

# The Caring Congregation Ministry

## Implementation Guide

Karen Lampe and Melissa Gepford

*ABINGDON PRESS*  
*Nashville, TN*

UNEDITED PROOF

**THE CARING CONGREGATION MINISTRY:  
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**

*Copyright © 2021 by Abingdon Press  
All rights reserved.*

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission can be addressed to Permissions, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2222 Rosa L. Parks Boulevard, Nashville, TN 37228-1306, or emailed to [permissions@umpublishing.org](mailto:permissions@umpublishing.org).

ISBN 978-1-7910-1338-7

Scripture quotations unless noted otherwise are from the Common English Bible. Copyright © 2011 by the Common English Bible. All rights reserved. Used by permission. [www.CommonEnglishBible.com](http://www.CommonEnglishBible.com).

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# Contents

Introduction

## PART ONE: ESTABLISHING YOUR CONGREGATIONAL CARE MINISTRY

Chapter 1. First Essential: Recruit and Equip

Chapter 2. Second Essential: Identify Roles and Responsibilities

Chapter 3. Third Essential: Establish the Documentation System

Chapter 4. Fourth Essential: Evaluate

Chapter 5. Fifth Essential: Build the Congregational Need

## PART TWO: EQUIPPING YOUR CONGREGATIONAL CARE MINISTERS

Chapter 6. Introduction, Basic Theological Foundations

Chapter 7. In All Things Pray First!

Chapter 8. Boundaries

Chapter 9. Pastoral Listening and Spiritual Guidance

Chapter 10. Visitation

Chapter 11. Leading through the Darkest Valley

Chapter 12. Documentation and Logistics

## PART THREE: CARING FOR PEOPLE IN CRISIS

Chapter 13. Caring for People in Crisis and Trauma

Chapter 14. Mental Health Ministry and Spiritual Guidance

Chapter 15. Recovery Ministry

Chapter 16. Communal Trauma

Acknowledgments

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness,  
light.*

*And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood as to understand.  
To be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. And it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life.*

*—St. Francis of Assisi*

# Introduction

The ministry of congregational care is the heart of the church and should be carefully designed to help all of us get through challenging times. Congregational Care Ministers (CCMs) are key volunteers who work alongside their pastor to help provide Christlike care for the church family. This book is designed to train both pastors and volunteers so that together they can organize methods of care that are relevant to the needs of our current era.

You may wonder if you have the capacity to create, lead, and do this ministry. Much of your ability to care is born out of your own life story because whatever situations life has handed you, God can help you take those challenges, turn them inside out, and make good of them.

Everyone has a story about their life that involves challenge and choices. Just by being human means we will encounter complex situations. The times when I (Karen) grew the most were not easy.

In my early twenties, I found myself in a very abusive situation professionally that helped me understand salvation in a way like I never had. The depth of my pain and shame would have been helped by the healing power of the voices of the #MeToo movement. An amazing volunteer in our church helped me and our marriage survive. This was when I came to understand the power of the gospel message.

Through the challenges of life I found that my relationship with God grew exponentially, especially when I engaged with people of my faith. How we help one another get through difficult times requires a commitment to the healing ministries of our churches.

If you or a loved one have encountered fear or pain from cancer, a natural disaster, questions of sexual/gender identity, addiction, assault, depression, anxiety, or suicide of a loved one, you can experience your own resurrection that then prepares you to help others.

Rev. Melissa Gepford and I share a vision of the importance of congregational care that is fueled by the empowerment of the laity with the hope of expanding the ministry out into the community. Melissa and her husband have developed a CCM ministry in both a small church and now in a medium-size church. She is a pro at organizing for any size church and you will find her contributions to this text very helpful. Her own life story drives her devotion to this task.

## How to Use This Book

This book is essential as you set up your care ministry and work consistently to develop the practical methods of care within your team. There are three parts to *The Caring Congregation Implementation Guide*.

Part 1 will give you details about how to organize your congregational care ministry by utilizing the Five Essentials. Each essential can be adjusted according to the size and needs of your church. Be patient as you evaluate and make needed changes.

Parts 2 and 3 will address relevant topics regarding care in very practical ways. Part 2 includes six chapters that serve as the six very important basic training sessions. Some of the focus areas consider issues such as boundaries, health, death, and pastoral listening.

Part 3 includes chapters that address specific needs your community may have, and this information can serve as continuing education training sessions. Critical issues we are currently facing such as addictions, depression and anxiety, suicides, as well as pandemic and other community crises induced by extreme weather or hate crimes are covered as we move forward to become a more relevant church in the twenty-first century.

*The Care Minister's Manual* is a **separate book** that serves as a training workbook and reference resource for each Congregational Care Minister. The manual provides specific details and highlights for care, and teaches important techniques and methods for the CCM. These techniques and methods include talking points, lists of clarifying questions for the CCM, relevant scripture references, prayers to share during the course of care, and lists of other resources where CCMs can find additional information or help. The *Manual* is packed with tools to help pastors, other Congregational Care Ministry leaders, and CCMs develop their care ministry, keep it organized, and improve the ministry's capacity to care for the congregation and community. These tools include sample forms, templates, and checklists.

The most robust Congregational Care Ministries will begin with this book, the *Implementation Guide*, and then will conduct CCM training and ministry development utilizing the *Care Minister's Manual*.

Throughout this book you'll find callout boxes that emphasize best practices as well as personal stories. Also, at the end of each chapter there are segments to help you assess yourself and your community. Take time to evaluate and consider thoughtfully possible changes.

Care is such a vital ministry and sacred responsibility of the church. God has called us to walk alongside people during their most defining moments, and it is so important to have an effective system that works.

## History of This Method of Care

This ministry of Congregational Care Ministers was started at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection when we realized that our ministry could be so much more effective if we had a trained group of volunteers to help us with all of the caring ministries including hospital calls, support groups/classes, pastoral listening, and any other number of care needs. The CCMs became essential to our ministry, and now that ministry has been shared with churches throughout the United States. This model of care has been utilized and adapted for many different denominations and scales well to fit any size church.

## Key Concepts

Four key concepts are emphasized throughout this book.

1. Embrace teamwork. There are no lone rangers in this ministry. Jesus had a team and we need teams to help us be the community of faith.
2. Trust that the Holy Spirit will be leading you in every aspect of your ministry. You are never alone and God will give you the tools you need for each situation.
3. Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. I have had a sign in my office for many years that says "Do not be afraid of change, be afraid of not changing." This sign has become a prayer for me as I invite others into the work of being a relevant church. Always be looking for new ways to keep your ministry effective and nimble.
4. In all things, pray first! Everything we do must be undergirded with prayerful discernment.

So with that in mind, let's pray:

Gracious, loving God, we come to you ever so grateful for all of the ways that our lives have been challenged because we know that in those times you have helped us to grow and become the people

whom we are now. Give us courage to take every life experience that you might continue to use us to bring Christlike care to a hurting world. All this we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

## Theology

Our theology, and how we express it, is foundational for the care ministries of our church. We have so many questions about how God works in the world:

- Why does a loving God allow suffering?
- What is the difference between healing and curing?
- How can we facilitate the redemption process?
- Do miracles still happen?

And the list goes on.

Yet this side of eternity, none of us fully understands how God's power works in and through us. As we study the life of Jesus, we understand that his healing ministry was central to who he was. Now he calls us to follow him and care for his lambs. Jesus challenges us in John 14:12 (NIV), "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these." How we define our part in Jesus's healing ministry is integral to our theology. Thus we acknowledge our own need to grow in our faith through experience, reasoning, scripture, and tradition. This text will explore and develop our theological foundation regarding care so that God can use us as healers.

## Organization

One of my mentors and teachers said to me, "Karen, you can have people read the books and teach them through a seminar, but they need to understand the basics of organizing the ministry." This statement is so very true.

As I have taught churches of all sizes across the country, it has become ever-more clear that there are five essential steps for organizing this ministry. These important ideas are addressed in detail throughout the text. As we begin, these five essentials will be explored in depth:

### Five Essentials for Organizing Your Care Ministry

1. **Recruit and Equip.** Choose and train the laity to become Congregational Care Ministers. Do not be afraid of empowering talented laity to use their gifts and graces. Training and deployment will take time, but it will be worth it! The church and community will be blessed beyond measure and those who are trained will also find new purposes.
2. **Identify Roles and Responsibilities.** Choose key volunteers who will help the pastor organize, triage, and deploy the other volunteers.
3. **Establish the Documentation System.** Create confidential documentation systems that may be in both electronic and paper formats.
4. **Evaluate.** Evaluate the current care needs of your church and community. Do you have support ministries that are effective? For instance, for the past many years, there has been an epidemic of new addictions across the country. Who are the champions who

- could help you develop a recovery ministry? Dream big about how you will offer care not only for individuals but also for all the people in your community.
5. **Build the Need.** Communicate to your congregation your excitement about the CCMs and the importance of the healing ministries of the church.

## This System Works Best with Three Primary Collaborative Roles

1. *Director of Congregational Care*—Typically, this role is embodied by a pastor; they are responsible for establishing and maintaining the Congregational Care Ministry. Responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, recruiting, training, and providing ongoing evaluation.
2. *Congregational Care Minister*—Laity become CCMs through a recruitment and application process. Once they are trained and commissioned, their responsibilities could include visitation, calls, one-on-one meetups, and care group leadership.
3. *Dispatcher*—The Dispatcher receives all prayer and visitation requests, calls, and submissions, and works with the Director of Congregational Care to assign CCMs to each concern. For small to mid-sized churches, the Director of Congregational Care serves as the Dispatcher. For larger churches, you may need a Dispatcher for hospital calls, plus separate Dispatchers for elder care or requests for personal prayer.

## How the Caring Congregation Ministry Model Works

Caring for people can get messy. We recognize that each person's concern or crisis is unique and will require wisdom in determining the next right step for them. As you work your way through this manual, you will encounter details and caveats to address possible scenarios for care. To avoid confusion or remaining caught in the weeds, we have outlined three general steps to provide care effectively as a congregation. We will further discuss each step in the following chapters.

1. *Intake and Dispatch*—Director and Dispatcher curate and assign each care request to a CCM (see the digital files for examples of prayer request cards and other useful resources for intake and dispatch).
2. *Follow Up*—CCMs receive their assignments weekly and follow up with the person requesting care.
3. *Documentation*—After each assigned follow-up, the CCM documents their interaction.

Now that you have a macro-view of the Congregational Care Ministry, our prayer is that you are even more convinced that this simple and streamlined, yet robust and versatile, system will bless you and your congregation. In part 1 of the text, we will explain how to set up your Congregational Care Ministry utilizing the Five Essentials.

## Assessing Your Community

Get vulnerable for a few minutes and prayerfully ponder your life experiences. Consider some of your most important and transformative times in your life and how the church has been integral to your journey.



1. What is God calling you to do?
2. How will your story help the ministry to grow?
3. What are the resources you need to initiate this ministry?
4. Who can help you organize?

UNEDITED PROOF

## Part One

# Establishing Your Congregational Care Ministry

UNEDITED PROOF

## Chapter One

# First Essential: Recruit and Equip

### *Prayer TK*

I (Melissa) remember it like it was yesterday. My husband, Bill, was the solo pastor at a small program-sized church in a town of five thousand. I hadn't yet been commissioned as a deacon in The United Methodist Church, but I worked on staff as the discipleship coordinator. It was a busy week day in the office when we received a call at the church. One of our members was in the hospital in Kansas City, just forty-five minutes east of us. Bill hopped in the car and headed east.

Fifteen minutes down the road, his cell phone rang. Another congregant was in the ICU; it was urgent. Except she was in the hospital in Lawrence, thirty minutes west of our little town.

Did I mention Bill was headed east?

It's a dilemma in which no pastor wants to find himself: who "gets" my care today? But that was the choice Bill had to make. That was the day we (Bill and I, along with two other gifted souls from our church whom I'll tell more about later) registered for The Caring Congregation Seminar, hosted by Rev. Karen Lampe at United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.

I hope your moment wasn't as potent as ours, but I imagine something—an event, a dilemma, an honest mistake—led you to this resource. As the twenty-first-century American church stares down the realities of our country's declining physical and mental health, financial crises, and the inevitable "death tsunami" predicted by Rev. Dr. Lovett Weems, it's becoming crystal clear that a pastor-centric model of care just isn't sustainable. We can't do this alone—and we were never meant to!

## The Case for Laity

Long before the advent of smartphones, social media, and twenty-four-hour accessibility, ministry leaders still had to take care of the flock. And somehow, they still had time to tend to their own spiritual growth, and take on hobbies like breeding dogs (Rev. John Russell), or writing entire books on health care (Rev. John Wesley).

The Apostle Paul, arguably the most effective church planter in history, planted churches then left! How in the world was that model sustainable, and why did it flourish the way that it did?

All human beings have certain gifts, skills, and abilities—but not by accident. God gave us these gifts and has called each of us to use them to be a blessing to the world. Paul talks about the church working like a body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-18:

Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. Certainly the body isn't one part but many. If the foot says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell? But as it is, God has placed each one of the parts in the body just like he wanted.

In my time serving on the Congregational Excellence team for the Great Plains Annual Conference, I've learned that the key ingredient for an excellent congregation is excellent laity—

people who are convinced of their call to ministry in every vocation, utilizing their God-given gifts for the sake of making disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world.

Pastors, it's time to get out of the way. Your people have been gifted by God—some of them to care for others—and when we take the reins for ourselves, we deny people opportunities to be who they were called to be.

## The First Class

The drive from the Caring Congregation Seminar to our bedroom community was forty-five minutes. After two days of soaking up all we could at the seminar, you would think we'd have been exhausted. Not so! On the way home, our team—comprising my husband; Carissa, our youth group leader; and Alice, a gifted layperson; and myself—spent the entire forty-five minutes brainstorming, tailoring, and beginning the first and most vital step to a successful Congregational Care Ministry: identifying that first class of CCMs.

The Congregational Care Minister is the foundation of the ministry. Without ministers, the system collapses, which is why it is so vital, especially in the early stages, to choose the right people with the right dispositions to serve. The following section will help you identify qualities in an ideal care minister.

## The Ideal Care Minister

The Congregational Care Ministry is modeled after Jesus, who healed the sick, cared for the poor, and had compassion on those who suffered physically, mentally, spiritually, and systemically. Upon reading the Gospels, we encounter the Wounded Healer willing to touch the untouchables, interact with those on the margins of society, and deliver people from all sorts of ailments with compassion, dignity, and empathy. This is the example we follow as disciples of Christ and as care ministers.

Easier said than done, right? I know I don't live up to that standard all the time, and the beauty of the good news is that there's grace when we don't emulate Jesus as well as we would like to. And the beauty of the Congregational Care Ministry model is that, while we strive to embody Jesus's example, we also follow a long and historical tradition of caring for others in our midst. Care didn't stop with Jesus.

Before Jesus was arrested and crucified, he sat at a table with his closest companions. He got up, took his outer garments off, wrapped himself in a towel, and began washing the disciples' feet. It was a shocking display of servanthood—one the disciples didn't quite understand. Jesus explained his entire ministry in that subversive act: he was the leader of a movement threatening to topple the empire, yet he took on the work of a servant. The way of Jesus is servant leadership, and he calls us to the same.

That same night, Jesus commanded the disciples to love one another. It seems obvious, but with a group like the disciples—full of zealots and tax collectors and Roman collaborators—Jesus needed to say it out loud one more time. Because the only way people will know we follow Jesus is if we love one another. That's it. The way we love one another, the way we care for one another—that's the model we strive for with the Congregational Care Ministry.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples were left to continue his ministry on earth. As the movement grew, it became clear that they needed to organize by defining roles and responsibilities. Acts 6 tells us that the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in their midst

were being neglected, so the disciples chose a core group of seven *diakonia*, from which we derive the word *deacon*, to provide care and concern for those who needed it.

In the New Testament, *diakonia* was the ministry of service, aid, and support. The word began as a word to describe a person who waits on tables, then expanded to someone who cared for all household needs, and eventually came to mean general service. It naturally implies a level of personal subjugation to another, putting a person's needs above their own. Deacons in the early church were women and men who assisted in liturgical logistics; proclamation of the word and Christian mission; and general ministry in the church, which included a variety of actions. As the role of the *diakonos* developed, it became one in which servant leaders attended to public worship, the care of the poor, and administration.

An early church collection of treatises known as the Apostolic Constitutions prescribes that deacons are to visit "all those who stand in need of visitation,"<sup>1</sup> and Cyprian of Carthage called on those in ministry to "always pray for one another" and to "relieve burdens and afflictions by mutual love."<sup>2</sup>

Ministry leaders, as you begin implementing the first essential, consider laypeople who embody servant leadership, prayer, and mutual love, care, and concern. Who comes to mind? Jot down their names. Let your list be as short or long as you are led, then pray over your potential CCMs.

On the way home from the seminar, we had so much fun brainstorming all the folks in our midst who embodied such admirable and Christlike qualities that we found our list was actually too long! Our average worship attendance was around 175, so we only needed five CCMs in addition to our pastoral staff. We didn't need as many people as we had listed, so we began narrowing down, utilizing the criteria provided in *The Caring Congregation Training Manual and Resource Guide*:

1. Active member who has established a deep connection to the church.
2. Regular worship attendance.
3. Scriptural and theological foundation, and a willingness to learn.
4. Knowledge and study of scripture to provide a foundation for care ministry.
5. Active pursuit of growth in the Christian life through participation in a small group or some other form of Christian discipleship.
6. Deeply committed Christian who lives out a life of faith through acts of piety (love of God) and mercy (love of neighbor).
7. Giving financially in proportion to their income with the tithe being the goal.
8. Safe gatherings or other types of certification to assure their understanding of boundaries.
- Each church needs to decide what type of certification will be required.
9. Expected to commit to at least three hours per week to this ministry.<sup>3</sup>

We found that some on our list embodied all of these qualities, while others weren't as regular in their worship attendance as we'd have liked our CCMs to be. A couple others would have been a great fit, but we already knew how busy their schedules were, and we knew they wouldn't be able to commit the amount of time each week we knew we needed. After a time of discernment, we had identified our five CCMs we wanted for our first class, and we began recruiting.

Ministry leaders, take a look at your list of possible CCMs again. Identify how many you'd like in your first class of CCMs, and take a look at the criteria provided. Who stands out now?

## Recruiting Your CCMs

Once you have narrowed your list down to the ones you believe would be a great first class of CCMs, it's time to recruit! Here are a few tips for effective CCM recruitment:

1. Pray, pray, pray. Pray for the church, the ministry, the people who have been called to care for others, and those who will be receiving care on behalf of the congregation. Ask God to give you eyes to see gifts in those who provide care well.
2. Be picky and practice discernment. Don't be OK with "any warm body" who will say yes to your begging. We don't work out of a scarcity mentality!
3. Face-to-face invitation to apply. Seek out individuals you've intentionally identified as possible CCMs. Phone calls, emails, texts, and pulpit/bulletin announcements certainly are helpful, but be careful with how you extend the invitation. Make it clear that there is an application process that will discern if being a CCM is a good fit. This is an invitation, not an ask, favor, or plea. Invite applicants to join you in sharing God's care and concern to the congregation and community.

Notice that the third point is an invitation to *apply*. Even if you already have a good idea of who should make up your core leadership team and subsequent CCMs, ask these persons to fill out an application. This is a vital step as the ministry continues to grow and more and more people are interested in serving as a CCM.

You may receive some pushback and even criticism for this, since many churches function in a "first come, first served" or "sign up to serve" mentality. For some ministries of the church, that model is great! We want to allow opportunities for all people to serve in some capacity at the church. The Congregational Care Ministry is not one of those opportunities. CCMs will be deployed on behalf of the church to provide care to people facing some of their darkest, most confusing times in their lives, and it is imperative to vet and train those who will share in these moments.

Determine your selection process ahead of time. We suggest a two-phase process:

1. Each person is asked to fill out an application, which asks for a spiritual biography.
2. Following the application submission, interviews are conducted with a pastor and staff member.

Consider the following interview questions:

1. What are two or three things in your life/faith story that are defining moments for you?
2. Tell me about how worship plays a role in your life.
3. What has been your discipleship journey so far?
4. In what ways have you practiced Christian service?
5. Tell me about any class or Bible studies you've participated in.
6. Why do you want to be a CCM? What does a life totally surrendered to God mean to you?
7. What does your daily practice of the spiritual disciplines look like? How do you explain grace? What is your faith autobiography?
8. When have you had a challenging experience in your life? What did you do? Who was involved? How did you handle it? From whom did you seek help?
9. Imagine you are in a one-on-one scenario, giving care. Who benefits? Where is God in this?

The interviewer informs the applicant that someone will call soon. Close by praying with the applicant. After the interview, debrief with your interview team, share any notes you take, and make decisions.

Not every member of your congregation will have the gifts and skills necessary to fill this role of caring for the congregation. In these cases, we try to direct people to other possibilities for volunteering where their unique gifts can best be used. Trust your gut and the collective experience of others. It is far better to redirect applicants to another area of ministry early in the discernment process rather than have a difficult conversation later about possible other places to serve. Some questions to consider as you practice discernment:

1. Are they healed from past wounds?
2. Do they need more time or experience to study? If so, invite them to apply again in the future.
3. Would there be a better fit for their gifts in a different ministry area?

## Equipping Your CCMs

Once your CCMs have said yes, it's crucial to equip them well. CCMs will be partnering with pastors to offer some of the care previously done only by a pastor, so it is important that these persons have basic theological and biblical training. We suggest equipping your CCMs with theological and biblical training through an intensive study like Disciple Bible Study, Christian Believer, or a similar resource.

It is also imperative to train your CCMs in the logistics and practices of the Congregational Care Ministry model. We invite you to utilize parts 2 and 3 of this book as a script for training the basics. These training modules work best when each CCM receives the companion resource, *The Caring Congregation Ministry: Care Minister's Manual*.

Training can be done over the course of a weekend, seminar-style. It can also be broken into one module per week over the course of a couple of months. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us all to reimagine former ways of connecting and learning, and we encourage you to continue offering digital options for accessible training. Decide what works best for your context and your CCMs. Once you have established the model for training, determine your dates. If other churches in the area or in your network are also implementing the Congregational Care Ministry, consider hosting a training together to share resources and teaching responsibilities. Secure a room large enough to accommodate your CCMs with round tables and chairs of no more than eight people at each table. If you are hosting a seminar-style weekend, consider kicking off your event with a worship service and closing with the commissioning service provided to you in chapter 5. Be sure to purchase a copy of the *Care Minister's Manual* for each participant, along with any other commissioning gifts, which could include a Bible, anointing vials, congregational care card sets (can be purchased at <https://thewell.cor.org/>), official CCM name tags with the church's logo, and official CCM business cards and stationery with the church's logo (these come in handy during visits, especially in nursing facilities or hospitals, to leave a note if the person is sleeping when a CCM arrives or is unable to remember the visit).

## Continuing Education

Once your CCMs have completed the basic training modules, we encourage you to regularly provide continuing education opportunities for your CCMs. The chapters in part 3 of this book serve as some jumping-off points as you consider offering continuing education. It is up to you to determine what “regular” looks like in your context. For some churches, quarterly meetings are sufficient and helpful; other churches host weekly meetings to unpack, share insights, and bring case studies to the group. Possible topics for continuing education could include member assistance, medical information, caring for the frail, hospice care, information technology, ministry to people with dementia and their families, self-care, development of a recovery ministry, and mental health ministry. The possibilities are endless!

## Assessing Your Community

In this chapter, you have learned that the first essential to building your Congregational Care Ministry is to recruit and equip your Congregational Care Ministers. As you begin implementing the first essential, take some time to reflect on the following questions.

1. What does an ideal Congregational Care Minister look like in your context?
2. Brainstorm a list of laity who exhibit gifts that align with those of a CCM.
3. Develop a plan for recruiting your first class of CCMs.