cure seems so much closer. At this time research is being done on a genetic link with Parkinson Disease. Also environmental research is being done. So why is it more common in the Great Lakes area?

Another hope that people with Parkinson Disease have is the hope of a treatment which will work and have fewer side effects. Much research is being done with medications, patches, pills and surgeries such as deep brain stimulation and the use of stem cells. Nothing seems to be perfect at this time, and each person seems to respond differently to all treatments.

Learning to live with the disease is the area of most hope at this time. Research has shown how exercise in various forms can help delay progression or even help people cope better with their day to day lives. The Parkinson Exercise Classes at the YMCA are designed from one of those research projects in our state. Learning to live with the disease is also helped with education – learning more about the disease and by the support of other people who are going through a similar journey. Our church has supported the local support group since 2004. This support group has been a source of hope for the participants.

Hope grows for people who live with Parkinson Disease each day when the people around them become more aware of the disease, its symptoms and the effects of medications. We hope that you will all come and learn more at the educational programs coming up in the next couple months!



"We who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered."

Hebrews 6: 18b-b 20a

Health News Notes

- **Parish Nurse hours** 10am–2pm Thursdays.
- **Blood Pressure check** on Sunday April 1st after both services.
- **Powerful Tools for Caregivers** is a six week educational series for caregivers who are taking care of loved ones in their own home or from a distance. Facilitators are Carol Moellenberndt and Pam Peterson. Pick up a flyer by the health bulletin board in the narthex. Starting April 4th!
- **Parkinson Support Group** Thursday April 5th, 1:00pm – 2:30pm in the lounge. Special speaker, Vicki Conte from Froedtert Department of Neurology – Outreach coordinator **"What Does It Feel Like to Think With Parkinson Disease?"** The church and community are invited.
- **"Living well With Parkinson Disease"** is the topic of a seminar by the Wisconsin Parkinson Association out of Milwaukee. They have chosen Sturgeon Bay as one of the sites for this seminar! It will be held Thursday May 3rd from 1:00 – 3:00 pm at the Crossroads at Big Creek. A movement disorder specialist will come to speak. This seminar is free and open to anyone who would like to learn about Parkinson Disease.