



# *Who is my neighbor?*

*Stories of social ministry in action*

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**In answer to the question “And who is my neighbor?” in Luke 10:25, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, an outcast traveler who stops along the road to give assistance and sustenance to a victim of violence. Every day, the staff of Lutheran Community Services Northwest reach out, reflecting the compassionate face of God, in service to our neighbors and our communities. Here is the story of some of the thousands of lives touched each year through our ministry.**

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## **Meet our neighbor, Ginger**

*“Given wings to fly”*

### **In her own words**

Three and a half years ago my husband, George, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Every day now brings an unknown agenda as he struggles to remain the man he’s always been and I let go of previously held expectations of how life would be in our Golden Years. This diagnosis opens a floodgate of personal emotion...anger, fear, depression, indignation, denial, sadness and grief. Both of us have experienced all of these and more. Some days are nothing BUT an emotional rollercoaster.

At first, we faced this demon by ourselves. Gradually, as our acceptance level grew, we sought out others with whom we could share our burden – a support group. This led us to an LCS program called “Stand By You,” designed to help families, like us, manage life with dementia.

Our LCS counselor, Heather - a slim redheaded woman with an infectious smile - helped me to get past the lack of belief in myself as a potential caregiver for my husband. I’ll never forget what she told me.

She said that when the path in front of me seems impossible, if I just go ahead and step out one of two things will happen... I’ll either be caught and carried, or given wings to fly. Many times, an hour with her has moved me from the edge of despair back to center where I can function again. Her encouragement has helped me to realize that I can be grieving and still stop to smell the flowers.

George says it all... “When I see Heather, it lifts my heart, because I can talk to her about anything – things I don’t talk to you about because I don’t want to bother you. After she goes, after I have talked to her, I don’t feel so depressed anymore. I feel good about myself. I really like to see her.”

This journey is hard, but not impossible for us to walk, because we do not have to walk it alone.

*Chances are you know someone who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease – a family member, a close friend, a member of your congregation. All of us can support them and their caregivers with our prayers and our friendship. God is present with the most vulnerable and with us in our offerings of love and kindness.*

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*Ginger and her husband, George, are participants in LCS’ Stand by You program, which provides counseling and support to Alzheimer’s patients and their families in the Boise, Idaho, area.*

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*“Who is my neighbor?” presents the many faces of social outreach ministry, as carried out by our agency in communities across the Northwest.*

For more information about the programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and to learn how you can help support our ministry, contact your nearest LCS office or visit our web site at [www.lcsnw.org](http://www.lcsnw.org)

