

Caring for carers:

Common Ground small groups in partnership with Izandla Zethemba Carers

The need for this intervention:

Izandla Zethemba has 5 carers supporting over 100 families who are impacted by HIV/AIDs. In many cases the primary breadwinners have AIDS and are unable to properly look after their children. In some cases the parents have died, leaving children as young as 13 to look after their brothers and sisters. Carers support these families through regular home visits, providing prayer, counselling and subsistence support (food, clothing, school fees).

The sheer load and nature of the work leaves carers feeling frequently drained and overwhelmed, and the risk of burnout and depression as a result of the work is high. The carers are at the forefront of nurturing those impacted by HIV, but need care themselves to keep motivated and encouraged to do the work they are called to.

There is a desperate need for teams of people to care for and get behind these carers. There is also the possibility, through the carers to nurture those infected and affected by HIV.

Maneo, a carer at IZ, recently described the sadness she felt at times in her work: 'the other day one of my clients ran out of paraffin. Paraffin is essential for cooking, for warmth, for cleaning water. It costs R5. Even though it was such a little need, I could not help her, it was terrible.'

Common Ground church has a number of small groups who may be keen to partner with others in our city who are serving the suffering. As a church we recognise that we can only become all that Christ intended us to be if we serve those less privileged than ourselves. We believe that we are spiritually poor - and need those who are disadvantaged through sickness, persecution and/or poverty to help us in our journey of growing in Christlikeness.

Proposed caring for carer intervention:

Common Ground would like to propose that small groups partner with carers for a period of 6 months in the following way:

1. 1 or 2 members will meet with the carer for **2 hours once every 2 weeks**, to build relationship with the carer and to listen to the current challenges the carer and families are facing. These people will feedback the information to small group for prayer.
2. The small group will arrange **an outing for the carer and families** under her care once **every 8 weeks**
3. Common ground will provide **R150 worth of vouchers once a month** for the carer to buy something for herself - a small way to recognise the work she does
4. **Once every 6 weeks the carer will attend the small group** and provide an update on the status of families under her care. The small group can pray for her and the families under her care. It would be great to have pictures of the people under her care so the small group can pray with faces of people in mind
5. The small group will determine whether or not they can **respond to some of the basic needs** of the families as outlined by the carer (e.g. paraffin, uniforms etc.).

Additional details:

1. Briefing and equipping of the small group:

Common Ground Foundation team (i.e. Margi and Sarah) will make sure that the small group is properly briefed and equipped to serve in a way that honours all involved. This will involve exploring our theology on service, principles of service and a more detailed brief on the process and commitments of the intervention.

2. Initial contact with the carer:

I would like to propose that the small group visit Khanyisa Church one Sunday and connect with the carer after the meeting. At this meeting the carer can provide a bit more information about who she is, the work she does and the families she supports.

3. Contact with the families

The carer will be the person to decide whether or not the families would benefit from direct contact with any of the small group members. Small group members will not necessarily meet the families in their homes.

4. Accountability to IZ and Common Ground

I am not sure whether goods for the families and vouchers for the carer should go directly from the small group to the carer. What would be best?

5. Time Frame

Small groups will commit to supporting carers and the families under their care for a 6 month period. After this time has passed the small group will decide whether to continue with the partnership.