United Methodist Communities has been blessed by countless friends and donors over more than 100 years that have allowed the provision of millions of dollars in benevolent care to our residents. More importantly, those dollars represent precious lives that have been given the gift to remain in their communities even after their resources were exhausted.

Like all of us, United Methodist Communities has been impacted by the rising cost of housing, of food, and especially of healthcare. The annual benevolent care cost per resident rose from $15,000 in 2006 to $81,000 in 2016. During that same time our annual benevolent care expenses rose from $1 million in 2006 to $6 million in 2016 while supporting virtually the same number of people. The result of these trends is an unsustainable model to assist with the shortfall of approximately 50 of our most vulnerable residents each and every year.

The heart of our mission is to provide compassionate care in every way that we can. Benevolent care has been and will remain central to that mission. With a continuing and deep commitment to our mission, and in accordance with our value of stewardship, the decision has been made to update our benevolent care program.

After many months of contemplation by the United Methodist Communities board of directors, we celebrate our continued commitment to benevolent care by introducing the Gift of Care Circle. Those residents who currently (as of June 30, 2018) reside within a United Methodist Community will not see any change in assistance with covering the difference between what the resident can pay and the services provided for baseline care: room, board and level of care. This applies to both current residents on benevolent care as well as those who become eligible at any point in the future.

However, seniors who enter a United Methodist community on or after July 1, 2018 will be asked to sign an addendum to their resident contract that stipulates a family contribution of 25% of the gap between what the resident can pay and the cost of services provided should they become eligible for benevolent care. We do understand that special circumstances may occur, for example, such as a resident who has no family or further means of support at their time of need. The United Methodist Communities Foundation is currently studying the feasibility of supplying additional funds in these situations.
For all residents, both current and future, who receive assistance, non-baseline items will not be covered. Items such as prescription drugs, incontinence supplies, transportation, laundry service, etc., must be provided by the family or other means of support. The community social worker will meet with affected residents personally to discuss your particular situation. The Mission Teams within United Methodist Communities are working on plans to help provide personal care items for residents who are unable to cover these expenses.

The name *Gift of Care Circle* was intentionally selected to describe the incredible gifts received from generous donors over the years of ministry, our abiding commitment to compassionate care and the circle of community that it takes to provide such an extraordinary gift. We feel grateful beyond measure to individual donors, churches, associates, families, and residents who all make this possible.

As the old song says, *May the circle be unbroken*. Through God’s grace and the collective work of His people, it is our prayer that the ability to provide benevolent care to seniors remain true for the next century as it has been provided for the last.

Warm regards,

Virginia Samuel Cetuk  
Chair  
Board of Directors

Lawrence D. Carlson  
President & CEO

P.S. Watch for opportunities to learn more about these changes in your community or church.

P.P.S. To make a donation to the *Gift of Care Circle* now, please use the following web address: foundation.umcommunities.org/donate.