



Catholic  
Charities  
North Dakota

Fall 2011

# Faith + Works Wonders

## You have cancer . . .

Hearing these words and receiving a diagnosis of a possibly life-threatening disease frequently forces you to take a reflective look at your life. Getting cancer can be a lonely event. You think no one can help; you think you are in this alone. The road you begin to travel is scary and uncharted. To whom can you express your fears, your concerns? Where do you turn? Who can make this easier?

Churches are, and have always been, places of healing. Through the church, we understand the meaning of health: harmony of body, mind, and spirit and living in relationship with God and with each other. Support received when facing illness and health challenges help us to live our lives with grace and hope.

At the Church of the Nativity in Fargo, the Cancer Support Group is a non-denominational group which welcomes people who have cancer to provide that support and be a place of healing. Meeting weekly, the group is made up of men and women in all stages of cancer, from newly-diagnosed to those in recovery.

The Cancer Support Group at Nativity began when a parishioner, who was trained as a medical art therapist and in cancer support group facilitation, was herself diagnosed with cancer. Her treatment was aggressive and the challenges she faced were transformative for her.

Not finding a cancer support group, she worked along with the parish's Pastoral Minister to start one in 1999. The meetings begin with prayer, and then there may be a presentation on various topics, such as medications and their interactions, diets that help when in treatment, or information on hospice or palliative care.

One of the primary benefits of meeting in the group is that the emotional challenges can be shared—the ups, the downs, the fears that come when awaiting tests results, change in medication, or the loss of things once taken for granted, such as hair, mobility, and energy. Being able



Members of the Cancer Support Group  
help one another live full lives.

## **Cancer is limited ...**

It cannot cripple love,  
It cannot shatter hope,  
It cannot corrode faith,  
It cannot eat away peace,  
It cannot destroy confidence,  
It cannot shut out memories,  
It cannot silence courage,  
It cannot invade the soul,  
It cannot reduce eternal life,  
It cannot quench the spirit,  
It cannot lessen the power  
of the Resurrection.

to share freely with others who understand what one is going through helps a person face the unknown. "You can express things here that you can't say to family and friends," says Joni.

The support received helps group members to continue to live a full life. The members of the group believe that even if one has received a terminal diagnosis, it doesn't mean "you need to go to bed and die." In general, a positive, upbeat attitude helps people keep on living as they move past the treatment and into recovery.

Tom, a member of the group stated "the best thing about the group is people you meet and the support that is received. The bad thing about the group is those who are no longer with us. I've learned more from those who have passed because of the things they have been through."

For more information on the Cancer Support Group, call Sr. Sharon Houle, 701-232-2414 at Nativity.

## **Parish Social Ministry**

The Board of Directors of Catholic Charities North Dakota has formed the Social Justice and Parish Social Ministry Committee. One purpose of the committee is to find projects, such as the Cancer Support Group at Nativity Parish in Fargo, and tell about them so others may learn from their success.

*What is happening in your parish/community that is transforming lives in the Kingdom of God? If you have a project you would like to tell us about, please contact Colleen Hardy at the Fargo Catholic Charities North Dakota office, (701) 235-4457.*

**Providing help. Creating hope. Transforming lives.**



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### **Catholic Charities North Dakota programs:**

- *Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Services*
- *Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK)*
- *Guardianship Services*
- *Counseling Services*

### **Locations**

**Fargo (701) 235-4457**

**Grand Forks (701) 775-4196**

**Bismarck (701) 255-1793**

**Minot (701) 852-2854**

**[www.catholiccharitiesnd.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesnd.org)**



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