

## The Best of National Church Residences

I certainly realize that a title like this one reveals a personal bias because best is such a relative term. But since I'm writing the article, I guess I get to share my bias. When I'm finished, you can decide if this example should make it to that coveted list called "Best of National Church Residences".

One of the slogans or catch phrases we use around here is *Home for Life*. It's a great concept, helping seniors to remain home throughout their entire life but what makes it even greater is that we apply this idea to our residents. This means, we want our communities to be more than a place to stay, we want them to be a home.

For the last 6 months I've been serving as our Community Chaplain. My role supports our mission to provide optimum health to Seniors by ensuring their spiritual needs are being addressed. When this program began in January of this year we identified Stafford Village in Worthington as one of several sites to begin this initiative. After a spiritual assessment was completed and a couple of social get togethers, we started a weekly Bible study. One of things our assessment made us aware of and our experience confirmed is that Stafford Village has a significant number of residents who struggled with mental illness.

One such individual was a regular attender of the weekly Bible Study and besides being a woman of strong faith she was quite upfront and humble about her mental health struggles. Her transparency coupled with a genuine Christian character made her well known and despite her limitations and idiosyncrasies, well received. Each week when she attended the study we would learn more about her life, her challenges with mental health and her relationships with many of her fellow residents.

During the last study she attended, some of the other members of the group were complimenting her knowledge of the Bible and how she lived it out. It was common for these residents to express their care and respect for one another.

Well just recently she passed away suddenly. All of us were in complete shock, there was no indication she was dealing with any kind of life threatening condition.

The property manager and the service coordinator from Stafford worked with the family and the lay chaplains who have been such a vital part of this community and together we held a Memorial Service on Monday.

What I witnessed that day was the Best of National Church Residences. It was a clear display that our work is a mission to serve God and to do good for others. These residents are truly a part of a home where love and laughter is shared. And this woman was a wonderful example of the freedom and security she felt to be herself among her Stafford family.

Throughout the service, residents shared how much they appreciated knowing her and how much she will be missed. It was hard on all of us who were there but it was a good kind hard, because loss only hurts if you loved what you are losing. She was greatly loved.

Even her family expressed gratitude for what they witnessed that day and what they knew she enjoyed while living in her home at Stafford Village.

*Home for Life* wasn't just a slogan, it was a reality. Mission Accomplished!