Barb Jones, Episcopal Church Home Elder, shares what she is grateful for this year.

A season of gratitude

What are you grateful for?

I am thankful for all the help I get!
Dear Friends,

This time last year, my letter celebrated the close of a remarkable 125th anniversary year. That feels like so long ago! Little did we know then a deadly virus was brewing that would shake our world.

First, I want to begin my year-end letter by honoring the families of the 112 elders who passed away at Episcopal Homes this year. We are grateful that, despite COVID, we lost 24 fewer beloved elders than in 2019. For those coping with loss while physical distancing and without traditional rituals to celebrate your loved ones, our hearts go out to you. We extend our gratitude for the privilege of serving your family as members of the Episcopal Homes community.

Second, I want to thank our entire community for your teamwork—from our nurses and housekeepers to our residents, families, and volunteers. Any tendencies we had between our 10 communities to work in silos prior to 2020 have disappeared. Our caring and trusted teamwork has helped keep us informed and safe. Without it, more lives may have been lost and fears heightened. We are so grateful.

When COVID reached the US, our volunteer force, including residents and families, made thousands of masks. Today, they chalk art on sidewalks, send cards, make companion calls, knit prayer shawls, and perform outdoors as elders participate while distancing. Without volunteers’ dedicated service, the risk of loneliness would be far greater. We are so grateful.

Amidst the threat of isolation, staff and elders demonstrated we never stop learning. Families donated iPads and new in-house television stations emerged for entertainment. Residents began talking to loved ones online; participating in programming; and watching my twice-weekly video updates online. We know technology does not replace human connection. As regulations changed, staff were quick to open visitation whenever feasible. For the courage to discover and the patience to support new avenues for connection, we are so very grateful.

Lastly, how appropriate that 2020 is the International Year of the Nurse. Our caregivers are on the front-line keeping residents safe, connected, healthy and whole. Seventy percent are racial/ethnic minorities and many are new immigrants. They come to work each day, amidst civil unrest, in service to our elders, bringing a culture of caring that embodies our mission. Meanwhile, their families are disproportionately impacted by both COVID and job losses. They need our support. As we enter 2021, Caring for Caregivers will be a top Episcopal Homes priority. Please consider a year-end gift to support our new Employee Emergency Assistance Program. Help bolster the resilience and wellbeing of our staff and demonstrate Caring for Caregivers.

We are so grateful.

Marvin Plakut
President & CEO

Inez Kalle, Episcopal Church Home Director of Nursing, sharing her story as part of the keynote speech for the 2020 Annual Meeting.

To contribute to our Caring for Caregivers Campaign, www.episcopalhomes.org/foundation/caring-for-caregivers

Support our Essential Staff

In addition to expertise in nursing and a passion for leading nursing staff at Episcopal Church Home, Inez Kalle brings the gift of presence with her to work every day, along with a smile that lights her whole face.

In her keynote for the 2020 Annual Meeting, she emphasized the elders in her care are family, and her workplace is a haven of love, knowledge, and care for one another. Inez believes that Episcopal Homes is a place where “We protect each other. And because we know each other and love each other and care for each other, it comes naturally that whatever is going on that affects one human being here affects all of us.”

Staff at Episcopal Homes take leadership from Inez, showing up with that same spirit of love and care for our residents. When we needed staff for our COVID Unit, staff of the hardest hit households volunteered to transfer to the Unit so residents would see a familiar face to provide comfort. Sometimes showing up comes at a personal cost. For our staff, they check their fear of bringing COVID to their own homes, their grief after the killing of George Floyd, and sorrow from losses at work and home at the door. The burdens of COVID aren’t shared equally. Adverse health outcomes from COVID for racial minorities, about 70 percent of our staff, are greater than the population as a whole. Through it all, our staff show up and show resilience and great love for our residents.

Our staff embody our mission. Caring for Caregivers will be a focused goal priority—an approach to make sure staff who need assistance do not suffer alone, and benefit from the same care they bring to work every day. Please consider a contribution to our Employee Assistance Program to care for those who care for our elders.

Caring FOR Caregivers

COVID-19 Communications

For ongoing updates on the status of COVID at Episcopal Homes, we are producing Monday and Thursday videos, Friday emails, and an always-current case dashboard:

- Marvin’s update video at 2 p.m. to our COVID-19 webpage, Facebook, YouTube and internal cable channel 3.1
- A Current Case Dashboard including tests administered and current active cases is at www.episcopalhomes.org/COVID-19
Meet Marilyn:

music lover, Twins fan, and engaged Iris Park resident

Marilyn lived in St. Paul’s Highland Park for 34 years before moving to Episcopal Homes ten years ago. Gloria Dei, where she was a member of the choir, is still her church home. She joined the Episcopal Homes choir, Sage Singers, too. Today, she watches both Episcopal Homes’ and Gloria Dei’s virtual church services. Music is a source of joy, whether she is singing along with hymns or listening to classical MPR. She keeps in close touch with her sister-in-law Mary, Mary’s daughter, and her children. They are very close, and when possible, Marilyn joins them for Sunday dinners and holidays.

Marilyn says the biggest change since she moved into Iris Park Commons is the light-rail line. She had a bird’s eye view of the construction and found it to be a convenient way to get to Twins games with friends. This avid baseball fan has plenty of Twins memorabilia.

Marilyn lives just above Iris Park Commons is the light-rail line. She had a bird’s eye view of the construction and found it to be a convenient way to get to Twins games with friends. This avid baseball fan has plenty of Twins memorabilia.

New Foundation Board and Committees to Intentionally Cultivate Volunteers in 2021

Ten years ago, during a period of rapid growth, boards and committees of the organizations that made up Episcopal Homes merged, forming a single board and committee structure.

In 2019, the Episcopal Homes Foundation led activities to celebrate our 125th anniversary year. It became clear that these historic committees provided many meaningful opportunities for volunteers to engage with elders, staff, and communities in service to our mission. These opportunities were also key to sustaining Episcopal Homes’ relationships with faith communities and grateful families across generations; shaping the organization since its founding.

Based on these learnings, Episcopal Homes voted in August to reintroduce a separate board and committee structure for its Foundation to help cultivate and grow our volunteer force as an asset in sustaining connection and mission throughout our next 125 years. Expect more messages on this new structure in the new year.

New Adopt A House Volunteer Model a Vehicle to Engage Faith Communities

To facilitate greater volunteer engagement, Episcopal Homes will introduce a new Adopt a Household volunteer program in 2021. This program is tailor-made to the times we are in. It allows us to be nimble in an environment that changes (sometimes daily), wring every drop of meaning out of every engagement, and support our staff who are serving residents’ daily needs.

Grab a small group of friends, family, or a faith group and we will match you to one of our households of between 10 to 20 residents and the staff who serve them. Help us to ensure our residents continue to lead engaged and enriched lives at Episcopal Homes.

Handmade connections

DON’T STOP FOR COVID

Heather Worthington, a member of St. Clement’s Episcopal Church, wanted to share her time at Episcopal Homes. She knew several church members living in assisted and independent living, and looked forward to seeing them. Then the pandemic impacted her visits to campus. Heather knew that the elders are particularly vulnerable to COVID and that physical distancing would be difficult for the active group of people she knows. She wanted to find a way to bring them joy from a distance. She started knitting miniature prayer shawls and stringing prayer beads to let them know they are loved and that friends are praying for them.

Each knitted shawl or prayer bead string takes about 40 minutes to make. Since March she has delivered 100 prayer shawls and 200 sets of prayer beads. They have brought a lot of smiles and warm feelings to Episcopal Homes’ residents and staff. Each is a testament to the flexibility and endurance of loving connections despite the pandemic.
It has been an extraordinary year by any reckoning. The cycles of life and death go on, and we strive to create new ways to celebrate the lives of 112 dear friends who died this year. Chaplain Phil Rose misses the heartfelt processions of honor most. It provided such immediate recognition of the loss to our community, and a beautiful, butterfly-draped transition for the departed. He looks forward to the day we can return to this ritual with elders’ families, neighbors, staff and friends.

We have also sorely missed being able to grieve alongside friends and family members who struggle to find comfort and closure. At the Feast of All Saints and Remembrance of All Souls service in November, we came together virtually to honor the lives of our friends. Hymns included “For All the Saints,” which was updated by Reverend Dr. David Gambrill to include new, timely lyrics.

We strive for accuracy when preparing these lists and apologize for any errors. We invite you to notify the Foundation office at 651-632-8854 or foundation@episcopalhomes.org to bring corrections to our attention for gifts to our COVID fund made between June 1 and Nov. 25, 2020.

Support Connectivity and Safety

Your gift to our COVID Emergency Fund helps fight isolation and increase safety for residents at Episcopal Homes. Donate at www.episcopalhomes.org/covid-emergency-fund

Celebrate the lives of loved one lost by watching the All Saints and All Souls ceremony on the Spiritual Life at Episcopal Homes YouTube channel. www.youtu.be/XFLDWUDuEOU

“We for live cut short, no time or space to grieve; for saints and servants you have now received; for all who still bear witness and believe: O Lord, have mercy. O Lord, have mercy.”

Grady Shapiro, Community Support Liaison, and Leah Welch, Chaplain and Spiritual Life Coordinator, preform the Litany of the Dead and lighting of candles during the unprecedented virtual ceremony.
The Gardens named among Nation's Best

The Gardens is among the 21% of U.S. skilled nursing facilities that have been recognized as a Best Nursing Home in 2020-21 by U.S. News & World Report.

U.S. News gives the designation of Best Nursing Home only to those homes that meet defined standards of quality service.

The Best Nursing Home rating reflects U.S. News’ exclusive analysis of publicly available data using a methodology that evaluates factors that most greatly impact patient and resident care, safety, and outcomes. This year, to accompany the new ratings, nursing home profile pages were updated to include a patient safety summary that reflects COVID-19 data alongside other measurements that can be helpful when choosing a home or facility amidst the pandemic.

Virtual Holiday Giving Tree

Help us make the holidays special for Episcopal Church Home and Gardens residents! The first-ever Virtual Holiday Giving Tree is open as a registry at Target.

Details are available at www.episcopalhomes.org/covid-19/ways-you-can-help including the registry links and other service opportunities to help us make this season bright.

© 2020 Episcopal Homes of Minnesota