

Operation Bearhugs

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From Thanksgiving Day through New Years it is time to bring in a teddy bear, or two, and drop them in our Bear Crib in the sanctuary. Not just any bear, but a special bear--one that speaks to you, because it will have a very special assignment. These bears, or other stuffed friends, may be very small or chubby and large. They can be simple or ornate, traditional or funky. You will know the bear when you see it. We only ask, for sanitary reasons, that the bear be new.

Starting in January, and continuing through the first weeks of February our volunteers will place our bears in a very special place. As you enter our sanctuary on Sunday mornings, a bear will be sitting in every seat, waiting for you to love. During the service it is time to pick up our bears, hug them, hold them, stroke them, and fill them up with all the love in your heart. At the end of the program, you may sign the tag attached to your bears, signifying whose love it is sending. Then place it back on your seat for the next person to fill with their love. By Valentine's Day, our bears should be bursting at the seams with love.

On Valentine's Day, our little messengers will make their final trip to Hospice. Each hospice resident will have the opportunity to select their special bear – a bear to be there even when their family or caregivers cannot. A bear to give them comfort on their journey from this life expression. The caregivers at Hospice who give so much from their heart will also choose their bear, to fill *their* hearts again with our love. And, any family members or friends of those in care may choose a bear to help mend their hearts at this time of loss.

Following are two of the many comments and notes of appreciation for “Operation Bearhugs.”

“I wanted you to know that one of the bears you sent to us was very loved by a patient. Recently this patient passed away and was buried with the teddy bear that was hugged by many of you. I thought it was important for you to know the beautiful impact you made in this person's life. Please tell everyone...thank you!”
S.W.

“Many thanks for the lovely teddy bear with the blue bow tie that you gave to my husband when he was at St. John's Hospice. The bear now sits on top of his TV in his room at home where your love continues to surround him. After two months in the hospital and a month in Hospice, he is now home and we thank you.”

“Thank you again for the love that you so willingly and graciously give to those in need.”
B.E.