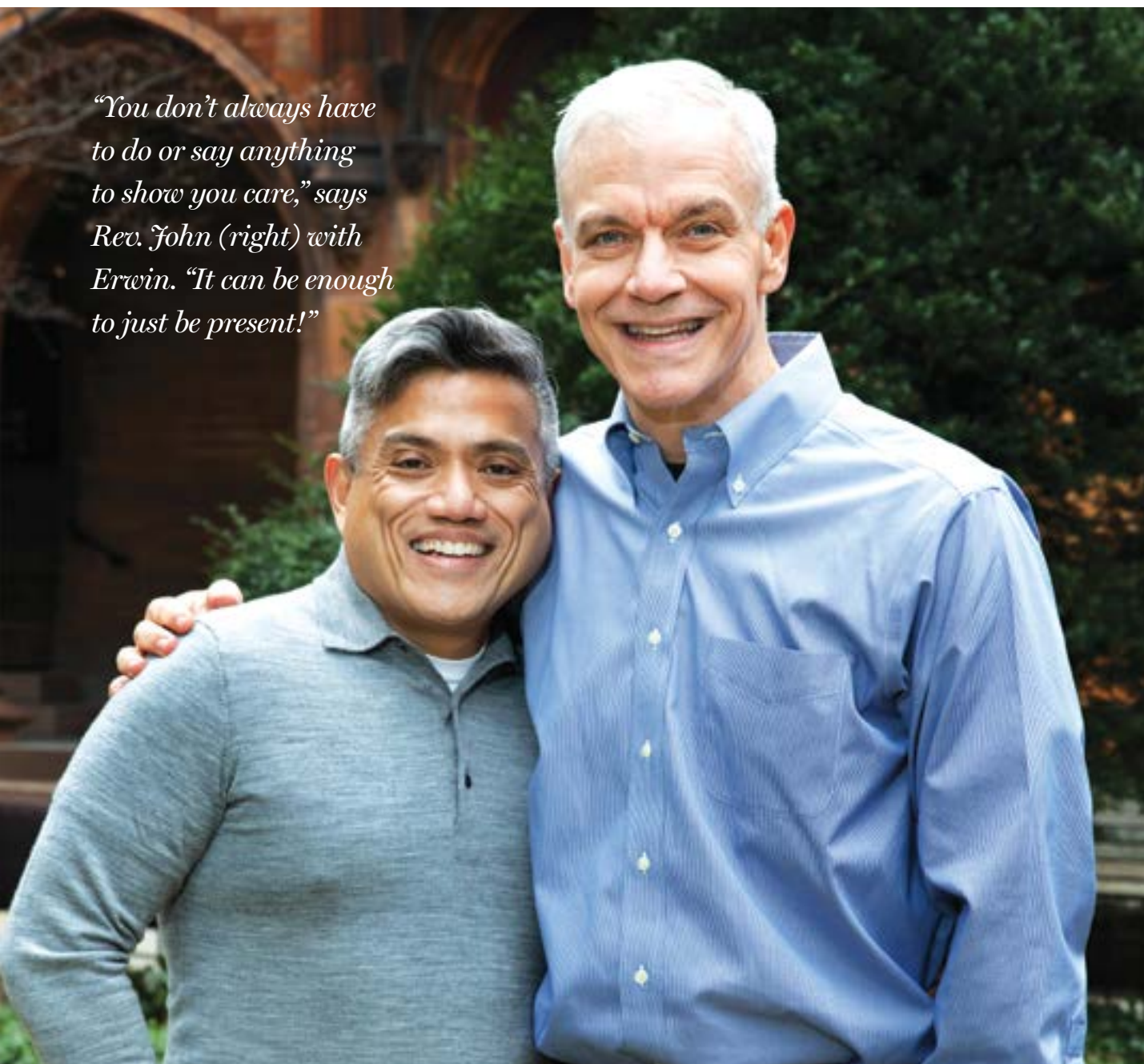


# “Laughter and love helped us manage cancer!”

As a caregiver, you may find it’s not always easy to help your loved one while ensuring your own needs are met. Here Rev. John F. Beddingfield, of New York, NY, shares the tips and strategies he relied on while his husband, Erwin De Leon, was undergoing treatment for prostate cancer (read Erwin’s story on p. 19). —BY KAREN KLEIMANN

*“You don’t always have to do or say anything to show you care,” says Rev. John (right) with Erwin. “It can be enough to just be present!”*



**Have faith.** “As an Episcopal priest, I find it helpful to plug in to your spiritual side. It doesn’t have to be religious, but I feel it’s good to have something to help center yourself and recognize that something bigger is at play. What helped Erwin and me was to pray for healing and in that context healing means wholeness and peace and well-being. Cure or not, it’s about trusting that things will be okay in the long run.”

**Take care of yourself.** “I knew that if I wasn’t alert and strong, I wouldn’t be much use to Erwin. I got serious about exercise and eating better. I even bought a juice machine. It was a two-fold

approach, as I wanted to be in the best shape I could be in to help Erwin, but I also hoped he would be interested in making changes, too, if he could see I was altering my habits.”

**Respect your loved ones’ decisions.** “After 20 years with Erwin I know I can’t control what he does or feels, even if I just want to help, so instead I want to encourage him without nagging. We share a lot of laughs, but you don’t always have to do or say anything. It can be enough to just be present.”

**Control what you can.** “I’m a do-er and want to keep busy and solve problems, but I knew this

wasn’t one I could solve. I couldn’t speed up Erwin’s treatment or make it work better, so by focusing on other things like cooking interesting and healthy meals, I was actively doing something that helped him and me at the same time.”

**Research what to expect.** “I wanted to educate myself on prostate cancer and all that it entails such as treatments and symptoms. One of his doctors wrote a book that involved holistic practices, so I read it hoping to gain some insights into what else we could do lifestyle-wise. I wanted as much information as possible, so if Erwin also wanted to know about something, I might have some answers.”

## Does your loved one need help?

Sometimes it’s hard to know when the people we care about need help and when it’s better to back off. However, policing their every move isn’t the answer—that’s draining for you and your loved one! Instead, use these questions to start a dialogue—the answers will help you both understand the most effective way to work together!

1. Do you want me to remind you when to take your next dose of medication? Would you prefer I leave Post-it notes around the house, or program phone reminders, rather than tell you in person?
2. Do you need help taking any of your medications, such as injections?
3. Do you want me to remind you when you’re due for an exam or blood test, or to make your appointments for you?
4. Would you like me to go to your appointment so I can take notes for you?
5. Do you want me to be the one who asks doctors any questions we have about your cancer or its treatment?
6. Do you want me to help you do research about your cancer or learn about new treatment options?
7. How can I help you control stress or feel more comfortable?