

First Jurisdiction Illinois COGIC
Holy Convocation
A Lame Church Before A Crippled World – Acts 3:1-8
Who cares for the Caregiver?

I. Understanding what is Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. It's basically a disease that attacks the individual's cognitive abilities. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse overtime, becoming so severe that it interrupts that person's daily tasks.

Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 percent to 80 percent of dementia cases.

II. Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life.

This is one of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting learned information. This includes forgetting important dates or events, asking for the same information over and over and the increasingly need to rely on memory aids (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems.

Some people may experience changes in the ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. In addition, may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure. An example of this is finding it hard to complete daily tasks.

4. Confusion with time or place.

This is when people with Alzheimer's lose track of dates, seasons and the passing of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it's not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are and how they got there.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.

Some people with Alzheimer's disease have vision problems. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determine colors or contrast, which may cause problems with driving. However is different from typical age-related changes for example your vision changes because of cataracts.

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing.

For example, people with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of the conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary; have problems finding the right words or call Things by the wrong names (example calling a watch a hand- clock).

7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.

A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over there steps to find them again. Sometimes, they may accuse others of stealing. This occurs more frequently over time.

8. Decreased or poor judgment.

People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving a large amount to people they don't know or telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities.

For example, a person with Alzheimer's may start to remove themselves from Hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They also May avoid being social because of the change they are experiencing.

10. Changes in mood and personality.

For example, the mood and the personality of a person with Alzheimer's can change. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

The most common early symptom of Alzheimer's is difficult to remembering newly-learned information because Alzheimer's changes typically, begin in the part of the brain that affects learning. As Alzheimer's advances through the brain that leads to increasingly severe symptoms, including disorientation, mood and behavior changes; deepening confusion about events, times and places; unfounded suspicions about family, friends and professional caregivers; more serious memory loss and behavior; and difficulty speaking, swallowing and walking.

In its early stages, memory loss is mild, but with late-stage Alzheimer's, individuals lose the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to their environment. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

On average, a person with Alzheimer's lives four to eight years after diagnosis, but can live as long as 20 years, depending on other factors.

III. Defining the role and responsibilities of Caregivers. (Answering the question, who is a caregiver?)

A caregiver can be anyone:

- Seniors taking care of their spouses.
- Children or grandchildren taking care of their parents or grandparents.
- Neighbors or friends taking care of older adults living down the street.
- Grandparents taking care of grandchildren.

The term "caregiver" refers to anyone who provides assistance to someone else who needs it. This person in need could be a husband who has Alzheimer's disease, a mother with cancer or a friend or neighbor who has suffered a stroke.

It is important to know that family caregiving is very common, especially among baby boomers whose parents are beginning to experience chronic health problems. An AARP study indicated that most members of the baby boomer generation (54%) currently care for children, parents, or both.

What does a Caregiver do?

The caregiver is that individual helping an older family member, who can no longer manage on their own. The caregiver also takes care of the older individual's medical appointments, shopping, helping with personal needs such as dressing or bathing and even financial matters (paying bills and managing the checkbook).

IV. Understanding the emotional challenges (Mental Wellness) that come with being a caregiver. Caregiver stress is common among caregivers because of the challenges faced with caregiving. Especially, women are at risk because of the harmful health effects of caregiver stress. These health problems may include depression or anxiety, feelings of frustration and anger. Feeling angry one minute or helpless the next are also emotional challenges.

Other signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling alone, isolated, or deserted by others
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Feeling tired most of the time
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Becoming easily irritated or angered
- Feeling worried or sad often
- Having headaches or body aches often

There are ways to manage caregiver stress:

- Learn ways to better help your loved one.
- Find caregiving resources in your community to help you. Ask for and accept help.
- Join a support group for caregivers.
- Get organized. Make to-do lists, and set a daily routine.
- Take time for yourself. Stay in touch with family and friends, and do things you enjoy with your loved ones and church.
- Take care of your health.
- See your doctor for regular checkups.

V. Resources available for Caregivers

- Alz.org
- Illinois Department of Aging
- Illinois Family Caregiver Support Program
- Caregiving.com
- National Caregiver Organizations

VI. References:

“Who Are Caregivers? - Caregiver Support Program.” *Illinois.gov*, www2.illinois.gov/.

“What Does a Caregiver Do? Caregiver Support Program” *Illinois.gov*, www2.illinois.gov/.

“Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia.” *Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia*, alz.org/.

“10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's.” *Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia*, www.alz.org/.
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