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Medical Help needed for an LCMS teacher with Parkinson's disease along with his wife and family.

Request from Melanie Davenport and also Rev. John Lescow at Saint Paul's Lutheran Church - West Allis, WI.

A LCMS teacher, Jerry Heimsoth, diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 13 years ago, needs financial help along with his wife Barb (LCMS teacher) and their two children.

Story written by Frank Davenport:

A story about a family I know:

I first met my wife's cousin, Jerry at an extended family picnic about 20 years ago on a hot, humid summer day. I liked Jerry right off. He was quick to smile, a bit shy, and easy to talk to. Even with the heat, Jerry and I decided to go for a run. We ran for a long way and talked about I don't know what. It was fun and memorable.

Jerry doesn't run anymore. He has Parkinson's.

My wife's family is active in Lutheran ministry—many being Lutheran teachers and ministers in LCMS. Jerry and his wife-to-be were no exception. They first met when they were teachers at St. Paul's Lutheran School. Barb was as captivated as I had been by Jerry's easy going farm boy manner. They married. Blessed with first a baby boy and then a little baby girl, they both continued to teach and minister to others. A change in Jerry's physical manner prompted visits to their doctor. Jerry was eventually diagnosed with Parkinson's.

Can any of us relate to what that moment might have felt like...for Jerry...for Barb...with 2 little kids at home? I can't.

That was 13 years ago. Jerry continued to teach for another 6 1/2 years (29 years in all), but as his condition deteriorated, he had to quit the job he so enjoyed. For a year or so, he would take his scooter to church to teach one-on-one confirmation classes. Today, however, Jerry is completely dependant on his wheelchair. He also has great difficulty in speaking, making it very difficult for him to communicate with anyone. He requires help for every single need - be it to eat, wash, dress, or go to the bathroom. As I write this and get up to warm-up my coffee, I can't relate to how he must feel. Can you?

His daughter, Kristy, now only 14 years old, and son John, 20 years old, act with love, patience, and maturity that belay their young years. John and Jerry—die-hard Cub fans—don't play catch or "shag fly balls" anymore, nor do Jerry and Kristy play one-on-one volleyball.

John has not gone off to college, but lives at home where he and Kristy attend to their Dad when Barb is not home. In his spare time, John attends classes and works as much as he can. Being financially strapped, the family moved a few years ago from their modest 3 bedroom home to a 2 bedroom, 1 bath ranch.

Jerry now requires 24 hour care. Although you would not sense it, Barb privately worries about how she will continue to pay for Jerry's increasing cost of care, the mortgage, home equity loans and other bills on her Lutheran school teacher's salary. Can you relate? I can't.

Barb's everyday, upbeat smile and "kidding around" manner with Jerry is...well...beyond my inadequate description...as is John's...as is Kristy's. How do they do it? I wonder if I could. Could you?

Jerry and Barb have never played the "poor me" card. Their strong faith gets them through along with supportive church friends, staff and family. Jerry and his beautiful family, although no longer living their dream, embody and exemplify everything we all strive to be. I don't know which one I admire most. They often say how blessed they are. They have not asked for help, but I think they deserve it and I know they need it.

Jerry, Barb, and their family are members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in West Allis, WI where Barb is on staff as a 2nd grade teacher.

[Click here to help them financially.](#)