Since 1996, ICEJ Homecare has provided nursing assistance, physical care and emotional support to many elderly and disabled Russian immigrants in Israel. But due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the families we visit and help on a weekly basis, most of them elderly, had to remain in their homes and were not allowed to have visitors. This was very difficult, as they eagerly await the visits of Corrie van Maanen of ICEJ Homecare each week. She has built up relationships and trust with them over the years and we became as family for them.

In this time of crisis, Corrie tried from the beginning to adjust with the circumstances, seeing their needs and stepping in to help as she was still able. The feeling of being ‘locked’ in their own homes has taken a toll, especially on the oldest ones. Most of them experienced suffering in the Second World War, and those memories can return in their fullness, which reinforces their sense of aloneness.

As Zacharia, aged 94, described it: “The loneliness of the isolation is worse than the fear of getting infected.”

“In such a situation, we want to stay close to them”, Corrie explained in response. “We don’t want to let them out of our sight, and we want to continue to see to their needs.”

Ahead of the Passover holiday, ICEJ Homecare has a special outreach every year for a group of Russian Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. The Jewish feasts are always a particularly good opportunity to bring comfort and blessing for these dear elderly ones. Homecare prepared a nice holiday packet with matza, tea, chocolate and other goodies, as well as a card with a word of encouragement. When they read the card, many express their thankfulness, saying: “We are not alone.”

In addition, we packed and delivered Passover holiday food and care packages for the people in Corrie’s care. She has continued to visit them and stay in touch by phone to encourage them and look after their emotional needs. She also continues to care for their ongoing basic needs by bringing groceries and medicines to their door as needed.

Corrie has called this the time of her “stairwell ministry”, as she is not able to enter their apartments, but often just sits on the stairs as they talk to her from their open doorways only a few feet away. When Tanya opened the door recently, she was eager to talk to Corrie. In tears, she told her that this time of isolation gave her such a fear of going hungry again, just as she had experienced as a small child growing up in wartime Ukraine. Since this virus emerged, Tanya has not seen her grandchildren. Her days are long and full of feeling lonely. The visits by Homecare have become a lifeline for her in these challenging days.

“When the storm is hitting hard, like this virus, then our visits and relationships with these people become very meaningful”, said Corrie. “It’s such a blessing to be in a time like this, when the staff of the Christian Embassy can reach out to them with hope and with assurance that the God of Israel is faithful to care for His people in these days.”

To be a blessing to these elderly and disabled Israelis during this critical time, support ICEJ Homecare at: ICEJ.ORG/HOMECARE

HOME CARE VISITS BREAKING LONELINESS FOR ELDERLY ISRAELIS
BY ICEJ STAFF