

The Faith Health Link



Sowing Seeds of Wellness

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This edition of The Faith Health Link is Dedicated to Advance Care Planning and Why it is Important.

Have Your Health Care Wishes Known in Advance

The COVID-19 pandemic brought it to the forefront the importance of clearly expressing personal wishes for medical care in emergency situations.

Health systems and providers across the country are seeing how important it is that all of us discuss our medical goals in advance. Not having one's medical goals known in advance puts a burden on frontline clinicians and loved ones, because it leaves important medical decisions up to them.

You can and should speak up about the kind of medical care you would want and tell doctors what matters to you. You also should tell those who matter most to you what you'd want if you couldn't make decisions for yourself.

This issue of The Faith Health Link is dedicated to the components involved with Advance Care Planning with a focus on:

- What is Advance Care Planning (ACP)?
- Why Advance Care Planning is important?
- How do you start the conversation?
- What is a Health Care Proxy and why is it important?
- How can you make your wishes known?
- What is the Five Wishes?
- How do I start my Advance Directive Care Plan?

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is about doing what you can do to ensure that health care treatment you may receive is consistent with your wishes and preferences should you be unable to make your own decisions or speak for yourself. Advance care planning is about planning for the 'what ifs' that may occur across the entire lifespan.

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Mission

Our mission is to develop a culturally, competent, Biblically informed, wellness ministry to meet the physical, mental, social-emotional, and spiritual needs through education, outreach and counseling that is affordable, accessible, and available

Vision

The vision of Loudon Avenue Christian Church Faith Health Ministry is to address the needs of the congregation and community that promote wellness of the Body, Mind and Spirit, based upon the will of God in our lives



Save the Date

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

6:30 pm

**Virtual Advance Care Planning
Informational Zoom**



Meeting ID: 89782764163

Passcode: 101921 or

Dial in: 301.715.8592

Whether someone is facing an acute illness, a long-term chronic illness or a terminal illness, advance care planning can help alleviate unnecessary suffering, improve quality of life, and provide better understanding of the decision-making challenges facing the individual and his or her caregivers. An advance care plan can be used at any stage of life and should be updated as circumstances change.

Why is Advance Care Planning So Important?

Sometimes, you have the luxury of having the time to make decisions about your health. However, a sudden accident or severe illness could limit or eliminate your ability to express your wishes to your healthcare team. Advance care planning allows you to decide in advance what care you want to receive if you become unable to speak for yourself. Rather than leave your treatment options up to others, you are able to leave instructions that take your values and preferences into account and eliminate the uncertainty for your doctors and family members.

Given all the way that COVID-19 is affecting how medical care is provided, it is important to talk to everyone—in or out of hospital settings—about advance directives. The medical status of individuals with COVID-19, even those with seemingly benign and mild symptoms, can quickly change to the point that they may need advanced life support (e.g., a ventilator). Many patients with COVID-19 present without an advance directive and are often not in a position to create one if they are severely ill and hospitalized.

Did you know?

- Ninety percent of people say talking with their loved ones about end-of-life care is important.
- Less than 30% of people have actually done so.

Thinking about being sick and talking about end-of-life care can be uncomfortable. However, the easiest time to talk about advance care planning is before an illness, when you have time for discussion and reflection with your loved ones. Family members say that having their loved one talk to them about what is important makes their job a lot easier.

What is An Advance Directive?

An advanced directive (also called "A Living Will") provides your health care agent with instructions on

what type of care you would like. An **advance directive** allows you to put your wishes in writing and share them with your loved ones and caregivers.

The information on advance care health care directive that will be covered center on:

- **Starting the conversation** — sharing your health care wishes with your loved ones before an illness or crisis.
- **Choosing a health care agent** — picking the person who would make decisions for your care if you became unable to do this yourself.
- **Thinking about your values** — thinking about what is most important and what you would like to avoid if you are sick.

Crisis or illness situations are always hard. If your loved ones know your preferences ahead of time, you can help make these times a little easier.

By going through the advance care planning process, you can give your loved ones peace of mind knowing they honored and respected your wishes if they ever have to make medical decisions for you.

Not only is it important for others to know your wishes, but it is also important for you to know the wishes of your family and friends. Advance care planning conversations benefit everyone. Documenting your wishes is just as important as having conversations. Starting a conversation with anyone about advance health care planning can be challenging.

How to Start the Conversation About Advance Care Planning

Thinking about getting sick can be scary. Sometimes people think the conversation is only for when you're sick or older. And, many times, our loved ones feel uneasy talking about the subject. But having a conversation about advance care planning is very important. Even though it's hard, the best time to talk about it is now. It's easier than waiting until you become ill.

Having the time for discussion and reflection can often help families and loved ones understand each other's views about end-of-life care. Completing an advance directive form isn't about medical treatments or legal rights. It's about making sure that if you are too sick,

the doctors choose the treatments that focus on what is important to you.

Tips for Starting the Conversation

- Use conversation starters: articles, TV shows, movies, or current events.
- Other triggers include sermons, funerals, and medical checkups. Even talking about the death of someone you know can help get you started.
- Talk about your values — what makes your life worth living and what you consider quality of life.
- Approach the conversation wanting to share your wishes before you ask someone else to share their own wishes.
- Be prepared to have more than one conversation because the subject may cause an emotional reaction. This is ok.

Here are some questions you may ask:

- If you could plan it today, what would the last day or week of your life look like? Who would be there? Where would you like to be?
- What are your fears or concerns about the process of dying?
- What care would you want during a severe illness or as you were dying?
- What kind of care would you like to receive if you found yourself suddenly in a vegetative state?
- Where would you prefer to spend your last days if you were ill? At home? At a nursing home? In a hospital?
- Who would you want to make medical decisions for you if you are unable?
- What are your beliefs about how long life should be preserved? Are there any physical or mental conditions that would make you believe that life-prolonging treatment should no longer be used?

Questions that may be helpful to guide the conversation with your provider are:

- What are the benefits of treatment?
- What are the possible outcomes of treatment?
- Are there other treatment options?
- What will I gain by doing this treatment?
- What would my life look like without doing this treatment?
- What would my life look like living with the side effects of this treatment?
- What are the burdens of the treatment as compared to the benefits?

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- What decisions do we have to make right now and what decisions will we have to make later?

Regardless of what your provider offers for treatment, you always have the choice to agree or refuse the treatment. It can be difficult to speak with your provider about refusing treatment.

**Who
Will Decide
When I Can't?**

What's a Health Care Proxy/Health Care Agent and Why Do I Need One?

This is also known as a Medical Power of Attorney. If you become incapacitated, who will make your medical

decisions? A health care proxy allows you to appoint someone else to act as your agent for medical decisions. It will ensure that your medical treatment instructions are carried out, and it is especially important to have a health care proxy if you and your family may disagree about treatment. Without a health care proxy, your doctor may be required to provide you with medical treatment that you would have refused if you were able to do so. It is important to select someone you can trust to speak up for you and be clear about your wishes, even if others may be unhappy with your choices.

In general, a health care proxy takes effect only when you require medical treatment, and a physician determines that you are unable to communicate your wishes concerning treatment. How this works exactly can depend on the laws of the particular state and the terms of the health care proxy itself. If you later become able to express your own wishes, you will be listened to, and the health care proxy will have no effect.

How will my health care agent know my wishes?

Having an open and frank discussion about your wishes with your health care agent will put him or her in a better position to serve your interests. Because this is a major responsibility for the person you appoint as your health care agent, you should have a discussion with the person about what types of treatments you would or would not want under different types of circumstances, such as:

- whether you would want life support initiated/continued/removed if you are in a permanent coma.
- whether you would want treatments initiated/continued/removed if you have a terminal illness.
- whether you would want artificial nutrition and hydration initiated/withheld or continued or withdrawn and under what types of circumstances.

Everyone needs a health care proxy, not just the elderly. Anybody can be in a situation where they're temporarily unable to speak for themselves. By naming someone in a health care proxy to speak for you and by informing them of your wishes, you relieve the potential burden on others. The health care proxy is only allowed to act while you are incapable of making decisions.

Please note: The health care proxy/health care agent/Medical Power of Attorney does not make financial decisions for you — they only speak for you about health care decisions.

Who should have a copy of my health care proxy?

Your health care agent and your physician should each have a copy of your health care proxy document and any advanced directives.

What If There Is No Health Care Proxy?

In most states, there is a procedure for appointing *somebody* to make decisions on behalf of the incapacitated person. This "surrogate" is chosen based on the laws of each state but often, the order starts with the person's spouse or domestic partner, a child over 18, parent, sibling over 18, and finally a close friend or relative who doesn't fit any of the above.



What is Five Wishes?

A living will, like Five Wishes, is a way for you to give consent for certain situations where you might want or not want treatment. Five Wishes is a legal form created by the non-profit organization,

Aging with Dignity, to help people prepare an advance medical directive to address what should happen if they become ill and are no longer able to make decisions for themselves. It has been described as the "living will with a heart and soul".

Why Use Five Wishes as my Directive?

A living will and a durable power of attorney for healthcare are two forms of advance directives. Five Wishes is an advance directive that covers the same medical topics. Five Wishes also addresses the individual's desires for spiritual, emotional, and personal care.

The Five Wishes

Wishes 1 and 2 are both legal documents. Once signed, they meet the legal requirements for an advance directive in the state of Virginia. Wishes 3, 4, and 5 are unique to Five Wishes, in that they address matters of comfort care, spirituality, forgiveness, and final wishes.

Wish 1: The Person I Want to Make Care Decisions for Me When I Can't

This section is an assignment of a health care agent (also called health care proxy, health care agent, or medical/health care power of attorney). This person makes medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Wish 2: The Kind of Medical Treatment I Want or Don't Want

This section is a living will—a definition of what life support treatment means to you, and when you would and would not want it.

Wish 3: How Comfortable I Want to Be

This section addresses matters of comfort care—what type of pain management you would like, personal grooming and bathing instructions, and whether you would like to know about options for hospice care, and other alternatives for care.

Wish 4: How I Want People to Treat Me

This section speaks to personal matters, such as whether you would like to be at home and what important spiritual or faith traditions should be remembered

Wish 5: What I Want My Loved Ones to Know

This section deals with matters of forgiveness, how you wish to be remembered, and final wishes regarding funeral or memorial plans.

When does the Five Wishes advance directive take effect?

You will always make your own health care decisions if you are able to talk with your doctor and understand

what is being said. The Five Wishes advance directive only takes effect when you are too ill to communicate. If you are unable to make your own decisions or speak for yourself, then your Five Wishes advance directive, and the person you chose to be your healthcare agent, can help direct your care with your doctor.

Signing and witnessing requirements

The last portion of the document contains a section for signing the document and having it witnessed. The document indicates which states require notarization.

Is the Five Wishes advance directive a legal document?

Yes. It was written with the help of the American Bar Association's Commission on Law & Aging. It meets the legal requirements for an advance directive in 42 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. In the other eight states (Indiana, Kansas, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, or Utah) your completed Five Wishes can be attached to your state's required form.

What changes can I make, and which require a new Five Wishes advance directive?

If you're changing anything in Wish 2 or anything in Wish 1, other than simple contact information, you should complete a new Five Wishes advance directive. Wishes 1 and 2 deal with legal matters where it's best to be safe. For any other changes, simply strike through (one line) the old information, write in the new in ink next to it, and then initial and date the new entry. Don't use Wite-Out or obliterate the old entries.

Does the Five Wishes advance directive meet HIPAA requirements?

Yes. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has ruled the agent or proxy appointed under Five Wishes is treated as the patient's "personal representative" under HIPAA and has the same access to medical records and information as the patient once the advance directive takes effect.

What if I fill out the Five Wishes advance directive and later change my mind?

You can change your wishes any time you want. It is a good idea to review and update your Five Wishes advance directive at least once a year, or if you have any major changes in your health or your family support network. When you make changes, be sure to inform your health care agent, family, friends, and

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doctor. Destroy all out-of-date copies of the document and distribute copies of your new Five Wishes advance directive.

Once I give my health care proxy and or provider a signed copy of my directive am I finish?

No. You have just started.

First, make sure your doctor understands and supports your wishes, and you understand your health state, likely futures, and options.

Second, there is no guarantee that your directive will follow you in your medical record, especially if you are transferred from one facility to another. You or your proxy should always double-check to be sure your providers are aware of your directive and have a copy.

Advance planning is an ongoing, evolving process.

Review your wishes whenever any of the **Five D's** occur: (1) you reach a new **decade** in age; (2) you experience the **death** of a loved one; (3) you **divorce**; (4) you are given a **diagnosis** of a significant medical condition; (5) you suffer a **decline** in your medical condition or functioning.

In summary, Advance Care Planning involves **learning about the types of decisions that might need to be made**, considering those decisions ahead of time, and then letting others know—both your family and your healthcare providers—about your preferences.

References:

[Advance Care Planning: Health Care Directives | National Institute on Aging \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nih.gov/health-care/advance-care)

[Advance Care Planning Conversations, Tomah - Mayo Clinic Health System Your Conversation Starter Guide \(theconversationproject.org\)](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/conversations/advance-care-planning-conversations)

[Quiz: Would You Make A Good Health Care Proxy? /Everplans](https://www.everplans.com/quiz/would-you-make-a-good-health-care-proxy/)

[Power of Attorney vs. Durable Power of Attorney vs. Living Will - Aqinacare.com](https://www.aqinacare.com/power-of-attorney-vs-durable-power-of-attorney-vs-living-will)

Please note the information contained in The Faith Health Link newsletter is for educational purposes only.

A Gift To Your Family



Completing *Five Wishes* is a gift to your family, friends, and your doctor, because it keeps them out of the difficult position of having to guess what kind of treatment you want or don't want.

LOUDON AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Pastor Anthony L. Holmes, Sr., M.Div.

ADVANCE CARE

WHAT IS ADVANCED CARE PLANNING?
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

WHAT'S YOUR
PLAN?

When Do You Need An
Advance Care Plan?

Do Your Loved Ones Know
Your Wishes and Values?

Who Will Speak For You If
You Can't Make Your Own
Health Decisions?

Presented By:
Loudon Avenue Christian Church
Faith Health Ministry
540.342.8852

Join us in a virtual
presentation on
Advanced Care Planning

Tuesday

October 19th
2021

6:30 pm



Meeting ID: 897 8276 4163
Passcode: 101921
301-715-8592

LACC Members in attendance, at the zoom presentation, will receive a copy of the Five Wishes.