



**APPLICATION FOR
2011 INTERNATIONAL FAITH AND SPIRIT
AT WORK AWARD**





Basic Data:

With a staff of nearly 200 full-time, part-time and prn team members, plus more than 100 volunteers, Circle of Life offers a team-oriented approach to provide expert hospice medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support tailored directly to the individual patient's needs and wishes. At the core of our program is the belief that everyone deserves the right to die pain-free and with dignity, and that their families receive the support to assist them.

We are also recognized as the principal provider of grief and bereavement services in Northwest Arkansas, offering support groups and individualized support for those who have experienced a loss, regardless of whether their loved one was a patient of Circle of Life. A special series called the Butterfly Bereavement Support Group is offered for children ages 5 – 11 and adolescents ages 12 – 17. Special training on managing grief also is also available to school districts, businesses, churches, and other organizations.

Circle of Life Hospice Mission Vision Philosophy and Values

MISSION: Circle of Life is committed to compassionate end-of-life care for a person's body, mind, spirit and family when there is no longer a cure.

VISION: Circle of Life is committed to become nationally recognized as the premier provider and educator for hospice and bereavement services in Northwest Arkansas.

PHILOSOPHY: We are focused exclusively on providing compassionate end-of-life care and bereavement support for all of Northwest Arkansas.

VALUES

- *Compassion-Demonstrating healing, caring and understanding*
- *Inclusion-Expressing openness and acceptance so that all experience validation*
- *Respect-Treating all with honor and dignity*
- *Comfort-Providing a peaceful, safe environment for body, mind and spirit*
- *Leadership-Genuinely living out the organization's mission, vision & values*
- *Excellence-Exceeding expectations while upholding our values*

Nature and scope of business:

Hospice is a concept of caring derived from medieval times, symbolizing a place where travelers, pilgrims and the sick, wounded, or dying could find rest and comfort. In 1967, physician Dame Cicely Saunders founded the first modern hospice, St. Christopher's Hospice, in London. The first hospice was created in the United States in Connecticut and staffed solely by volunteers in 1974. The contemporary hospice offers a comprehensive program of care to patients and families facing a life threatening illness. Hospice is primarily a concept of care, not a specific place of care.

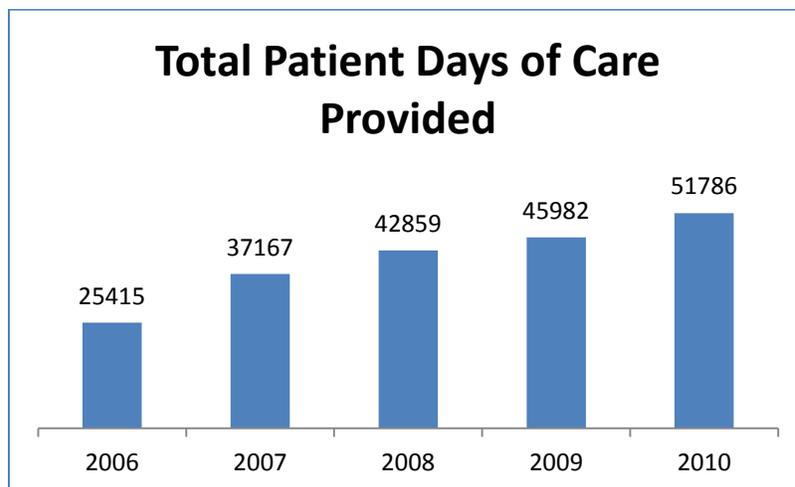
Services through Circle of Life Hospice emphasize palliative rather than curative treatment; quality rather than quantity of life. The dying are comforted, professional medical care is given, and sophisticated symptom relief is provided. The patient and family are both included in the care plan and emotional, spiritual, and practical support is given based on the patient's wishes and family's needs. Trained volunteers can offer respite care for family members as well as meaningful support to the patient.

Hospice affirms life and regards dying as a normal process. Hospice service neither hastens nor postpones death. Hospice provides personalized services and a caring community so that patients and families can attain the necessary preparation for a death that is satisfactory to them.

Those involved in the process of dying have a variety of physical, spiritual, emotional, and social needs. The nature of dying is so unique that the goal of the hospice team is to be sensitive and responsive to the special requirements of each individual and family.

Although less than 40% of hospice clients are cancer patients, hospices accept anyone regardless of age or type of illness. These patients have made a decision to spend their last months at home or in a homelike setting.

The service area for Circle of Life covers four counties in Northwest Arkansas – Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington. The total population for this area is approximately 420,000; however, it is one of the top ten fastest growing areas in the United States, and the region's population 65 years and older is expected to more than double in the next fifteen years. Circle of Life has experienced dramatic growth in its census in recent years, serving more than 1000 patients in 2010, and providing more than 4000 grief and bereavement contacts last year.



History of Circle of Life

July 1, 1980: Communities Home Health Care (CHHC) was started in Bella Vista, Arkansas under the auspices of Concordia's 10-bed hospital.

March 1982: CHHC, under the leadership of Hugh Means, CEO of Springdale Memorial Hospital, became a nonprofit three-hospital based home health program. The three hospitals were Bates Medical Center, St. Mary's Hospital and Springdale Memorial Hospital. This was the first multi-hospital home health program in Region X for Health Care Finance Administration, now Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. A federal grant funded the joint venture.

March 1984: Springdale Memorial Hospital assumed ownership of CHHC. It was the largest nonprofit home health in Arkansas based in Bentonville.

December 29, 1992: Hospice services were added to the scope of care provided by CHHC, and Circle of Life Hospice was licensed by the State of Arkansas and by Medicare.

1995: Springdale Memorial Hospital is purchased by a for-profit hospital group.

Summer 1999: Circle of Life is not budgeted at hospital. 20 patients were on the program. Divestiture from the hospital was considered.

March 1, 2000: Circle of Life became the area's only nonprofit free-standing hospice program. Northwest Health Center donates \$17,000. Start-up grants were given by the Care Foundation, funded by the sale of Springdale Memorial Hospital, Northwest Auxiliary, and The Cancer Challenge.

October 2000: Hired full-time Bereavement Coordinator. Received Robert Wood Johnson Grant for bereavement services in churches.

November 2001: Voyage to a Dream, Circle of Life's first fundraiser is held with over 800 guests in attendance

February 2002: Mrs. Bernice Jones offers to donate 3 acres of land in Har-Ber Meadows.

January 27, 2004: Approved by Arkansas Department of Health for construction of a 16 bed inpatient hospice home.

March 2004: Ground dedication for the land where the first free-standing inpatient hospice home would be built in the Har-Ber Meadows master-planned community west of Springdale.

December 27, 2005: Admitted the first patient into Circle of Life's Earlene Howard Hospice Home.

January 2007: St. Mary's Mercy Medical Center discontinues its Hospice program, and transfers its patients to Circle of Life.

February 29, 2007: Citing demonstrated need, Arkansas Department of Health approved Circle of Life's application for 8 bed expansion to Hospice Home.

August 2009: Circle of Life opens 8-bed West Wing expansion of Earlene Howard Hospice Home in Springdale.

September 10, 2009: Anticipating continued population growth and increased need for its services, Circle of Life receives Permit of Approval for 24-bed inpatient facility in Benton County

January 2010: The Center for Grief, Healing, and Transition opens at Circle of Life, providing bereavement support for the NWA community

April 2010: COL opens a temporary 8-bed inpatient hospice home in a Green House® at Legacy Village in Bentonville.

The state of Arkansas has reported the need for 50 additional inpatient hospice beds in Benton County where more than 50 percent of our current patients come from. Circle of Life has been approved to build a free-standing hospice facility in Benton County and expects to break ground in October 2011. In the meantime, Circle of Life will temporarily occupy a Green House® at Legacy Village, allowing us to provide eight inpatient beds to the community until the permanent facility opens in 2013.



-Hospice Home at Legacy Village in Bentonville, opening 2013

a) Location(s):

Circle of Life serves patients in their place of residence (home, assisted living, or nursing facility) in four Northwest Arkansas counties: Benton, Washington, Carroll and Madison. We also provide care in two free-standing hospice inpatient facilities: the Earlene Howard Hospice Home in Springdale, and the Hospice Home at Legacy Village in Bentonville.

b) Website address : www.nwacircleoflife.org

Contact Information

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How does your organization define “Faith” and/or “Spirituality”. How do you talk about the “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions of faith and spirituality?

While Circle of Life is not a faith-based organization, we do take seriously the role that faith and spirituality play in the experience of life and death. We integrate expressions of faith and spirituality in our interdisciplinary care of patients and families, and we honor the perspectives that staff bring to their work with those who are dying. Many employees consider this work to be an expression of ministry, and we seek ways to celebrate that vocational spirit while also striving to honor the diversity of ways that is understood contextually. Circle of Life Hospice attends to the role that faith and spirituality play in our lives, and especially as we strive to serve those who are nearing the end of life.

VERTICAL

Few people in modern society actually experience the death of others—it has been medicalized to a point that it becomes a sterile experience. Hospice attempts to reverse that trend, seeking to reclaim death as a natural part of life. Anyone who is invited into the home of one who lies dying—whether that be a bedroom in one’s home or a room in nursing home or hospice home—quickly becomes aware of the liminal space and time created by such an experience. We have different names for it—holy space, crossing over, spiritual presence, transcendent moment—but there is a keen sense of some vertical connection between what is physical “there” and what is spiritually “there.” It is special work to which the entire team lays claim, from physician to cook, from social worker to housekeeper. We provide space and time for staff to engage in meditation, prayer, debriefing, healing touch and personal renewal as integral aspects of their work, and we provide professional resources both internally and externally for the support and psychospiritual well-being of all employees (see below).

HORIZONTAL

The desire to serve others is THE core of our hospice workers. Circle of Life seeks to hire and retain team members who engage the mission, values and vision of our organization in earnest, knowing the compassion, dignity, respect and inclusion are integral to the work we do. Many difficult questions are raised in the course of providing hospice care: Is there any meaning or value in the experience of dying? What is the role of hope in the care of the dying? Do dying and death offer anything to those who are not at life's end? We embrace such difficult questions and honor the struggle with them.

Circle of Life Hospice provides a broad range of visualizations, guided imagery, art and music, and spiritual practices for team members to “work out” their own sense of meaning in life and death. In this manner, we are all "empowered" to review life with attention to reconciliation, identity, meaning, purpose, and transcendence, thereby closing the loop between Vertical and Horizontal expressions of spirituality.

How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way making others uncomfortable?

Because so many of our employees engage their work here as vocational ministry, dealing with diverse religious expressions and boundary issues are common challenges for Circle of Life. Drawing on our Values, we choose to address this directly with frequent in-services, multicultural training, and debriefings, designed to remind us of the realities of this work while also naming expectations for our behavior with each other and especially with our patients and their families.

The process of dying in hospice is an intimate setting in which the emotions of all parties involved are often close to the surface. While the need to get close to the patient and their families is essential to providing quality end-of-life care, the vulnerability of the setting, often a patient's home, is "ripe" for ethical dilemmas to arise. Circle of Life expects all staff maintain recognized ethical boundaries of professional practice. We are called to be mindful of triggers that often surface when patient's or family member's belief systems are contrasted to our own. We honor the differences, and embrace such occasions as opportunities to learn from others, and thereby grow in our own right.

The team gathers to review the plan of care for every single patient at least fortnightly. This is also an occasion for team members to air concerns, name triggers so we are more aware of them, and to honor those who have died while also naming those who are bereaved in the wake of their loss. Additionally, we have policies and procedures holding staff accountable for appropriate behavior, and we also conduct family satisfaction surveys as a means of gaining additional feedback to continually improve our services.

To what degree do employees have a choice about participating in faith/spirituality in the workplace activities? To what degree are employees able to express their own faith and spirituality?

As part of our team meetings, we create the space for employees to share their experiences with those for whom they care, including the spiritual experiences that often involve transcendent experiences. Chaplains are part of every clinical team, and they foster a sense of acceptance for all to share their experiences that lend meaning to our lives and work. We have annual "Blessing of the Hands" services which are open but not compulsory. The on-site chapel is open 24 hours each day.

Is there any form of faith or spirituality that is excluded from the organization?

No.

Core Application:

Our work at Circle of Life holds a single focus: serving the patient and family compassionately. We excel in the mission to put others first, providing excellent supportive care during a time of great need. It is vital the our caregivers, be they nurses or billing clerks, get the support they need to find meaning in their work while also finding space for renewal. Hospice is hard work. We want all our workers functioning with a healthy spirit. As cited previously, and detailed below, we have many ways by which we strive to nourish our staff so they can sustain excellence in their work.

Description of policies, programs or practices

POLICIES

In addition to an open-door policy throughout the organization aimed at fostering healthy communication, we provide both internal and external benefits for employee health and well-being. Every employee is afforded access to an Employee Assistance Program through Ozark Guidance Center. Employees also have access to confidential support from chaplains and bereavement counselors.

PROGRAMS

We have several integral programs that are designed to support employees in a respectful, caring way.

First, there are monthly “*Debriefings*” during which team members are invited to share their individual stories with their unique burdens, successes, joys and despairing experiences. What often ensues is the sharing of a difficult hospice case, a personal loss, or telling patient’s stories. It is a time of active listening and support for fellow colleagues. Co-workers discuss how the impact of multiple patients has contributed to their compassion fatigue and potential burnout. There is often discussion of the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue and how to develop self care into our lives. It is a time of mutuality and community. Many cite that their work puts them on a spiritual path. Many feel that they have been called to do hospice work. The nature of the work allows personal growth, enabling us to become more caring and compassionate with other team members and those for whom we care.

Secondly, the *hospice interdisciplinary team* meets regularly to review every patient’s plan of care which is always developed with individual goals in mind. At the outset of each meeting, we review the case of every patient who has died since our last meeting, and we provide space for staff to honor those who have died, to convey concern about those bereaved, and to share any poignant experiences with that family. Every patient for whom we are still caring then has his/her care plan reviewed, including spiritual and faith concerns. We frequently assess how individual team members are doing, especially when caseloads are heavy or certain family dynamics are particularly stressful.

Complementary therapies are often integrated, not only for the patient and family, but also for the team members for whom compassion fatigue is a real problem. Modalities offered to the staff include meditation, contemplative prayer, healing touch, guided imagery, and progressive relaxation

exercises. Additionally, we contract with a licensed art therapist to work with staff, and we offer music therapy with harpists, pianists, guitars and dulcimer group who play for patients and staff. We also have a pet therapy program, designed for patients but also create the space for staff to engage the pets as well.

At our Earlene Howard Hospice Home we have a “Butterfly Garden” creating a serene space of where gentle smells, soft textures, and deep and vibrant colors designed to awaken the senses and invite participation in the natural beauty.

We offer a semi-annual Evening of Remembrance during which employees are given paper bags to write messages or thoughts concerning those who have died, and we create luminaries on the patio. All who chose to attend are invited to share our stories, shed tears and hold hands for healing. Our work is about loss, and rituals allow us to recognize how loss affects and quite possibly changes us. They also signify hope—hope that, in our remembering we will recognize our work has value and, in that recognition, be sustained.

Circle of Life also has a Ribbons of Memories activity during which all attendees pick out a ribbon and write a note on it. We have a beautiful tree adorned with white lights that is placed in the front of our building during the winter holidays, and people are invited tie their own ribbons on the tree.

Circle of Life has offered biweekly Tear Soup programs for staff to talk to a bereavement counselor to acknowledge the deaths of patients and helps staff deal with individual and accumulated grief they may experience.

With the opening of the Hospice Home at Legacy Village, we offered a Blessing of the Hospice Home (see attached) and we conduct annual Blessing of the Hands ceremonies for our staff who choose to participate.

We believe these approaches not only meet the needs of employees currently but that they are sustainable programs, offering a diverse array of ways for employees to engage.

What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on stakeholders?

See Appendix A for testimonials

What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on nominee’s business success?

While there is no way to measure such outcomes in quantitative fashion, it is our strong belief that such practices help define not only who we are as an organization but also how we engage our work. Anecdotally, we hear how our work makes a difference in people’s lives; we hear employees saying how valued they feel in their roles and how valuable they think their work is; we hear community members across Northwest Arkansas speak of Circle of Life as a brand of excellence and quality of compassionate care. We believe this is a result of our values and how we embrace them. Moreover, our employee turnover rate is significantly lower than the industry standard (see Table 1).

Table 1. Regional/National Hospice Turnover Rates

West South Central Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma & Texas)

| | <u>All Employees</u> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Circle of Life (Q1, 2011) | 4.68% |
| Regional Annual Turnover Rates | 20.51% |
| National Average | 16.94% |

Source for Annual Turnover Rate: 2010-2011 Hospice Salary and Benefits Report published by Hospital and Healthcare Compensation Service in cooperation with the National Association for Home Care and Hospice

How has the organization been a model or inspiration for others companies in your industry or outside of it?

Members of our leadership team are frequently asked to speak at hospice conferences, and we embrace our mission, vision and values unabashedly. We often share specifics of the programs and events delineated above, and we lay claim to the belief that hospice is indeed holy work.

Appendix A—Stakeholder References & Verbatims

1. Mr. Horace Hardwick

Member, Board of Directors, Circle of Life

Retired Executive, General Electric

Former Arkansas State Legislator

Circle of Life copes with very sad, delicate and emotional end-of-life situations twenty four hours a day, three hundred sixty five days a year. Not only do we deal with this event with our patients and their families but also with our staff. Our staff is exposed to this sad event in an almost every day occurrence and it bears on them both physically and mentally. We have trained chaplains on our administrative staff that are caring and fully qualified to offer spiritual support, not only for our patient's families, but also for our staff. Along with this faith and spiritual support, our facilities provide a chapel for quiet reflections and meditation for all.

We recently dedicated our second Circle of Life Hospice Home in Bentonville and offered up a prayer of "Blessings of the Home", and a special anointing of and prayer for, "Blessing of the Hands" of all staff and board members. We offered these dedication prayers to give spiritual strength and comfort to the staff as we serve and minister to our patients and their love ones. As both a family member of a deceased patient and as a board member I have experienced and can attest to the positive benefits of the faith and spiritual support offered by Circle of Life Hospice.

Horace Hardwick

2. M. Catherine Lyon, RN, CHPN, LSW

Patient Advocate, ALS Society

Parish Nurse, St. Paul's Episcopal Church

PRN Nurse, Circle of Life

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to participate in Circle of Life's application for recognition as an organization that embraces spirituality.

In 2007, very early into my nursing career, I was graced with the opportunity to join the staff at Circle of Life Hospice in their inpatient program. Under gentle direction, what originally felt to me was a Divine directive has grown into a passion. I credit my sense of proficiency in end of life care and my confidence in the face of what can be life's most difficult times to the guidance offered me by my supervisors, the clinical staff and my most especially my fellow nurses. In 2008, the nursing staff was sponsored by the organization to become nationally certified in hospice and palliative care. That tradition has since been expanded to include our certified nursing assistants. This recognition of worth and worthiness is but one example of the administration's effort to build upon the gifts of its staff. Promoting self confidence and initiative is one of Circle of Life's strong suits and is testimonial to how they embrace the very spirit of the work at hand.

It is my opinion that to be truly effective, a hospice professional must view their work as a ministry. Circle of Life strives to operate from this perspective in totality. From its overall

operational mission to the recognition of the power to heal found in a simple pat on the back and the lexis, “thank you”. Rare is the occasion you will not see or hear these two signs of admiration taking place at the Circle of Life. From the CEO to the volunteers, the generosity of common courtesy is always present. Nothing heals the staff’s wounds of loss or replenishes our spirit of commitment then to know we are valued and appreciated. The truer gift is being able to recognize it in the complimentary as readily as the extravagant.

I can only imagine the challenges of balancing the industry of health care and the fragility of the human spirit. Yet when we are all focused on the Divine directive we have each been entrusted with, the Circle of Life can be a very holy place to work indeed.

3. Beth Stockdell

Harpist & Volunteer, Circle of Life

My name is Beth Stockdell and I am a harpist. For four years my work at Circle of Life Hospice has been to provide healing music to the patients, family members/visitors and staff. This work is specifically meant to be used to create a “healing” environment for the mind, body and soul and does not work towards “cure”. In my discipline we do not play familiar music – which may have personal associations – and we generally play at heartbeat and/or a breathing rate. The body will then match the pace of the music and space is created for deep breathing, internal focus and reflection.

We have seen the music serve as a conduit to allow individuals to grieve silently and groups to come together as they are drawn into the music. The music that is played at COL by this program is specifically non-denominational to allow for all individuals to find their own meaning and the faith that calls to them.

Often, the staff members are my primary “patients” during this healing time. They often take a few minutes to reflect on the music and allow themselves to be strengthened and focused. I believe that COL does an amazing job at providing these opportunities for their staff and encouraging them in these pursuits. The better the staff is supported in their personal health, both physically and spiritually, the better they are able to do their jobs in caring for the patients.

4. The Rev. Judy Van Hoose

Pastor of Congregational Care, First United Methodist Church, Springdale, AR

As the Pastor of Congregational Care at First United Methodist Church in Springdale, Arkansas, I have personally witnessed the dedication and faithfulness of Circle of Life Hospice staff and volunteers as they live out their mission of comfort care to families.

From the first point of contact, the team at Circle of Life Hospice springs into action. Within hours, those who are available and chosen to work together, meet with the family to provide care and support for the journey of life and death. These persons assure the patient and the family that they

will be with them and that provides such comfort for those making the difficult decision to watch their loved one die. It takes a special person to be part of a hospice team and only those with strength of spirit can do this service. Those who are part of the team are living out their faith and their spirituality by being present and assisting those who may be experiencing anxiety and uncertainty. To have someone who listens to the concerns or fears and who responds with reassurance and heart is a wonderful gift that calms those fears and concerns. Circle of Life staff and volunteers are there to provide the care that is needed and to answer the questions of the patient and the family. Through this process, the staff gives of themselves in such a way that their faith is seen and felt and the family is drawn into the process. In doing so, the staff is able to be fully present in a non anxious way as they help meet the needs of those who are receiving care.

There is no greater gift than to be able to be present and walk alongside those whose bodies stop working and whose spirit transitions to another place. The hospice staff does this over and over and over again, sharing who they are as finite human beings trained to offer care and spiritual beings offering mercy and grace. Circle of Life caregivers are present at one of the most meaningful times in one's life and the staff works together in support and love. What better way to be able to share one's spirituality and faith.

Rev. Judy Van Hoose

5. Chyrl Hoyt, BSN, RN, CHPN

Clinical Care Coordinator, Circle of Life Hospice

I am a registered nurse working for Circle of Life Hospice located in northwest Arkansas. Circle of Life embodies Faith and Spirit in the workplace in a number of ways.

Chaplains are employed by Circle of Life and serve on the interdisciplinary team that cares for each terminally ill patient and their loved ones. Our chaplains serve as spiritual advisors, not in a way that promotes any one religion, but as a support for our patient and their family, meeting them on whatever spiritual level they desire. Chaplains visit patients in their homes and in the Circle of Life Hospice Homes.

In both of Circle of Life's inpatient facilities there is a chapel/meditation space. It is a beautiful space that is available to the community for worship, quiet thinking, a private talk, or a funeral service. Weddings and renewal of marriage vows have also taken place in the chapel.

When we opened the new hospice home in Bentonville last year, our Medical Director, Dr. Steven Thomason, led us in a Blessing of the Home. We went through each room and read a blessing appropriate to the purpose of that space. Afterwards, one of our chaplains, Chuck Bengston, led us in a Blessing of our Hands. The Blessing of the Hands is very special to me, allowing me to visualize a greater purpose for my hands in their daily work.

The work that my hands do is always an honor and privilege. Knowing that at the end of the day, I have had the opportunity to serve in meaningful way is the best anyone could ask for.

Chyrl Hoyt, BSN, RN, CHPN

Appendix C—Supporting Documents

1. Rite of Blessing of the Hands. (*Offered annually and as needed.*)

Gathering of those who serve

Sometimes, by the grace of God, we have it in us to be God-bearers to other people—to manifest and offer the life-giving, life-enriching, and healing power of being present, really present. Know that it is when that power is alive in you and through you that others will experience something of the Holy that is there in that place and in that moment, with you present.

Many rely upon their hands

And are skillful in their own work.

Prosper, O God, the work of our hands:

May it be good work of blessing others.

Leader and Participants read together:

Blessed be the works of our hands, O Holy One.

Blessed be these hands that have touched life.

Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.

Blessed be these hands that have held pain.

Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.

Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.

Blessed be these hands that have cleaned rooms.

Blessed be these hands that have prepared meals.

Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.

Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.

Blessed be these hands that have carried out endless tasks as part of caring for others.

Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.

Blessed be the hands that hold the promise of the future.

Blessed be the works of our hands, O Holy One.

(adapted from "In Praise of Hands" by Diann Neu)

Let us pray.

Holy God, as oil was used as a base for medicine in ancient times, we ask you to bless our use of this oil today. May its texture remind us that the soothing work of our hands is also pleasing to you.

Amen.

The Leader then move about the Participants offering the following Blessing of the Hands while anointing them with oil.

"Oh Holy God, Bless these hands that they may continue to be a Blessing to Others." Amen

Let us pray.

O God, you have taught us that work is a creative endeavor and that you delight in our good work: be present we pray with those who work in this place. Give them meaningful work till their lives end, and life till their work is done, that laboring together with you they may share the joy of your creation. ***Amen.***

God of work and rest and pleasure, grant that what we do here may be for us an offering rather than a burden; and for those we serve, may it be the help they need. **Amen.**

A Final Blessing

May you be blessed with a spirit of gentleness and a heart that is tender.

May you be blessed with a spirit of strength shining within you.

May you be blessed with a spirit of compassion and a fervent caring.

May you be blessed with a spirit of courage, daring to be who you are.

May you be blessed with a spirit of openness, understanding, and respect. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and to serve!

Thanks be to God!

From time to time, consider saying this prayer as you go about your good work.

Holy God, may your presence be in all that I do. Renew in me awareness of your sustaining love that touches me each day, opening the eyes of my heart to see that you touch the world through the work of my hands. Amen.

2. Blessing of a Hospice Home *(on the occasion of opening our hospice home in Bentonville, Arkansas, on March 29, 2010)*

THE BLESSING OF A NEW HOSPICE HOME

It is good for us to be here! A Home is more than a house—much more than a design and combination of materials. It is a dwelling place, a place of stories—a place for stories that lend meaning to who we are.

So much transpires in a hospice home. It is where we grieve and celebrate, laugh and cry, work and rest, love and pray; it is where we create lasting memories of those we see no longer while also commending them to God.

This home is where we hold onto one another; it is where we let go of one another. It is where we live into the full expanse of life, including death, and so, it is special. This Hospice Home is special—structurally but spiritually as well given the work we are about.

And so we ask God's blessing upon this hospice home and all who will cross its hearth. By being here today, you become part of this place, its story and the tapestry of lives that will be woven into its hallowed history as a haven of rest. It is good work that you are about.

ON THE LAND WHERE THE HOSPICE HOME STANDS

*The group moves onto the land on which the building stands
The leader begins by calling to the people, whose response is in BOLD type*

The earth is God's, and all that is in it,
the world and all those who dwell there.
God cares for the land...
God watches over it season by season.

God be with you;
And also with you.
Let us pray.

O God of earth and sky, you breathe over the land and bless it, you greatly enrich it, you water it abundantly and bless its growth with your goodness. You formed us from the dust of the ground.
You breathed into us the breath of life.

Encircle this dwelling place with your protection, O God; may your holy angels encompass these walls.
And peace be within them.

Open the windows and doors of this home that the light and love of your Spirit may shine within,
A light in the world for warmth and welcome.

The group then moves near the front door.



AT THE FRONT DOOR

Peace be to this home, and to all who enter here.

Through wisdom is a home built, and by understanding is it established;

Reading: Ancient Celtic poem

*I saw a stranger yesterday.
I put food in the eating place,
drink in the drinking place,
music in the listening place,
and in the sacred name of God,
He blessed myself and my house,
my cattle and my dear ones,
and the lark said in her song
often, often, often goes the Holy One
in the stranger's guise.*

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
For by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Let us pray.

O Holy One, who resides deep in the hearts of all who enter here, grant that they may know you as their friend and companion, their guide and instructor, their joy and delight. **Amen.**



THE BLESSING OF THE LIGHT

It is an ancient custom for a light in the window or near the front to signal presence of life and welcome to those who travel by. In this Hospice Home a lamp will always be lit to herald its open doors for all.

There is sprung up a light for the righteous;
And joyful gladness for those who are true-hearted.

Let us pray.

O God, whose glory shines as the light: Bless, we ask you, this lamp for the illumination of this place, and grant that as it gives light to all that are in this home, so those who enter here may show forth in their lives the brightness of good works. **Amen**



IN THE FAMILY ROOM

Reading: C.S. Lewis

Friendship is born in that moment when one person says to another, "What! You, too? I thought I was the only one."

Oh, how good and pleasant it is,
When God's people live together in unity!

Let us pray.

We ask you, God of Peace, for your blessing on all who may share this room, that they may be knit together in fellowship as they share their lives and come to know each other's stories. **Amen.**



IN THE CHILDREN'S AREA

Reading: Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.

Let the little children come unto me
For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

O gracious God, we set apart this space for use by children who are, like all of us, deeply touched by the mysteries of life and death: may it be a safe place of play and pondering, where tensions are released, and understanding and acceptance found. Amen.



AT THE MEDITATION SPACE

Teach us, O God, where wisdom is to be found,
And show us the place of understanding.
Seek the Holy One, and you will be found.
**Search for God with all your heart
and with all your mind.**

Let us pray,
Gracious God, you created us in your image: keep us mindful that there is no part
of our being that is not rooted in the creating, redeeming, and inspiring mystery of
God. **Amen.**



NEAR THE OFFICES

Reading: from *The Longing for Home* by Fred Buechner

*Whether we're rich or poor, male or female, a nineteenth-century Swiss jeweler... Or a
twenty-first century clergyperson...or a twenty one year old celebrating his birthday, our
stories are all stories of searching. We search for a good self to be and for good work to
do. We search to become human in a world that tempts us always to be less than human or
looks to us to be more. We search to love and be loved. And in a world where it is often
hard to believe in much of anything, we search to believe in something holy and beautiful
and life-transcending that will give meaning and purpose to the lives we live.*

Seek your God and you will be found,
Search for God with all your heart and with all your mind.

Let us pray,

God of all, you have made us to need each other and to grow best with
companions; bless all who shall sit or talk or work together here. May this
place be a place where relationships mature, quarrels are made up, failures
forgiven, and strength renewed. **Amen.**



NEAR THE LAUNDRY, NURSES' STATION, AND MEDICATION ROOM

Reading: *from the New Zealand Prayer Book*

Lord God, when you give to us your servants any great matter to do, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of it, until it is thoroughly finished, which yields the true glory.

Many there are who rely upon their hands

And are skillful in their own work.

Prosper, O Lord, the work of our hands:

Prosper our handiwork.

Let us pray.

O God, you have taught us that work is a creative endeavor and that you delight in our good work: be present we pray with those who work in this place. Give them meaningful work till their lives end, and life till their work is done, that laboring together with you they may share the joy of your creation. ***Amen.***

God of work and rest and pleasure, grant that what we do here may be for us an offering rather than a burden; and for those we serve, may it be the help they need. ***Amen.***



IN THE KITCHEN

Reading: *Isaiah 55: 10-13*

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
And praise the Name of your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.
The eyes of all wait upon you, O God:
And you give them their food in due season.

Let us pray.

O God of bountiful gifts, supply, we pray you, every need of ours according to your great riches, and bless the hands that work in this place. Give us grateful hearts for the daily bread we receive; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



IN THE DINING AREA

Reading: *Sirach 9:14-16*

As much as you can, aim to know your neighbors, and consult with the wise. Let your conversation be with intelligent people. . . . Let the righteous be your dinner companions, and let your glory be in the fear of the Lord.

The ornament of a house is the friends who frequent it.
Happy is the house that shelters a friend.

(Emerson)

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O Lord, for you give us food and drink and wonderful companions to sustain our lives: Make us grateful for all your gifts. May the food eaten here strengthen us in our resolve to be more mindful of those who are in need. *Amen.*



IN THE PATIENT ROOM

Reading: David Harkins

*"You can shed tears that she is gone,
or you can smile because she has lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back,
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her,
or you can be full of the love you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember her only that she is gone,
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back.
Or you can do what she'd want:
smile, open your eyes, love and go on."*

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep.

(Proverbs 6:10)

Let us pray.

O Gracious God, help us to entrust our loved ones to your care; when sorrow darkens our lives, teach us to look to you, remembering the cloud of witnesses by whom we are surrounded. Grant that we on earth may share with them the rest and peace which you have prepared for us all. **Amen.**

God of all, may this be a holy and blessed place
for all who may die here.

Here may they know your loving presence,
find rest for their fatigue,
comfort from their pain,
and peace for their anxiety.

**May your holy angels guard them,
and your continual blessing strengthen them. Amen.**



ON THE PATIO

Reading: Albert Schweitzer

"Never say there is nothing beautiful in the world anymore. There is always something to make you wonder in the shape of a tree, the trembling of a leaf."

Happily may I walk.

May it be beautiful before me.

May it be beautiful behind me.

May it be beautiful below me.

May it be beautiful above me.

May it be beautiful all around me.

(Navajo Night Chant)

Let us pray.

Creator God, bless, we pray you, this outdoor space. Make it a place where your companions and servants come for fellowship and recreation and to marvel in the beauty of your creation. Make it a place of serenity and peace, a place of comfort and consolation; in your Name we ask it. ***Amen.***



BLESSING OF THE HANDS

Leader and Participants read together:

**Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.
Blessed be these hands that have touched life.
Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.
Blessed be these hands that have held pain.
Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.
Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.
Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.
Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.
Blessed be these hands that have carried out endless tasks
as part of caring for others.
Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.
Blessed be the hands that hold the promise of the future.
Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.**

(adapted from "In Praise of Hands" by Diann Neu)

Let us pray.

Holy God, as oil was used as a base for medicine in ancient times, we ask you to bless our use of this oil today. May its texture remind us that the soothing work of our hands is also pleasing to you. Amen.

The Leaders then move about the Participants offering the following Blessing of the Hands while anointing them with oil.

Leader: "Oh Holy God, Bless these hands that they may continue to be a Blessing to Others." Amen

A Final Blessing

May you be blessed with a spirit of gentleness and a heart that is tender.
May you be blessed with a spirit of strength shining within you.
May you be blessed with a spirit of compassion and a fervent caring.
May you be blessed with a spirit of courage, daring to be who you are.
May you be blessed with a spirit of openness, understanding, and respect. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and to serve!

Thanks be to God!



POSTSCRIPT

Sometimes, by the grace of God, we have it in us to be God-bearers to other people—to manifest and offer the life-giving, life-enriching, and healing power of being present, really present. Know that it is when that power is alive in you and through you that others will experience this place as being truly home, as experiencing something of the Holy that is here.

From time to time, consider saying this prayer as you go about your good work:

Holy God, may your presence be in all that I do. Renew in me awareness of your sustaining love that touches me each day, opening the eyes of my heart to see that you touch the world through the work of my hands. Amen.

