



October 2026 · Volume 1, Issue 2 LFCC Healing Hearts Ministry

Thank you to everyone who took up the 30 Days of Hope challenge last month. This issue turns toward a different kind of weight: the emotional load carried by those facing breast cancer, those who have survived it, and those who love them.

This month's theme

Breast Cancer Awareness & Emotional Wellness

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:26 (NIV)

1 A Word on This Month's Theme

October brings pink ribbons, awareness walks, and a great deal of encouragement to be strong. Much of it is good. What often goes unspoken is the emotional weight underneath — the fear between scans, the exhaustion that outlasts treatment, the changed body in the mirror, the spouse who has not slept well in months.

The psalmist does not deny that flesh and heart fail. He names it plainly and then names what holds when strength does not. That is the honest ground we want to stand on this month: awareness of the disease, and equal attention to what it does to the heart.

2 Mental Health Education: The Emotional Weight of Cancer

A cancer diagnosis is a medical event and a psychological one. Roughly a third of people treated for cancer experience significant anxiety or depression — rates well above the general population — and much of it goes unaddressed because everyone's attention, including the patient's, is on the treatment.

Diagnosis and the first weeks

Shock is the common first response. Many people describe an unreal quality to the initial appointments and later cannot recall what was said. This is a normal stress response, not a failure of attention. Bring someone to appointments, ask for written summaries, and give yourself permission to ask a question twice.

Anxiety during treatment

Treatment introduces a rhythm of waiting — for results, for the next cycle, for side effects to pass. Anxiety before scans and follow-up appointments is so widespread that patients have named it "scanxiety." It often peaks in the days before an appointment and eases afterward regardless of the result. Naming the pattern helps; so does scheduling something grounding for the waiting days.

Body image and identity

Surgery, hair loss, weight changes, early menopause, and lasting scars alter how a person recognizes herself. This is grief, and it is legitimate grief even when the treatment succeeded. Well-meant encouragement to focus on being alive can leave someone feeling she has no right to mourn what she lost. She does.

When treatment ends

The hardest stretch is frequently after the final appointment. The structure disappears, the calls slow, everyone celebrates, and the survivor is left with fear of recurrence and a body that has not caught up. Distress in this period is common and often surprises the person experiencing it. It is not ingratitude. It is the bill coming due after months of holding it together.

Screening Reminder

Early detection remains the strongest tool we have. Guidelines vary by organization, which is a source of understandable confusion:

- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends mammography every two years for women aged 40 to 74 at average risk.
- The American Cancer Society recommends the option to begin annual screening at 40, regular annual screening from 45 to 54, and every one to two years from 55 onward while in good health.
- Radiology and breast surgery organizations generally recommend annual mammograms beginning at 40.
- Family history, genetic factors, dense breast tissue, or prior chest radiation may warrant earlier or additional screening.

The right schedule is a conversation with your own provider, not a number from a newsletter. If cost or insurance is the barrier, Texas Breast and Cervical Cancer Services provides no-cost screening for eligible uninsured women — call 2-1-1 or ask us for help finding a site. **If you have been putting off the call, make it this month.**

3 Faith & Wellness: Faith Through Illness and Uncertainty

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NIV)

Paul does not write around the body's decline. He acknowledges it directly and points to something being renewed alongside it. Both are true at once. Faith is not a claim that the hard thing is not happening.

Illness raises questions that polite theology often rushes past. Why this. Why now. Whether faith was insufficient. It is worth saying plainly: cancer is not a verdict on anyone's spiritual life. Jesus rejected that arithmetic outright when his disciples went looking for whose sin had caused a man's blindness. Disease is part of a broken world, not a scorecard.

Uncertainty is its own trial, sometimes harder than bad news. Waiting has no clear enemy to fight. What Scripture offers there is not a guaranteed outcome but a guaranteed presence — the promise is that God goes through the water with us, not that we are spared the crossing.

And a word for those who are tired of being brave: you are permitted to have a bad day out loud. Prayer that consists of "I cannot do this today" is still prayer. The friend who hears it is not a burden-bearer of last resort. That is what the body of Christ is for.

Prayer

Lord, for those awaiting results, receiving treatment, or living with what treatment has left behind: give them rest and quiet the fear that comes at night. For those who love them and are worn down: sustain them. For those grieving a body that has changed: let them mourn without shame. Be the strength of every heart that has run out of its own. Amen.

4 Know the Signs

Emotional distress during and after cancer treatment is common and treatable. Watch for these in a patient, a survivor, or a caregiver — particularly if they persist for two weeks or more:

- Anxiety or dread that no longer eases between appointments
- Loss of interest in people and activities beyond what fatigue explains
- Sleep disruption that continues after treatment side effects have resolved
- Withdrawal from support — declining visits, going quiet, skipping church
- Avoiding mirrors, refusing photographs, or persistent expressions of disgust toward one's own body
- Missing appointments or stopping medication
- Increased alcohol or substance use
- Statements about being a burden to the family, or that everyone would be better off

Distress in cancer care is treatable, and most treatment centers have a social worker or psycho-oncology service available at no additional cost. Ask the care team — this is a standard part of cancer care, not an extra favor. If you hear anything suggesting thoughts of suicide, ask directly and connect the person to 988 the same day.

5 Practical Tip: What to Say, and What to Do

Most people freeze because they fear saying the wrong thing, so they say nothing — and silence lands as abandonment. A few substitutions cover nearly every situation:

Try this	Rather than
"I don't know what to say, but I'm here."	"Everything happens for a reason."
"How are you doing today?"	"You're so strong, you'll beat this."
"I'm bringing dinner Tuesday — is 6 all right?"	"Let me know if you need anything."
"Do you want to talk about it, or think about something else?"	"My aunt had that. Have you tried..."
"I'm still here" — six months later.	Going quiet once treatment ends.

Practical help beats sentiment nearly every time: rides to appointments, a load of laundry, a grocery run, childcare during infusion days, sitting in a waiting room. Keep inviting even when the answer is no. Being asked matters as much as being able to go.

6 Family & Caregiver Corner

Caregivers frequently report anxiety and depression at rates matching or exceeding the patient's, while receiving a fraction of the attention. If you are the one driving to appointments, managing medications, holding the household together, and answering everyone's questions, this section is for you.

- **Accept help in specific units.** When someone offers, hand them a real task. Most people want to help and need a job.
- **Protect one thing that is yours.** A walk, a class, a standing coffee. Not selfishness — maintenance on the equipment everyone depends on.
- **Guard your own care.** Caregivers routinely postpone their own appointments and screenings. Schedule yours this month too.
- **Expect complicated feelings.** Resentment, exhaustion, and guilt about both are ordinary in long caregiving and say nothing about your love.
- **You are allowed to be scared.** Find one person outside the household to say that to.

Kids & Teen Korner

When a parent or grandparent is sick, children know. They read tone, tension, and whispered phone calls long before anyone tells them anything. Silence does not protect them — it leaves them to invent an explanation, and what they invent is almost always worse than the truth and usually involves being at fault.

For younger children

- Use real words. "Mom has an illness called cancer, and the doctors are giving her strong medicine." Vague language like "sick" makes every cold frightening.
- Cover the three things they most need to hear: you did not cause this, you cannot catch it, and you will be taken care of no matter what.
- Keep routines where you can. Bedtime, school, and Sunday morning carry more reassurance than any conversation.
- Expect the questions to come sideways and repeatedly — in the car, at bedtime, weeks later. Answer them

again.

- Prepare them for what they will see: hair loss, fatigue, a parent resting more. Surprises frighten children more than facts do.

For teens

- Give them real information. Teens can tell when they are being managed, and being left out reads as not being trusted.
- Watch for the quiet ones. Withdrawal, sleeping constantly, slipping grades, or anger that comes out at everything except the actual subject are all ways grief and fear travel at this age.
- Let them keep their life. Practice, friends, the game on Friday — leaving is not disloyalty, and normal is medicine.
- Do not let them become the parent. Teens will quietly take on cooking, siblings, and emotional caretaking. Some responsibility is fine; carrying the household is not.
- Give them one adult outside the house — a youth leader, an aunt, a counselor — they can talk to without protecting anyone's feelings.

When to get extra help

Reach out to a school counselor, pediatrician, or therapist if you see a lasting change in mood or behavior, a return to much younger behaviors, refusal to go to school, ongoing stomachaches or headaches with no medical cause, or any talk of self-harm. Many treatment centers offer support groups for children of patients at no cost. Asking early is easier than repairing later.

Youth and children's ministry team members are glad to walk alongside a family through this — reach out to us at healinghearts@salivingfaith.org.

7 Community Resource Spotlight

Starting points for care in our area. Healing Hearts does not endorse or supervise outside providers; please verify services, eligibility, and cost directly.

Screening & Financial Access Texas Breast and Cervical Cancer Services — no-cost screening for eligible uninsured women; call 2-1-1
Information & Navigation American Cancer Society, 24/7 helpline 1-800-227-2345 · Susan G. Komen Breast Care Helpline, 1-877-465-6636
Counseling & Support Groups CancerCare — free counseling and groups by phone, 1-800-813-4673
Practical & Financial Help Patient Advocate Foundation, 1-800-532-5274 · 2-1-1 Texas for transportation and basic needs
Local Support Groups ThriveWell Cancer Foundation — "Divas Thriving in Every Color." Free, professionally facilitated support for women with cancer, including breast cancer; the group is not exclusively for breast cancer. Meets at the START Center, 4383 Medical Drive, fourth-floor conference room. Call 210-593-5949 for the current schedule and registration. Keep Abreast SA — Breast Cancer Support Group. Free support and education specifically for people diagnosed with breast cancer and survivors. Meets the first Monday of each month, 7:00–8:15 p.m., via Zoom. Contact Suzi Emanuel at 210-365-1321 to register and obtain meeting details.
Caregiver Support Family Caregiver Alliance, caregiver.org · Alamo Area Agency on Aging, 210-362-5254
Behavioral Health The Center for Health Care Services, intake 210-261-2427; 24-hour crisis line 210-223-7233

Numbers and programs change. Confirm each listing before publication and re-verify quarterly.

8 Healing Hearts Ministry Update

No ministry updates this month. Watch this space and the Sunday bulletin as new groups, trainings, and outreach efforts are announced.

To reach us, speak with any Healing Hearts team member after service.

When Ministry Support Isn't Enough

Healing Hearts offers companionship, prayer, education, and connection to resources. We do not provide therapy, diagnosis, medical care, or crisis intervention. Please seek professional support when distress persists beyond a few weeks or worsens, when daily functioning breaks down, when substances have become a way to cope, when there are thoughts of suicide or self-harm, or when safety at home is a concern. Our team is glad to help you take that step, including making the first call with you.

9 Upcoming Events

- **Collaboration with the Grief Ministry** — Saturday, November 21. Time and location to be announced.

10 Monthly Challenge: 30-Day Wellness & Breast Health

Nourish your body · Renew your mind · Strengthen your spirit

Breast health matters for everyone — men can get breast cancer too.

1 Start with Prayer Commit this month to God and ask for His guidance, strength, and health.	2 Be Aware Learn the importance of breast health and early detection.	3 Know Your Normal Perform a breast self-check and note any changes.	4 Drink Water Aim for at least 8 cups today.	5 Move Your Body Take a 30-minute walk or do a form of exercise you enjoy.	6 Fuel Well Choose nutrient-rich foods — fruits, vegetables, lean protein.
7 Rest & Recharge Get 7–8 hours of quality sleep.	8 Speak Life Replace negative thoughts with positive, God-centered affirmations.	9 Stress Less Try deep breathing, meditation, or 5 minutes of quiet with God.	10 Check In Schedule a mammogram (if due) or encourage a loved one to do so.	11 Choose Community Reach out to a friend, family member, or support group.	12 Be Screen Smart Limit social media and make time for what brings you peace.
13 Healthy Portions Be mindful of portion sizes and avoid processed foods.	14 Celebrate You Take time to do something that brings you joy.	15 Give Thanks Write down three things you are grateful for today.	16 Mind Your Heart Practice kindness — toward yourself and others.	17 Move Again Try a new physical activity or stretch for 10 minutes.	18 Go Green Add a green vegetable to your meals today.
19 Lift Someone Up Encourage someone on their wellness journey.	20 Limit Sugar Choose natural sweeteners and limit sugary drinks.	21 Nature Reset Spend time outdoors and enjoy God's creation.	22 Self-Check Reminder Do another self-check and stay in tune with your body.	23 Nourish Your Mind Read a devotion or scripture and reflect on God's promises.	24 Healthy Boundaries Say no to what drains you and yes to what brings peace.
25 Hydrate & Energize Drink water and choose a healthy snack today.	26 Focus on Faith When anxious, pray and trust God's plan.	27 Share Support Share a breast health tip or this challenge with someone else.	28 Check Your Progress Celebrate how far you've come. Choose one healthy habit to continue.	29 Spread Hope Write an encouraging note or message to someone who needs it.	30 Keep Going Commit to continuing these healthy habits beyond 30 days.

Healthy People ♥ Stronger Families ♥ Brighter Tomorrows

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." — 3 John 1:2 (NKJV)

11 Crisis Reminder — Keep This Where You Can Find It

911	Immediate danger to life or safety, or a medical emergency
988 — call or text	Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Free, confidential, 24/7
988, then press 1	Veterans Crisis Line
Text HOME to 741741	Crisis Text Line
210-223-7233	Bexar County 24-hour crisis line (adults); 210-225-5481 for children
1-800-799-7233	National Domestic Violence Hotline (text START to 88788)
Call or text 211	2-1-1 Texas — food, housing, utilities, local assistance

You do not need to be in immediate danger to call 988. It is also there for anyone who is struggling, and for anyone worried about someone else.

12 A Closing Word

If you are in treatment this month, you do not owe anyone a brave face. If you are a caregiver, your exhaustion is real and it is seen. If you finished treatment years ago and October still makes your chest tight, that is not weakness — it is memory doing what memory does.

Flesh and heart fail; that is the psalmist's honest admission and ours. What holds is not our strength but the One who is the strength of our hearts — often reaching us through a nurse, a neighbor, a casserole, and a church that keeps showing up. May you be held that way this month, and may you let someone do it.

Healing Hearts Ministry provides faith-based support, education, encouragement, and community resources. Healing Hearts does not provide psychotherapy, diagnosis, medical treatment, or crisis intervention.

Screening information here is general education and is not medical advice. Talk with your own healthcare provider about the schedule that fits your history and risk. If you are in crisis, call or text 988. If there is immediate danger, call 911.

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