



It is official. I have a new title. I am now a Designated Caregiver. I happened upon this role by accident. I was told that my mom's long-term care facility was in lockdown, which meant no visitors at any time! As I was trying to find a way to see her, the administrator at my mom's home said, "Why don't you become a Designated Caregiver?" I applied, and after completing the required online training and providing a negative COVID-19 test, I was finally able to be with my mom.

It reminded me of an article I read a few years ago that talked about the way organizers of the Special Olympics ensured that each athlete would receive encouragement. At the finish line of every event there were individuals known as Designated Huggers. Their job was to call out the winners, encourage each competitor throughout the race, and hug each participant as they crossed the finish line. I long to call out to my mom and let her know she is a winner and encourage her as she runs this last course of her race until she crosses the finish line to be with Jesus - and this is my opportunity!

In 2 Timothy 1:16, we are introduced to a man who characterizes the heart of a designated caregiver. His name, Onesiphorus, means *profit-bringer*. The apostle Paul singles out Onesiphorus in his letter and declares his deep appreciation for the friendship that he demonstrated to Paul while he was in prison.

This letter was written during the final days of Paul's life. He was bound in chains and, according to tradition, in a dark, damp Roman cell known as the Well Dungeon. Paul was awaiting his appeal to Caesar, but deep within he was aware that the time of his execution could come at any moment. He was alone. "Only Luke is with me," he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:11. It was during these lonely days that Onesiphorus arrived on the scene and provided Paul with refreshment and friendship. Onesiphorus was Paul's designated caregiver, providing a ministry of refreshment to the weary apostle.

Paul writes, "...he often refreshed me..." The word *refresh* literally means *to brace up or revive by fresh air*. It suggests the image of a stale, stuffy room in which those inside are oppressed by the heat. Seeking relief, someone opens a window and a cool, fresh breeze pours into the sweltering room, bringing strength and energy to everyone in its path. Onesiphorus was this cool breeze to Paul. He brought strength, hope, and perspective during incredibly challenging circumstances. He released the fragrance of Christ. So, what was it that made Onesiphorus such an effective designated caregiver?

First, Onesiphorus *showed up*. He refreshed Paul simply by being with him as frequently as he could. Refreshing others means making time to be with them in a way

that makes them feel safe, appreciated, and affirmed. Marva Dawn writes, “One of the best things that we can do, then, for persons who are in despair is to create for them an enfolding and safe environment in which they will know so deeply that they are loved... that they are not alone in their pain.”¹

Second, Onesiphorus *stepped up*. Paul writes, “You know very well how many ways he helped me in Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1:18b). It was not the size or magnitude of the acts of kindness that Onesiphorus offered; it was the fact that they were given at the right time, in the right way, and right on target.

For me, one of the most moving moments of 2020 was when my grandson, Jordan, befriended our next-door neighbour’s son. This boy has cerebral palsy and is not able to do many of the things other kids his age can do naturally. Jordan was determined to help him ride a bike. Day after day, Jordan would help his friend get on a bike and coach him on how to keep his balance and pedal. I happened to be present the day that this young boy rode a bike for the first time. Both Jordan and I went crazy with excitement. Jordan leaned over and said, “Is it okay if I give him the bike you gave me?” Without hesitation we both agreed that it was the right thing to do. When his friend got off the bike he exclaimed, “This is the best day ever!” Jordan showed up and stepped up that day and our neighbour’s son’s life changed, and so did Jordan’s.

God is looking for us to be His designated caregivers to this world, especially now! I am convinced that as we

enter an extended season of COVID-19 with even more accumulated losses, uncertainties, and fears, this is a critical time for followers of Jesus to open their eyes and listen—where is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *show up* and *step up*? Instead of viewing the pandemic as a season of closures and increasing restrictions, we need to allow God to shift our perspective and help us see that He has opened a season of incredible opportunities.

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So, who can you reach out to today? Caring for someone does not require a huge amount of time or some special gifting or expertise, but rather a humble heart and a willing spirit. I dare you to show up, whether virtually or in-person (with your mask on), and step up—not only will you change lives, but your life will be changed as well...just ask Jordan!

I know many of those reading this article are longing to see your loved ones who are in long-term care facilities and be able to reach out to them. We are praying for you and for your loved ones. And to those who are serving as designated caregivers or working on the frontlines in some other capacity, on behalf of the Alliance, I want to express our deepest gratitude. You are in our thoughts and prayers daily.

¹ Marva J Dawn, “Morning by Morning: Daily Meditation from the Writing of Marva J. Dawn”

Global Advance Fund Update

The Global Advance Fund (GAF) covers the costs of sending and supporting international workers. Through the GAF, our workers take the Gospel to places where few or none have heard the name of Jesus.

Year to date (as of January 29, 2021)

Total 2021 Faith Goal	\$14,322,910
YTD Income	\$1,350,873*
Excess/Shortfall	(12,972,037)

*9.43% of total 2021 Faith Goal