

**FIRM ROOTS CANCER SUPPORT**

**‘Strength for today; hope for tomorrow’**

[**www.firmroots.org.uk**](http://www.firmroots.org.uk)

COULD YOUR CHURCH OFFER A CHRISTIAN CANCER SUPPORT MINISTRY?

Firm Roots Cancer Support started in Bristol in 2012 as a Christian organisation offering prayer and spiritual support, as well as practical and emotional support to people affected by cancer and their families. The motto of Firm Roots is ‘Strength for Today; Hope for Tomorrow’ and the aim of the organisation is to walk alongside people and support them with God’s love, as they go through cancer.

There are several ecumenical Firm Roots Cancer Prayer Support Groups which run in different parts of the country such as Chester, Birmingham and Lancashire, with links to another group in Maidstone, and a new group starting in Huddersfield. The groups offer tea and cake, friendship, a short talk and time to pray for people affected by cancer. Firm Roots has run several ecumenical Retreat Days in Bristol and Lancashire for people affected by cancer and those supporting them, which have been uplifting and encouraging quiet days in God’s presence. Another branch of Firm Roots is a volunteer project in Lancashire in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, where a team of trained volunteers offer practical and emotional support in the community, such as befriending, meals, shopping, ironing and gardening for local people affected by cancer. The vision for Firm Roots is very much to see churches offering Christian cancer support and for more Cancer Prayer Support Groups to start across the country. Could God be calling you to think about offering this support in your church or area?

Around 2.5 million people in the UK are living with or beyond a cancer diagnosis and many people face cancer without the support of a local family or church. Lots of practical and emotional needs of patients and families often go unmet, and many people live with complex difficulties as a consequence of cancer treatment. Cancer can also affect a person’s faith or belief in God – some people may turn to God in prayer, asking for his help and others may wonder where God is, in the midst of such a time as cancer.

In all churches there are members of the congregation affected by cancer or caring for someone going through it, but how we support them, can be variable. People often don’t know what to say or how to help and sadly cancer often remains a lonely place. As a church nationally, we have a great opportunity to be God’s hands and feet – to care, to listen, to help practically, to pray, to stand alongside and reach out to people in our churches and communities affected by cancer, as an expression of God’s great love and compassion. For the first time, NHS and Macmillan staff are now asking cancer patients about their spiritual needs arising from their cancer diagnosis, so again this is a great opportunity to point the way to Jesus who can provide strength, comfort and peace through the most difficult of journeys. We are called to be courageous, to step out in faith and to be a witness through all the seasons of life and challenges life throws at us.

Could your church think about offering a Firm Roots ministry to reach out to so many people affected by cancer? Maybe you have been personally affected by cancer and known God’s presence on your journey. Could God be calling you to give something back and help to support others going through the same? Maybe you have cared for a family member or friend – could you too support other carers and family members after your own experience? Could you think about starting a Cancer Prayer Support Group at your church or in your local area? You can make a difference and bring God’s love to others!

We would like to invite you to come along and find out more at our first **Firm Roots National Conference on Saturday 13th October, 10am – 4pm, at Kirkheaton Parish Church, Church Lane, Kirkheaton, Huddersfield HD5 0BH**. The day will be an opportunity to find out more about the work of Firm Roots and to learn how you could potentially set up and run a Firm Roots Cancer Prayer Support Group in your church/area. There will be talks, worship, workshops on prayer and another by Macmillan Cancer Support on running support groups for people affected by cancer. The conference will also be an opportunity for current Firm Roots Prayer Group leaders to meet each other, offer support and answer any questions. The cost is £10, to include lunch and refreshments (payable at the time of booking). To book a place at the conference, please contact Helen Jones at Helen.Jones@firmroots.co.uk or phone Claire Coates at Kirkheaton Parish Church on 01484 531449. Everyone is very welcome to join us and there is no obligation to start a prayer group – just come along and find out more!

For further information about Firm Roots Cancer Support, have a look at the website [www.firmroots.org.uk](http://www.firmroots.org.uk) or contact Helen Jones on Helen.Jones@firmroots.co.uk or 07936 186028.

Helen Jones

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