

Hospital Visitation Guide

Created for the Elders and Deacons of Memorial Presbyterian Church of Cherokee. With excerpts from:
The 1995 Book of Common Worship of the PC(USA),
The 1946 Book of Common Worship,
Serving in Church Visitation, by Paul Engle and Jerry Stubblefield
The New International Greek New Testament Commentary, Murray Harris.

Quick Tips for Hospital Visits

In Matthew 25:36 Jesus says, “ I was sick and you visited me.” A hospital visit is a tangible way for a Christian to say, “I care for you. I am concerned about you.” As you visit be aware of the condition of the hospitalized person. A critically ill person may be in a unit where he or she is receiving specialized care. While you may not be able to see the patient, you can visit with family members who anxiously wait for their loved one to show some improvement or for some update to come from the doctor. This is a great time to offer support and encouragement, even in the gravest of circumstances.

Here are a few tips to remember as you make a hospital visit:

1. Visit only during posted visiting hours.
2. Don't be afraid to ask about their ailments, and listen to the treatments and medicines they are taking. If they don't want to talk about it, they'll say so.
3. Don't stand by the bed and loom over them. Take a seat and pull it next to the bed so that you can talk without yelling and so the patient feels comfortable.
4. Ask if they need anything – items from home, a phone call to relatives, something from the store, or just words of encouragement.
5. Don't stay too long. 10-15 minutes is really all the time you need for a good visit.
6. Don't worry about what to say or how to pray. Jesus told his disciples, “do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour” (Matthew 10:19 ESV).
7. Don't be afraid to say, “I don't know,” when asked tough questions, and don't make promises you can't keep (“I'm sure you'll be home soon”).
8. Please contact the church office after your visit to let the pastor know a visit was made.
9. Please remember that what is said during your visit is confidential and not to be shared.

For the Sick

Almighty and immortal God, Giver of life and health: We beseech Thee to hear our prayers for this Thy servant, that, by Thy blessing upon *him* and upon those who minister to *him*, *he* may be restored to health of body and mind, and give thanks to Thee in Thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For a sick Child

O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of the Sheep, who dost gather the lambs with Thine arms, and carry them in Thy bosom: We commit into Thy loving hands this child. Relieve *his* pain, guard *him* in all danger; restore unto *him* Thy gifts of gladness and strength, and raise *him* up to a life of service with Thee. Hear us, we beseech Thee, for Thy dear name's sake. Amen.

For the dying

O God, our Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being: Grant to this Thy servant grace to desire only Thy most holy will; that, whether living or dying, *he* may be Thine; for His sake who loved us and gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Before an operation

Almighty God, who didst send Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Great Physician of our souls and bodies: Grant us Thy Peace. Thou who givest rest to those who wait upon Thee, grant us Thy courage. In quietness and confidence may we find strength. Give wisdom and skill to those who operate and to those who serve as nurses. We give ourselves into Thy sustaining presence, knowing that in Thee is our peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For an Alzheimer's disease patient

God of compassion, you have borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Preserve your covenant of peace with your servant N., in his/her distress. Although the pain of his/her forgetfulness is great, we rejoice that you remember him/her always in your grace. Supply his/her every need according to the riches of your glory in Christ Jesus. Amen.

For use when a life-support system is withdrawn

God of compassion and love, you have breathed into us the breath of life and have given us the exercise of our minds and wills. In our frailty we surrender all life to you from whom it came, trusting in your gracious promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For parents after the birth of a stillborn child or the death of a newly born child

Merciful God, you strengthen us by your power and wisdom. Be gracious to N. and N. in their grief, and surround them with your unfailing love; that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness, and courage to meet the days to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Book of Common Worship (1946)

For the Sick

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou great Physician: Look with Thy gracious favor upon this Thy servant; give wisdom and discretion to those who minister to *him* in *his* sickness; bless all the means used for *his* recovery; stretch forth Thy hand, and, according to Thy will, restore *him* to health and strength, that *he* may live to praise Thee for Thy goodness and Thy grace; to the glory of Thy holy name. Amen

A Theology of Suffering

From The New International Greek Testament Commentary on II Corinthians, by Murray Harris.

In II Corinthians 1:3-11, several principles emerge from Paul's discussion:

1. **Suffering patiently endured deepens our appreciation of God's character**, in particular his limitless compassion and never-failing comfort (1:3-4).
2. **Suffering drives us to trust God alone**. Paul's desperate plight had undermined his self-reliance and compelled his total dependence on a God who raises the dead and therefore can rescue the dying from the grip of death (1:9).
3. **Suffering brings identification with Christ**. Paul could identify his sufferings as the "sufferings of Christ" (1:5) probably because they befell him as a "person in Christ" (12:2) who was engaged in the service of Christ (4:11). They were *Christ's* sufferings because they contributed to the fulfillment of the suffering destined for the body of Christ or because Christ continued to identify himself with his afflicted church.
4. **The experience of God's comfort in our sufferings qualifies, equips, and obliges us to comfort others undergoing any type of suffering (1:4, 6)**. The apostle's thought seems to imply four stages: Paul's own sufferings (= Christ's sufferings) (1:4), his experience of God's comfort mediated through Christ (1:5), the Corinthians' sufferings, and their experience of God's comfort mediated through Paul (1:6-7).
5. **Suffering is not forever**. In comparison with the weighty and eternal glory that is produced by suffering patiently endured, suffering is relatively insignificant and momentary (4:17). Glory follows suffering.

Scripture Readings

The following readings are particularly appropriate for use in pastoral care.

Old Testament

1 Kings 19:4-8	Elijah's despair in the wilderness
Job 5:7-11	God sets on high those who are lowly
Job 7:11-21	Job complains to God
Eccl. 3:1-15	For everything there is a season
Isa. 26:1-4	God will keep them in perfect peace
Isa. 35	The desert shall rejoice and blossom
Isa. 38	Hezekiah's prayer in distress
Isa. 40:1-11	Comfort my people
Isa. 40:28-31	Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
Isa. 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25	When you pass through the waters
Isa. 52:13-53:12	Surely he has borne our infirmities
Isa. 61:1-4	The spirit of the Lord God is upon me

Psalms

Ps. 6:2-4, 6-9	Lord, heal me, for my soul is struck with terror
Ps. 22	My God, why have you forsaken me?
Ps. 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Ps. 27:1-14	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Ps. 31	In you, O Lord, I seek refuge
Ps. 39:4-5, 12	Lord, let me know my end
Ps. 42:1-5	As a deer longs for flowing streams
Ps. 46:1-5, 10-11	A very present help in trouble
Ps. 51:1-12, 15-17	Create in me a clean heart, O God
Ps. 63:1-8	In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy
Ps. 77	I cry to God to hear me
Ps. 90:1-10, 12	The eternity of God and human transitoriness
Ps. 91	My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust

For one who has attempted suicide

Gracious God, your Son came among us not to condemn but to save. He taught us that nothing can separate us from your love. Release us from the fear that we are worthless, and stay our hands from self-destruction. Uphold N. with your love. Fill him/her with hope and with trust in your guidance, that your power may make him/her new through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For one who is anxious

Merciful God, in Jesus Christ we have your promise of peace. Receive N., who seeks your help. Assure her/him that you are near. Fill her/him with your Spirit, cast out her/his anxiety and fear, and help her/him to rely on the strength you provide, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For someone who is old

God of grace and hope, we thank you for life, love, and good memories, for the gift of age, and for the wisdom that comes from experience. We bless you for your constant presence, for with you there is fullness of joy. Give us the courage and faith to accept life as it comes, confident that the future is yours and that we belong to you forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those in coma or unable to communicate

Eternal God, you have known us before we were here and will continue to know us after we are gone. Touch N. with your grace and presence. As you give your abiding care, assure him/her of our love and presence. Though we are unable to respond to each other, assure him/her that our communion together remains secure, and that your love for him/her is unfailing. In Christ, who came through to us, we pray. Amen.

For the sick and those giving care

Faithful Healer of the sick, in your loving mercy, embrace N. in her/his time of need. Guide the nurses, doctors and others who attend her/him. Use their skills to restore N. to health and joy for the service of Christ our Savior. Amen.

For those in medical services

Merciful God, your healing power is everywhere about us. Strengthen those who work among the sick; give them courage and confidence in everything they do. Encourage them when their efforts seem futile or when death prevails. Increase their trust in your power even to overcome death and pain and crying. May they be thankful for every sign of health you give, and humble before the mystery of your healing grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For one in emotional distress

Merciful God, you give us the grace that helps in time of need. Surround N. with your steadfast love and lighten his/her burden. By the power of your Spirit, free him/her from distress and give him/her a new mind and heart made whole in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.

For one in emotional distress

God of life, deliver your servant N. from distress and loneliness. Give her/him your peace, and fill her/him with your Holy Spirit. Lift her/him from despair to claim the life you offer in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

For those in mental distress

Mighty God, in Jesus Christ you deal with spirits that darken our minds and set us against ourselves. Give peace to those who are torn by conflict, cast down, or lost in worlds of illusion. By your power, drive from our minds demons that shake confidence and wreck love. Tame unruly forces within us, and bring us to your truth, so that we may accept ourselves as your beloved children in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ps. 103:1-5

Ps. 116:1-9

Ps. 121

Ps. 130

Ps. 137:1-6

Ps. 139

Ps. 143

Bless the Lord, O my soul

When I was brought low, the Lord saved me

I lift up my eyes to the hills

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord

By the rivers of Babylon

You have searched me and known me

Give ear to my supplications

New Testament

Matt. 5:1-12a

Matt. 8:14-17

Matt. 11:2-5

Matt. 11:28-30

Mark 6:53-56

Mark 10:13-16

Mark 15:24-34

Luke 4:31-37

Luke 4:40

Luke 5:12-16

Luke 5:17-26

Luke 7:2-10

Luke 8:26-35

Luke 8:43-48

Luke 9:37-43a

Luke 13:10-17

Luke 17:11-19

Luke 18:35-43

John 3:16-17

John 4:46-54

John 5:2-18

John 9:1-7

John 10:11-18

John 14:1-6, 25-27

Acts 3:1-10

The Beatitudes

Jesus and Peter's mother-in-law

Go and tell John what you hear and see

All who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens

Healing in Gennesaret

Let the children come to me

My God, why have you forsaken me?

The man with an unclean spirit

Jesus lays hands on the sick and heals them

A leper is cleansed

Paralytic carried by four men

The centurion's servant

The demoniac(s) at Gadara

The woman with hemorrhages

Epileptic boy

Woman bent double for eighteen years

The ten lepers

Blind Bartimaeus

God so loved the world

The royal official's son

Sick man at pool of Beth-zatha

Who sinned . . . that he was born blind?

I am the good shepherd

Let not your hearts be troubled

The lame man at the temple gate

Romans 5:1-11 Hope does not disappoint
 Romans 8:14-23 Present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed
 Romans 8:26-28 The Spirit helps us in our weakness
 Romans 8:31-39 If God is for us, who is against us?
 Romans 12:1, 2 Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
 1 Cor. 12:24b-27 The members may have the same care for one another
 2 Cor. 1:3-7 Sharing in sufferings and in comfort
 2 Cor. 4:16-18 Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
 Phil. 2:25-30 Epaphroditus' illness
 Phil. 4:4, 6-9 Rejoice in the Lord always; have no anxiety
 Heb. 2:14-18 Christ was tested in every way
 James 5:13-16 Is anyone among you suffering?
 1 Peter 1:3-9 Born anew to a living hope
 1 John 3:1-3 We are children of God
 1 John 4:16-19 There is no fear in love
 Rev. 21:1-7 God will wipe away every tear

Suggested Prayers

From the Book of Common Worship (1995)

For the sick

Lord of all health, you are the source of our life and our fulfillment in death. Be for N. now comfort in the midst of pain, strength to transform weakness, and light to brighten darkness, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For healing

By your power, great God, our Lord Jesus healed the sick and gave new hope to the hopeless. Though we cannot command or possess your power, we pray for those who want to be healed (especially for N.).

Mend their wounds, soothe fevered brows, and make broken people whole again. Help us to welcome every healing as a sign that, though death is against us, you are for us, and have promised renewed and risen life in Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

For parent(s) of a sick child

Merciful God, Enfold N. [name of child] in the arms of your love. Comfort N., N. [parent(s)] in their anxiety. Deliver them from despair, give them patience to endure and guide them to choose wisely for N. [name of child], in the name of him who welcomed little children, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those experiencing tragedy

Out of the darkness we cry to you, O God. Enable us to find in Christ the faith to trust your care even in the midst of pain, so that we may not walk alone through the valley of the shadow of death, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For a sick child

Jesus, friend of little children, bless N. with your healing love and make him/her well. Amen.