

# Table of Contents

---

FOREWORD, by Henry Paetkau .....	1
Why this Resource Collection? .....	2
<b>I WHAT DOES OUR THEOLOGY AND FAITH SAY ABOUT DEATH AND DYING .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>From “Sheol” to “Heaven”:</i>	
<i>What the Bible Says about Life After Death, by David Schroeder .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<b>II THE CHURCH: PROVIDING CARE WHEN DEATH OCCURS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
The Church as a Caring Community .....	6
The Pastor’s Role .....	6
Seven Steps for Pastoral Care when Death Occurs .....	7
Self-Care for the Pastor .....	9
The Funeral/Memorial Service .....	9
Its Purpose .....	9
The Viewing .....	10
Involving Children .....	10
<i>A Meal on Top of a Tombstone, by Henri Nouwen .....</i>	<i>11</i>
1. The Service in the Sanctuary .....	12
A Sample Order of Service .....	12
Comments about the Order of Service .....	12
Selecting hymns and other music .....	13
<i>The Life Story, by Ken Bechtel .....</i>	<i>15</i>
Scripture Readings .....	16
The Sermon (or Homily) .....	16
<i>The Storms of Life, a meditation by John H. Neufeld .....</i>	<i>17</i>
2. The Service at the Cemetery .....	18
Committal Services .....	19
3. The Gathering in the Fellowship Hall .....	20
<b>III SPECIAL SITUATIONS AND NEEDS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
The Funeral of a Child .....	21
<i>In Good Hands: A Letter to Stephanie Rose, reflections by Benno Klassen .....</i>	<i>21</i>
Stillbirths and Miscarriages .....	23
<i>And a Little Child Shall Lead Them, a meditation by Walter Franz .....</i>	<i>24</i>
Cross-Cultural Funerals .....	25
When the Deceased is of Chinese or Vietnamese Background .....	26
When the Deceased is of Laotian Background .....	26
When the Deceased is of Hispanic Background .....	27
When the Deceased is Aboriginal .....	28

	When the Deceased has Committed Suicide .....	29
	Some Facts About the Causes and Frequency of Suicides .....	30
	Suggestions for Survivors of Suicides, by Iris M. Bolton .....	31
	<i>Meditation for Bob, “A Rambling Man,”</i> by Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen .....	32
	When the Deceased Person was Not a Believer .....	33
	<i>Life’s Journey</i> , a poem by Anne Warkentin .....	34
IV	OTHER DEATH AND DYING ISSUES IN OUR CULTURE .....	35
	Should it be a Memorial Service or a Funeral? .....	35
	What About the Casket? .....	35
	Is Cremation an Option? .....	35
	Frequently Asked Questions About Cremation .....	36
V	WHAT ELSE CAN A CONGREGATION DO? .....	39
	Do Not Forget Those Who are Grieving .....	39
	Arrange Services of Remembering and Healing .....	39
	Memorial Sunday (Eternity Sunday, <i>Totensonntag</i> ) .....	39
	“Blue Christmas” .....	41
	Organize a Community-wide Memorial Service .....	43
	Educate the Congregation about Death and Dying .....	43
	Encourage Special Support Groups .....	43
	Consider Building a Columbarium .....	44
	Urge Members to be Prepared .....	44
VI	BEING PREPARED .....	45
	Outline of Estate Planning Guide by Mennonite Foundation of Canada .....	47
VII	FORMS AND OTHER RESOURCES .....	48
	Funeral/Memorial Service Preparation Form .....	49
	An Invitation to Record Your Wishes Concerning Funeral Plans .....	51
	A Personal Data Form .....	53
	A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning a Christian Funeral .....	54
	A Living Will Declaration .....	58
	Personal Record of Will/Papers/Documents .....	59
	Directions for a Handmade Casket .....	61
	Books, Videos and Web Sites .....	63
	Materials Available from Resource Centres and Libraries .....	67
	Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre, Winnipeg, MB .....	67
	Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Centre, Kitchener, ON .....	69
	Columbia Bible College Library, Abbotsford, BC .....	71

# Foreword

---

Among the many books and resources on your shelves, I hope this is one you'll reach for often. Not because there are so many dying persons to minister to and funerals to conduct, but because it's a useful tool! That was the vision and hope of the planners, and is our hope as we share these materials with you.

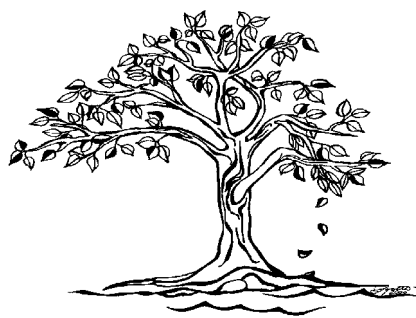
For some years, Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now part of Canadian Mennonite University) has hosted an annual continuing education event called "Special Courses." In 2000 those courses focussed on "Weddings and Funerals." The planning committee (which included representation from CMBC, the Council on Faith and Life, and the Leadership Commission of Mennonite Church Canada, with financial assistance from the Resources Commission) programmed an event that would not only probe the theme in theory, but also produce some useful material to take home.

The result of that endeavour, fittingly titled *Going Gracefully*, is the first of an anticipated series of resources to help pastors fulfill their priestly role. A companion piece on weddings is in preparation. The Leadership and Resources Commissions of MC Canada are pleased to offer this material for your use. (You will also find it online on the Mennonite Church Canada web site at [www.mennonitechurch.ca](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca))

This resource is not intended to replace, or duplicate, the *Minister's Manual* or other collections of worship materials. It is offered, rather, as a tool that can be updated and duplicated for personal or educational use as and when needed. We welcome your contributions of content that would enhance this resource further!

Special thanks to Larry Kehler who compiled and edited this collection, to Edwin Epp, Rosalie Loepky and Marvin Koop who planned the funerals portion of the event, wrote some of the materials, and later served as a reference committee, and to Allan Rudy-Froese who assisted in the entire process as chair of the Council on Faith and Life. Lynette Wiebe provided technical and design expertise.

**Henry Paetkau**  
**Conference Minister**



# *Going Gracefully*

## **A resource collection on dying, death, funerals and grief for pastors and caregivers in the church**

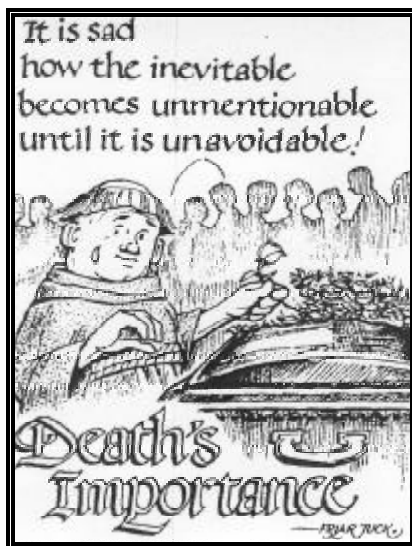
**This is a sampling of materials and background information to provide guidance on how to walk with persons who are dying or grieving, and to deal with other matters related to death and dying.**

### *Why this Resource Collection?*

We are all mortal beings. Just as surely as we were born, we will die. This has not changed since the beginning of time, but the milieu in which dying and death occurs in our church communities across Canada has been changing, and it will continue to change. Our churches are becoming more cross-cultural in make-up; more and more of our members are now living in urban areas and family members are scattered across the country and around the world; and we are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of people who are choosing cremation. These are just a few of the shifts that are occurring.

Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA have some excellent materials available on issues related to death and dying. The minister's manuals prepared by Dorothea and Heinz Janzen in 1983 and by John Rempel in 1998, for example, are very helpful guides. Other very good materials have also been produced recently by other church agencies and by congregations. This Resource Collection is not intended to replace but to supplement and to draw attention to these resources and to provide additional materials and background information. Attention will also be drawn to books, articles, web sites, videos and other materials which might be helpful to pastors and other caregivers, as well as to individuals and families, as they face the issue of dying and death.

This Resource Collection contains a broad range of items, all the way from theological comments and sample meditations, to practical counsel on preparing for death and the commemorative services, to poems and anecdotes, to forms which can be used to help people work through the various planning processes.



Used by permission

The idea for collecting this material grew out of a vision which emerged from needs which members of several Mennonite Church Canada commissions observed in Mennonite Church Canada congregations. The Council on Faith and Life, Leadership Commission and Canadian Mennonite Bible College worked together in developing this vision. They decided to focus the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses in February 2000 on the funerals and weddings themes. A three-person committee was appointed for each of the two topics to gather further information and creative ideas and to begin the drafting process for a guidebook. The members of the committee which focussed on funerals were Edwin Epp, pastor of the Sargent Mennonite Church in Winnipeg; Rosalie Loeppky, chaplain at the Concordia Hospital and Bethania Mennonite Personal Care Home in Winnipeg; and Marvin Koop, pastor of the Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler. They collected information and materials from pastors and congregations, from books, periodicals and web sites that focus on this theme, and from other sources, especially from the workshops and plenary sessions at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses.

# I

---

## *What Does Our Theology and Faith Say About Death and Dying?*

### **When Death Occurs**

Death is a natural part of the cycle of life. The writer in Ecclesiastes says there is “a time to be born and a time to die” (Eccles. 3:2). So, too, the writer of Hebrews says, “It is appointed for mortals to die once” (Heb. 9:27). Still, many find it hard to think or talk about death.

Our society tends to deny death and to find ways to soften its impact. One of the ways this is done is through the language that is used. People talk about a person having “passed away” or having “breathed his/her last” or having “gone to be with the Lord” or in some other way avoiding the use of the language of death. The Bible uses some euphemisms too (e.g., referring to death as “sleep”), but it is basically straightforward in its references to death. Death is part of the cycle of life.

It is not in our attempts to deny death, nor alone in the rejection of such denial, that we come to terms with death. Rather, it is in God and God’s gift of life wherein we find resources to embrace death both for ourselves and for others.

Faith in Christ helps us to embrace death in a spirit of hope, which is based on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It translates into life with meaning now -- even if there is suffering -- with the anticipation of a heavenly inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-9).

But death is also surrounded by mystery. There is much more to death and resurrection than we can understand or describe. For example, we know that the physical body will decay, but what will the resurrected body be like? What happens in the interim, before the resurrection? Is the person’s spirit with the Lord or waiting? Will loved ones be recognizable? Faith invites us to affirm that loved ones are in the care of God. We can accept what remains a mystery because of who God is, and we can find encouragement and comfort because of the assurance of the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:18).

Still, death brings pain and sorrow, and healing is needed. God desires healing for the pains that people experience. A promise of Jesus shows us both the appropriateness of grieving our losses and the promise of healing when he says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). Healing also involves the church community as its members seek to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).



### ***FROM “SHEOL” TO “HEAVEN”: What the Bible Says about Life after Death***

**By David Schroeder**

Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Philosophy at Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

*This was part of the writer’s presentation at a workshop entitled, “Death and Resurrection: What can we expect?” at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses in February 2000. It was the goal of this session to name the content of Christians’ hope, to seek to understand the biblical teaching on body and spirit/soul, to recognize what must for now remain a mystery, and yet to find comfort through the presence of God.*

## God, the Creator of Life

“God is the author of life because God is life. God “has life himself” (John 5:26) and bestows life on others. God is the living God and is known as such in the Bible (Deut. 5:26; Matt. 26:63; Rom. 9:26; Rev. 14:30). We understand what the Bible calls life only in terms of the God who lives and bestows life on others” (1 Sam. 14:39).<sup>1</sup>

God proposed to create the cosmos and to create life – all forms of life. God created a whole ecosystem of matter, plants, animals and many other things to support life on earth. Humans were formed out of the dust of the earth, as were trees and animals (Gen. 2:9, 19) and they, together with animals, fish and birds, received the “breath of life” (Gen. 1:30; 2:9, 19). Physical life ends in death when the breath of life is withdrawn (Ps. 104:29).

In naming what has been created “good,” God instituted the moral order. What was good was what was in harmony with God’s will, purpose and goal of fullness of life, or shalom. That which was contrary to the will and purpose of God and moved towards death rather than life, was evil and would be judged by God.

Humans were created to be morally responsible persons. They were created in the image of God and intended to be in fellowship with God, and to be God’s representatives on earth. Humans were asked to be co-workers with God and to be accountable to God in what they chose to be and do as God’s representatives. They were asked to manage the world for God during their earthly pilgrimage. This management consisted of assisting God to sustain the created order, to name the world, to see to ongoing life on earth and to be God’s people.

Since life had a beginning it would also have an end. Both biological birth and biological death were seen as part of the gift of life. Both were “good.” But things did not stay that way. Because of human sin, in which humans chose evil rather than good, death as separation from God entered the world. The blessing of God no longer rested on what persons chose to be and do. They stood in danger of judgment and death – separation from God.

God is a God of love and righteousness. True to God’s character, God acted to redeem humankind. God chose a people through whom to reveal the love and will of God to all people. In the first covenant the revelation of God’s saving grace and love is revealed to Israel, but also God’s judgment of evil. It was in Christ and his death on the cross that God opened to those who believed in him the way of salvation and life.

## Life after Death

The continuation of life after death played little or no part in early Hebrew religion. The Sadducees did not believe in life after death because it was not emphasized in the Torah (Law). But a partial life after death was accepted even in the Torah because the souls of the departed dead were held to be in Sheol, the abode of the dead. It was thought of as a place of sadness and gloom, but not of punishment. Here the “shades” of people found neither suffering nor enjoyment. Without some form of embodiment there was thought to be no personality or communication. “There is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol” (Eccles. 9:10). No one would return from this land of gloom, deep darkness (Job 10:21) and silence (Psalm 94:17). The inhabitants of Sheol were considered to be weary (Job 3:17) and without strength (Psalm 88:4). The souls of the departed dead were simply gathered to the fathers.

The emphasis of Sheol being the abode of the dead left too many questions unanswered. Should the just not receive their reward in this world? Why do the just suffer right until the end? How can the promises of God be fulfilled if their faith is not vindicated before they die? The first indication that there would be continuation of life after death came when Saul sought the guidance of Samuel through a medium (1 Sam. 28). A more explicit statement is made in Isaiah 26:19 about the pious Israelites: “The dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!”<sup>2</sup> Daniel 12:2 is more explicit. “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Very little is said about the state of the departed dead, except that there would be a resurrection.

Some of the intertestamental writings, between the Old and New Testaments, express the belief that righteousness will rise to eternal life (2 Maccabees, Enoch 91-92, Psalms of Solomon). In 2 Baruch 30 only the

---

<sup>1</sup> David Schroeder, “Life and Death: Biblical-Theological Perspectives,” in *Medical Ethics: Human Choices*, edited by John Roberts, Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars believe that this refers to the spiritually “dead” Judah.

righteous will rise, but in 50-51 both the righteous and the evil will rise. The good will become more beautiful and the bad more ugly. The view of Hades (the Greek term for Sheol) did not change much (Eccles. 14:16; 41:4; Baruch 217; Testament of Reuben 4:6) during the intertestamental period. Yet they thought there must be a special place for the righteous. “The saints shall rest in Eden, and in the New Jerusalem shall the righteous rejoice” (Testament of Daniel 5:12). They even spoke of a “paradise of delight” (2 Esdra 7:36)<sup>3</sup>. Some located paradise in the third heaven (2 Enoch 8:1), where the Messiah would one day open paradise to the righteous. Others believed the soul of the righteous would go to paradise immediately after death. When the Jewish people were heavily persecuted and lost many of their people in battle it was held that the persons who had given up their lives for others would be raised from death to participate with the righteous in the victory of God over all evil (2 Maccabees 7).

Hellenistic Judaism was influenced by the Greek notion of immortality of the soul and the trichotomy of mind, body and soul. In this view the soul is antithetical (opposite) to the material body in which it is held captive. Death is seen as a liberation of the soul and its union with the All Soul (God). Philo integrated this Greek understanding of immortality with the Jewish tradition. He saw death as restoring the soul to its original pre-birth state (immortal, immaterial, and asexual).<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish community at the time of Jesus was divided in its beliefs about the after life. The Sadducees stayed with their view of the Torah that God is a God of the living and that at death the soul withers away.<sup>5</sup> The Pharisees, on the other hand, waited for the fulfilment of the prophetic message about the restoration of the people of Israel and the destruction of its enemies. They early accepted the resurrection of the dead and spoke in terms of heaven rather than, or together with, the concept of paradise.

Jesus, in his dispute with the Sadducees, argued that the confession of Israel in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob implied that there was a life after death because God is a God of the living, not of the dead. Jesus also accepted the resurrection of the body and claimed that he himself was the resurrection and the life. What is totally new in Jesus is that he indicated that in the afterlife there would be no sexual differentiation and no marrying or being given in marriage. He indicated further that he was going to provide a place of many mansions for his followers so that they could be with him after death. Heaven, or paradise, is spoken of now as the place of the righteous dead. To the thief on the cross Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” From the parable of Lazarus we learn that there is a gulf between heaven and hell, and that the righteous will be with Abraham and the saints, and the unrighteous will be judged.

Paul was very much a Pharisee in his belief in the resurrection of the dead. He accepted the resurrection of the body after death, but indicated that it will be a different – a transformed -- body:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1 Cor. 15:42-45)

But Paul speaks about the soul being “asleep” immediately after death – a delayed reunion with the Divine. At a future time the resurrection of the body would occur. At that time the souls of the righteous, both the living and the dead, will rise to meet the Lord in the air.

It should be noted that even though Paul used the Greek words for mind, body and soul when he spoke about persons, all three refer to the person indivisible. He did not hold that the soul was trapped in the physical body from which it needed to be released. In Hebrew and Christian thought there needed to be embodiment for persons to communicate with each other. For life after death there had to be some form of embodiment and not just the immortality of the soul.

---

<sup>3</sup> “The pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight” (2 Esdras 7:36)

<sup>4</sup> On the Giants: a higher existence, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Colleen McDonnell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, P. 20.

## *II*

---

# *The Church: Providing Care When Death Occurs*

## **The Church as a Caring Community**

At the centre of Christian belief and activity is the church, which is to be a community of caring people whose interest and commitment it is to walk with one another, to share each other's joys and burdens, and to seek to faithfully be about God's mission on earth. This community knows God as The One who is compassionate, caring and loving. The church thus becomes the incarnation of these qualities to individuals and families on many occasions, such as the time of a death.

Because of the community nature of God's people, it is appropriate and desirable for funerals to be in a church setting, and for the church community to take responsibility for as much of the preparations as feasible. The funeral service becomes an extension of the caring function of the church. The funeral belongs in church because it is the center in which the member has been nurtured in living and in dying.

Today's mobile society sometimes complicates this understanding of the involvement of the church at occasions such as a funeral. The deceased person and his or her family may be new to the community; they may have connections with other congregations and denominations near at hand or farther away; and/or they may have close ties to a previous pastor or a minister in the extended family. It requires a generous amount of sensitivity to keep all these things in focus as plans for the funeral are made.

It is recommended that congregations and their pastors discuss the involvement of guest clergy and/or former pastors at funeral services and draft a general set of guidelines to be referred to at times such these.

When a member dies, the church family as a whole is called upon to offer support and compassion to the family members and close friends of the deceased.

Families may feel overwhelmed with grief and with the many immediate tasks that lie before them. A church offers an avenue through which some of the immediate needs can be directed. One of the deacons or a contact person can serve as a go-between to screen phone calls, make a schedule for offers of food, transportation, and childcare, etc. In doing this the church community acknowledges and participates actively in providing pastoral care to the grieving family.

## **The Pastor's Role**

The death of a family member is an opportune time for a pastor to connect with the family. The pastor carries an important priestly role in ministering to individuals and families in critical times of their lives, such as when a death occurs.

The pastor finds time for the family. It is a high priority item, no matter what other plans may have been made for that day. This is a ministry of encouragement, support and caring. It carries an important message: the family is not alone; there is someone prepared to walk with them. This can include such things as regular visits, sitting with the family at the bedside of the one who is dying, guiding the family through funeral preparations, leading the funeral service and maintaining regular contact following the funeral. It is a ministry of presence.



Pastors also offer a ministry of representation. They are not there only on their own behalf. It is not only a ministry of personal presence, but by virtue of office or trust given, pastors also bring Christ's love and presence to the situation in a tangible way. The pastor is a reminder of the presence of God, even in times of pain. Wayne Oates, a writer on pastoral theology says, "The Christian pastor . . . is a representative of God, commissioned to bring the ruling sense of the presence of God to bear upon the conflict-weary lives of men and women." (From *The Minister's Manual for Funerals*, p. 16). This reminder of God's presence is reinforced through the use of Scripture, song, prayer and in other ways.

Edwin Epp, pastor of the Sargent Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, tells about an experience he had. "Some time ago I visited a woman in the hospital who was dying. I came in and greeted her. I had to come quite close because she was hard of hearing. Before I knew what was happening, she pulled me close, gave me a hug, and thanked me for coming. I replied, 'Soon you will be able to greet your Lord with the same kind of joy with which you have greeted me.' For me, that was a vivid reminder of the ministry of representation."

Part of this ministry of representation is also that the pastor is present on behalf of the congregation. While others in the congregation will express their care in a variety of ways as well, the pastor is the front-runner, representing that support. Often at times of serious illness, imminent death or of death, members of the congregation cannot be present. At such times the pastor's caring ministry is symbolic of both the care of God and the care of the congregation. Sometimes the people in our churches recognize this better than the pastors themselves do. It is the reason why a pastor is usually quickly welcomed in such a situation.

The pastor functions as priest in connecting the bereaved family with God and God's sustaining message. The primary expression of the priestly ministry is through the ritual of the funeral or memorial service. The pastor's task is to lead the mourners in a service of worship. The focus of such a service is rightly upon God, who is both the giver of life and the source of resurrection hope. While occasioned by the death of a person, whose body may or may not be present, the service points toward God and draws comfort from God's love and word rather than on the achievements of the deceased. Good balance needs to be sought between eulogizing the deceased and praising God.

## **Seven Steps for Pastoral Care When Death Occurs**

The pastor plays a very significant role in relating to the family of the deceased, often during the dying process and at the time of death. Walking with the family on this journey will usually include the following seven steps.<sup>1</sup>

### **Step 1**

It may not always be necessary for the pastor to be there for a long period of time, but the loved ones need to be assured that the pastor is available at any time. When death occurs the family is encouraged to call the pastor to the bedside, be it hospital, home or nursing home. It is the moment of finality. It is a time of listening, silence and prayer. Pastors may wish to gently encourage family members to talk about the last days and hours of the deceased and about their own feelings surrounding this event. Sometimes it is appropriate to sing a song together with the family or also alone. Encourage the family to arrange two meetings: (1) with the funeral director of their choice, and (2) a formal meeting with the pastor. Often it is preferable to meet the family in their home at a time which is convenient to them.

---

<sup>1</sup> These seven steps have been garnered from a list submitted by Menno Epp, Saskatoon, who served as pastor at the Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, and the Leamington United Mennonite Church prior to his retirement.

## **Step 2**

The family meets with the funeral director to consider the time of the funeral, the services required, the choice of casket, the visitations, and other matters pertaining to the burial of the body. The funeral director will check with the pastor on the scheduling of the service and a special viewing time for family members and close friends. The family can be assured that the funeral director will raise all the necessary questions pertaining to their possible responsibilities and will indicate the options which are available to them. The director will also make suggestions concerning such matters as honoraria for the musicians and the pastor.

## **Step 3**

The family meets with the pastor. Participation in the planning of all aspects of the funeral is an important means of coping with bereavement. The family is led to offer expressions of grief, to share feelings, to cry and to tell stories. Then, with sensitivity and a well-ordered manner, the pastor guides the family to consider aspects that relate to the funeral/memorial service. The family will be guided to consider such aspects as: the nature of the service, who should be involved in leadership, who should present the homily or sermon, who will prepare the life story, what scripture passages and texts should be used in the service, etc. Family members often benefit from working together at developing a life story of the deceased to be presented at the service. The preparation itself serves as a useful tool for grieving and healing. Pastors may have an outline (checklist) of all the details that concern a Christian family at such a time (See Form 1, pages 49-50). This meeting might also allow for some sharing for the benefit of both pastor and the family in grief -- for the pastor, so that he/she can get a better sense of the dynamics of this family in grief, and for the family, so that they can recall important memories. Drawing on the memory bank is crucial to healthy grieving.

(It should be noted that a death sometimes opens old family wounds. This can result in additional pain, or it can exacerbate family dynamics that were at best tenuous and at worst divisive. The pastor's pre-funeral meeting with the family is not a family therapy session. However, the pastor may be called upon to utilize his/her conflict mediation skills. This may mean, for instance, that the pastor will need to make every effort to include an alienated family member and/or both sides of a divided family in the funeral preparations. These dynamics may also determine the nature of follow-up after the funeral.)

## **Step 4**

When the above meeting has taken place the pastor begins his/her preparations, assuring both family and others that their energies need not be expended on anxieties about the service itself. The family, too, has a list of concerns and preparations to which it needs to attend. This is a list that was created in Step 3.

## **Step 5**

Pastors may wish to be at the visitation or viewing at the funeral home a few minutes prior to the arrival of the visitors. This is a time to meet with the family for reflection and prayer. The prayer includes a concern that God will bless their togetherness as a family, give them the strength and joy to meet the many people who come to pay their "last respects" and share their sympathies. It is also a time to double-check with the family if they have any concerns regarding the memorial service.

## **Step 6**

The funeral usually includes three parts, each of which has a distinct purpose: (1) the service in the sanctuary; (2) the service at the cemetery; and (3) the service in the fellowship hall. These three parts are covered in more detail on pages 9-20.

## **Step 7**

While the formal aspects of the funeral service have come to a close, the care for the bereaved needs to continue. Grieving is not finished with the conclusion of the fellowship meal. A caring community continues its ministry to the grieving in less formal ways, such as remembering and acknowledging birthdays, anniversaries and other special days, and mentioning the name of the deceased in conversations. The memory of the deceased is very much in the minds of those who are grieving, so mentioning the name and some experience of the deceased to loved ones is not rude. It may arouse some pain, but it is generally appreciated and contributes to healing. In the early stages of the grieving process loved ones do not wish for their loved one to be forgotten. Members of the church are encouraged not to forget. Healing takes place faster and the grieving persons' need to hear the deceased persons' names mentioned grows less when in the initial stages they are able to share more with each other about the separation. One of the best ways of managing grief is to share it with those who can see, hear and touch one another in the gathered community. Paul says, "Weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

## **Self-care for the Pastor**

Recognition of the interrelationship between the pastor's own "stuff" and his/her ability to minister is essential. Compassion for others requires compassion for one's own vulnerabilities. Detachment from their own hurts and pains opens the way to compassion for others. Pastors and other caregivers should begin coming to terms with their own death. Unless this happens they cannot minister to the dying. They need to stand at the bedside of the dying and participate in funerals as learners. Pastors are encouraged to establish pathways for dealing with their own grief. This may be via regular sessions with a mentor or spiritual director. It may be through allowing (even encouraging) grieving privately while preparing for a funeral. Or it may be by taking note of which experiences in the lives of others seem to absorb the largest portion of their energy.

When they become exercised over the experiences of others, they need to ask, "What spectre is asking for attention in my own inner life?" They need to watch for red flags! Pastors should not be shy to seek out professional help for themselves; this provides a helpful model for parishioners.

Pastors' awareness of their own unresolved issues and their ability to work with them--letting them go and finding healing--will determine their capacity to be fully present to the grieving persons to whom they minister.

*I must acknowledge my wounds before I can sit with your pain.  
I must befriend my losses before I can sit with your grief  
I must consider my own death before I can sit with you as you die.*

(from Manitoba Hospice and Palliative Care)

## **The Funeral/Memorial Service**

### **Its Purpose**

Rituals are symbolic activities that help us, together with our families and friends, to express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life's important events. The funeral ritual, too, is a public, traditional and symbolic means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts and feelings about the death of someone who is loved. The funeral or memorial service helps us to acknowledge the reality of death, to remember the person who

died, to encourage the expression of grief, and to provide support to mourners in the context of the worshipping community which embraces faith in God, and thereby offer hope.

It is the purpose of a funeral to:<sup>1</sup>

- a) Affirm the great realities of the Christian faith, especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 11:25).
- b) Mourn in a way that brings healing and comfort to the bereaved. This includes pointing persons to the love and presence of the God of all comfort. It allows for healthy expression of emotions such as weeping.
- c) Remember the life of the departed through recalling not only formal facts, but telling stories about the person.
- d) Express farewell to the person and to adjust to the new reality without him or her. Those who are left must feel the finality of the loss, yet look to the future with hope.
- e) Give the congregation a way to participate and to show support for the family of the bereaved.

### **The Viewing**

Many people desire to be present with their loved one at the time of death. It is indeed a holy/sacred moment, a time of transition, crossing over to another reality. These are moments shrouded in the mystery of how death is the door to new life with God. When people are not able to be present at the time of dying then viewing may be additionally important.

The body is the visible symbol of the person who died. Consequently, viewing the body can for many be a significant part of the separation and farewell. It may also serve to impress people with the reality of death, especially for those not present during the dying and/or at the time of death.

Viewing of the body may trigger a flood of emotions that have been unrecognized or held in check.

In some cultures and communities it is acceptable and desirable for photographs to be taken of the body (person) in the coffin -- sometimes with family members shown standing around the coffin.

Traditions vary regarding viewing. In some localities families are present at the funeral home 4-6 hours the day before the funeral to receive visitors. Sometimes the viewing is a private family affair. In some communities the funeral home is open during the day for anyone to walk in at anytime and view the body. In other traditions the viewing is combined with a short prayer service or brief devotional that is held the evening before the funeral, especially for people unable to attend the funeral the next day. This viewing service is usually brief, less formal in nature and may offer an open mike to encourage sharing of stories. The viewing may be time-limited in some instances because of the funeral home schedule.

If cremation is chosen, there may be a viewing for family members and close friends prior to the cremation.

### **Involving Children**

Children often grieve very differently than adults. They may move quickly from one emotion to another, sobbing deeply at one moment, then laughing and playing seemingly unconcerned, and the next moment angrily kicking a playmate. Unknown to the adults in the family, a child, because of his/her understanding and interpretation of the events that have happened, may take on guilt for the death. Children's participation in family events and with the dying person, as well as in the planning for and in the actual funeral service, can be a very significant step toward healing for them -- healing that affects their response to other grief situations later in life. Children know instinctively what they need and want. Ask a child whether he/she

---

<sup>1</sup> This summary of the purposes of a funeral is from the 1983 *Minister's Manual* (pp 123-24), edited by Dorothea & Heinz Janzen. (Faith and Life Press)

wishes to visit and be with the dying person and/or view the body following death. Keep the explanations simple. Assure a child of your support and offer the opportunity to attend the funeral service with the rest of the family. Children may wish to draw pictures, write letters or stories to be placed in the coffin. Some funeral directors encourage writing brief messages of farewell and love on the outside of the casket with a felt marker.

The pastor may consider including children in the funeral service by having a special children's item or by telling stories at various points during the service.

Here are some ways in which children can be involved:

- ❖ write messages or draw pictures for the funeral bulletin;
- ❖ share some memories at the funeral (older children);
- ❖ say a prayer;
- ❖ write a poem, story or song;
- ❖ light a candle;
- ❖ release a balloon;
- ❖ place flowers on the casket;
- ❖ take flowers to the grave side;
- ❖ participate in a children's story;
- ❖ write on the casket;
- ❖ participate in building or decorating the casket;
- ❖ give mementos (e.g. a key chain collection);
- ❖ photographs;
- ❖ make it possible for them to participate in the funeral service;
- ❖ be intentional about connecting with children (i.e. when meeting with the family);
- ❖ include children in planning the whole service;
- ❖ include children in the process of writing the life story;
- ❖ visit the grave site afterward.

### *A Meal on Top of a Tombstone*

**By Henri J. M. Nouwen**

*New Oxford Review* (March 1994); reprinted in *Leadership Journal* (Summer 1994); used by permission

"A few years ago Bob, the husband of a friend of mine, died suddenly of a heart attack. My friend decided to keep her two young children away from the funeral. She thought it would be too hard for them to see their father put in the ground. For years after Bob's death the cemetery remained a fearful and a dangerous place for them.

"Then, one day, my friend asked me to visit the grave with her, and invited the children to come along. The elder one was too afraid to go, but the younger one decided to come with us. When we came to the place where Bob was buried, the three of us sat down on the grass around the stone engraved with the words, 'A kind and gentle man.' As we sat, we reminisced about Bob.

"I said: 'Maybe one day we should have a picnic here. This is not only a place to think about death, but also a place to rejoice in our life. I think Bob will be most honored when we find new strength, here, to live.' At first it seemed a strange idea: having a meal on top of a tombstone. But isn't that similar to what Jesus told his disciples to do when he asked them to share bread and wine in his memory?

"A few days later my friend took her elder child to the grave, the younger one having convinced his sister that there was nothing to fear. Now they often go to the cemetery and tell each other stories about Bob."

## **The Service in the Sanctuary**

### **A Sample Order of Service**

Prelude  
    Opportunity for viewing and giving a memorial gift  
Gathering  
    Entrance of the family  
    Greeting, call to worship and opening prayer  
Praising/adoring God  
    Hymn(s) by the congregation and/or a choir  
Sharing the deceased person's life story  
A children's item (if appropriate)  
Affirming faith  
    Hymn(s) by the congregation and/or a choir  
Hearing God's Word  
    Scripture reading  
    Sermon (Homily)  
Responding to God  
    Hymn  
    Prayer  
Sending  
    Benediction

### **Comments about the Order of Service**

#### **Before the service begins:**

This can be a time for viewing for those who have come to the service who are not part of the mourning family. (Viewing by family members can feel rushed if it happens here, and it can be traumatic if it comes just before they enter the sanctuary for the service.) Opportunities for guests to provide memorial gifts to a charity or charities of the deceased person's or his/her family's choice are sometimes provided at a table in the church foyer. Guests can arrange for such gifts prior to entering the sanctuary. Memorial gifts are sometimes recommended in place of flowers.

#### **The Prelude:**

This is a time of reflection and remembering. The music can be by a pianist, organist and/or one or more instrumentalists. If there is a choir, it can sing several of the deceased's or his/her family's favorite hymns during this time.

#### **Entrance of the Family:**

The congregation stands when the family enters; this is a way of showing support for the immediate family in their grief.

#### **Greeting, Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:**

Recognize the presence of God and people's need for God; call on God to bring comfort and hope.

### **Sample Calls to Worship:**

- a) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:2)
- b) Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

### **Sample Opening Prayers:**

- a) We gather here to worship the Creator who heals, sustains and nurtures our world. We come together to thank the Giver of Life for the life of (name of deceased). We gather to name and to express our sorrow over his/her death. Our loss is profound. We join together in the tension and conflict between our pain, and our joy that she/he is now in the hands of our Healer, the Almighty. We gather, longing for the breath of God's Spirit to give us courage and renewal. Come, Christ Jesus, be our guest. Bless us as we weep and laugh, comfort us as we mourn and celebrate. Set our hearts at peace so that we may bring our thanks and needs before you. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen. *(by Ken Quiring, pastor, North Star Mennonite Church, Drake, SK)*
- b) Loving God, creator of the universe, redeemer of humankind through Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit our guide and encourager, you gave us life – life for living on this earth; life to know you while we journey through the years entrusted to us; and the hope of eternal life with you. Life is truly a special gift. By you we are being brought into eternal life. Help us to sense the richness of your promises, to believe them and to receive the comfort they offer. Comfort (name the family members who are present at the service) throughout this service and in the time to come. In Jesus' name. Amen. *(by Werner Froese, pastor of the Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack, BC.)*

### **Selecting Hymns and Other Music**

When selecting music for a funeral there are points both of faith and practical necessity to be considered. Perhaps no other service is as important an opportunity for people to renew their faith and for believers to proclaim their Christian hope. This is the time when believers' relationship with God is brought to its final meaning. However, the power of this moment needs to be carried forward with sensitivity and understanding. There needs to be a recognition of the ongoing relationship between God and those still living. God's love touches them, and they can know with assurance that God stands in a special way with those who are grieving.

A Christian funeral is a corporate event in which the participants praise and thank God who is the giver of all life for providence, for the deceased person's life, for family members, friends and the church. The pervasive spirit of the worship service is that expressed in Job 1:21, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Perhaps at no other service does congregational singing serve to comfort the bereaved family as at a funeral service. The gathered community, through its singing, offers songs of faith and hope. Hymns that remind the participants of God's steadfast love are ideal. (See the list of suggestions below.)

If a choir is present, anthems and hymns should be chosen which can be learned during a brief time of rehearsal.

If a choir is not present, and other music ministry is called for (vocal or instrumental), care should be given to choosing appropriate texts and music. Consult an experienced music minister if there is uncertainty about the selections.

At funerals, music is often chosen on the basis of "favourites" of the deceased. In the discernment process pastors and musicians can often encourage family members to offset those choices with themes such as the following: celebration, resurrection, triumph of life over death, comfort, adoration and hope. Persons involved in the funeral service should talk to the family about the spirit they want to convey during the time of worship. Under ideal circumstances it would be desirable for the pastor, song leader, accompanist and worship leader to meet with the family to consult about the selections.

## Hymns for Funerals <sup>2</sup>

(From the *Hymnal: A Worship Book*)

A wonderful Savior is Jesus our Lord	598	Let hope and sorrow now unite	634
Amazing grace!	143	Lift your glad voices	275
And I will raise you up	596	Love divine, all loves excelling	592
Be Thou my vision	545	My shepherd will supply my need	589
Blessed assurance	332	My life flows on	580
Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light	203	Now thank we all our God	86
Children of the heavenly father	616	O God, our help in ages past	328
Christ the Lord is ris'n today	280	O Lord of life, where'er they be	635
Come, come ye saints	425	O that I had a thousand voices	84
Come, gracious Spirit	303	O Power of love	593
For all the Saints	636	Oh, have you not heard	606
Gentle Shepherd, come and lead us	352	Praise the Lord, sing hallelujah	50
God of grace and God of glory	366	Praise God from Whom	118
God of our life	486	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	37
Great is thy faithfulness	327	Precious Lord, take my hand	575
He leadeth me	599	Shall we gather at the river	615
Healer of every ill	377	Shepherd me, O God	519
Holy God we praise Thy name	121	Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling	491
I heard the voice of Jesus say	493	The Lord is King	69
I am weak and I need Thy strength	553	The King of love my shepherd is	170
If Christ is mine	331	We shall walk through the valley	412
In the rifted Rock I'm resting	526	When grief is raw ( <i>by soloist or congregation</i> )	637
In you but trust in God	576	When peace, like a river	336
In the bulb there is a flower	614	Who is so great a God	62
In Thee is gladness	114		

### Vocal Pieces

Green pastures	Wilfred Sanderson
How lovely are thy dwellings	Samuel Liddle
Jesus, the very thought of Thee	Eric Thiman
Let not your heart be troubled	Paul Haeussler
O rest in the Lord ("Elijah")	Mendelssohn
The Lord's Prayer	A. Malotte
The Lord is my Shepherd	Samuel Liddle

### Duets

Children of the heavenly Father	Hale and Wilder songbook
I am his and he is mine	Hale and Wilder songbook
The Lord is my shepherd	Henry Smart

---

<sup>2</sup> Most of these hymns were suggested by Bernie Neufeld, a member of the Sargent Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. Bernie has taught music at Canadian Mennonite Bible College and has also served in a pastoral role with his congregation.



### **The Life Story:**

The title, "Life Story," allows more openness than the word, "Eulogy," which means "high praise." The funeral or memorial service is a time to remember the life of the person as he or she was, to celebrate it, and to grieve its end.

A balance needs to be found between talking about and celebrating a person's living and dying and the theological and worship aspects of the service, i.e. personalization needs to be in balance with worship. Balance can be found in looking at the themes in the person's life and bringing those themes into the understanding of faith.



## **The Life Story: Another Approach**

**By Ken Bechtel**

Former pastor in Toronto and Calgary and currently serving as "transition minister"  
at the Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, ON.

I offer families the possibility of my writing a "We Remember" article for use in the bulletin. This is in addition to whatever tributes/eulogies are prepared by the family. I usually show them samples from previous funeral bulletins....

If the family agrees, I get the phone numbers of close colleagues, family members and other persons who are acquainted with the deceased. Usually the family welcomes this. I call each person on the list – sometimes twice, first to explain what I want and later to listen to their recollections – inviting "special memories and moments."

I have found this approach helpful in the following ways:

1. As a way of hearing and understanding key themes from this person's life. These may help to inform or illustrate other moments in the service or sermon;
2. A particular aid when I only know bits about the person (e.g. someone off the street or when I am new in the congregation).
3. As an opportunity to offer ministry to the larger constellation of persons who are grieving. I often follow-up on these "shorter conversations" at the funeral or later.
4. Families have welcomed these write-ups. When possible, this proposed summation is shared with the immediate family before it is printed.

I don't usually read this article at the funeral service, but I call attention to it as an invitation to people's own special memories.

Time-wise, writing such an article usually takes about 3-4 hours, but it makes the other preparations for the funeral easier.



### **Scripture readings:**

Many Bible passages are appropriate to include in a funeral or memorial service. Here is a list of some readings suggested in a special booklet, "Facing Death," prepared by a committee at the Goshen College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN:

Psalm 23	“The Lord is my shepherd....”
Psalm 46	“God is our refuge and strength....”
Psalm 90	“Lord, you have been our dwelling place....”
Psalm 91	“You who live in the shelter of the Most High....”
Isaiah 40	“Comfort, O comfort my people....”
Isaiah 43:1-3	“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you....”
Matthew 11:28-30	“Come to me, you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens....”
John 11	“I am the resurrection and the life....”
John 14	“Do not let your hearts be troubled....”
Romans 8	“There is therefore now no condemnation....”
1 Corinthians 15	“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory....”
2 Corinthians 5	“...we have a building from God....”
Philippians 1:21	“For me, living is Christ, and dying is gain....”
1 Thess 4:13-18	“But we do not want you to be uninformed....” “Therefore, comfort one another.”
1 Thess 5:1-11	“Therefore, encourage one another....”
2 Timothy 4:6-8	“I have fought the good fight....”
1 Peter 1:22-25	“You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed....”
1 John 3:1-3	“...that we should be called children of God....”
Revelation 14:13	“Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord....”
Revelation 21:1-4	“...he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more....”
Revelation 22:1-5	“...the Lord will be their light....”

Minister’s manuals offer additional suggestions for scripture readings.

### **The Sermon (or Homily):**

Speakers at a funeral or memorial service should ask themselves: “Who is this sermon for? Is it for the family or the congregation?” Family members are usually in deep emotional distress. They are unlikely to be able to absorb a sermon with a heavy didactic or exegetical focus. Also, the attention span of persons grieving is considerably less than usual. A brief (10-minute), easy-to-understand sermon is more likely to be received well by all. The sermon is always an invitation to the Christian way in that whenever Jesus, or God, and his love are spoken about, it is in effect an invitation to people to respond to God. Several pastors who replied to our request for suggestions and comments stated that they are opposed to the forced and artificial practice of trying to scare the vulnerable “into the kingdom” by means of the sermon at a funeral. This kind of preaching, they said, is not appropriate for people in mourning.

### **Sending:**

A final family viewing could take place immediately after the service by asking the congregation to remain seated, or by dismissing the congregation, and allowing the family some time to gather around the casket in the sanctuary. Sometimes the family needs more time. This final viewing should not be rushed.





## ***The Storms of Life:*** **A Funeral Meditation**

**By John H. Neufeld**

Former President of Canadian Mennonite Bible College and before that pastor of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

**Texts: Matthew 7:24-27** (*Two foundations*)

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** (*Finishing the race*)

The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:24-27 are often used to point out the necessity of a solid foundation in one's life: to build on Jesus' teaching. Another important thing said in these verses is that whether we build on sand or rock, the storms will come. This says that having Christ as the foundation of our lives is no assurance that we will be spared difficulties in life. The rain, winds and storm beat upon both persons' lives, whether or not they had Jesus as their foundation.

Your mother had accepted Christ into her life a long time ago and since then she sought to express that faith in her life. But she also experienced a lot of testing, particularly when your father died over 20 years ago and, more recently, with her illness. She enjoyed good health for many years as the children were growing up, but some months ago the storms began to rage in her life. Her energy waned, her illness was diagnosed, she underwent treatment, she had to give up work, she had to struggle within herself about her new situation.

No doubt many of us, as we became aware of her illness, have tried to imagine what it would be like to go through what she had to endure. One of the things we could identify with was her feeling that it simply wasn't fair. "Just imagine, after I was widowed, I worked and raised the children. Now that they have reached adulthood I thought I would be able to enjoy life with a little less pressure. And then what do I get? Leukemia! It just doesn't seem fair!" I am sure that each of us in a similar situation would have the same thoughts. "And the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on a rock."

Another thing she found difficult during this storm was the feeling of being useless. She was used to being able to work, to be responsible, to help others, to carry a fair share of the load. Now as her physical strength decreased she had to be helped. She had to accept her new position. It was hard. I know the children did not think that she was useless, but she felt it within herself. Yet even this was thought about in the light of her faith: "There must be some purpose to all of this, but I don't understand it now." "And the winds beat upon that house but it did not fall for it was built upon the rock."

Through the storms of life, through the suffering, "living hope" shines through. The writer of 1 Peter says this so clearly. He praises "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" for having given all believers a "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He praises God for "an inheritance which is imperishable and unfading" (1 Peter 1:3-4). This writer also says that the storms that test one's life reveal "the genuineness of our faith" so that in spite of setbacks and suffering, there is a deep sense of gratitude to God. "As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls." (1:9).

A related image in Hebrews is the anchor that holds our lives steady no matter how much we are driven by the wind. The anchor is our hope, based on what God has done for us. This was the basis of your loved one's faith and hope during her struggle. Here she found the inner strength to bear the burden and the heat of the day. For her faith and her courage in the face of adversity we must be deeply grateful.

From the other side, this experience also has been storm for you as a family: her illness and then this week the unexpected news of her death. It was hard to believe, yet it is true and somehow you have to come to terms with it. That is the storm in which you are now caught up. Even in the face of this death, this loss

in your lives, you must go on with life. But how does one go on? Going on means living with unanswered and unanswerable questions: Why suffering? Why an early death? There is a mystery side of life. We simply do not have all the answers, but we continue to hold on to him who himself is the Answer.

Going on means working through the stages of grief: shock and disbelief, remembering, emotional release, emptiness and reaffirming the meaning of life.

Going on means remembering and cherishing a shared past: being grateful for all that she was to each of you, for her strength and dedication in raising the family, for many things she stored away in your hearts. Going on means checking our own life's foundation. Is our life's house resting squarely on Jesus who is the only enduring foundation? Going on means knowing that the Lord who was with her is also willing to be with you.

Going on means being challenged once more by her concern for you. Paul's farewell words are appropriate: "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6b-8).

She says to all of us: "I have fought the good fight of faith and of life; I have tried to live by faith, to express it. Will you do the same?"

"I have finished the race. It was shorter than I would have liked it to be, but I see the finish line. Will you, my friends, run the race, whether it be long or short, till you see the finish line?"

"I have kept the faith--and the Lord has kept me through all the vicissitudes of life, even through the storm of cancer. Will you, my friends, keep the faith too, no matter what comes your way?"

"Now at the end I strive forward in hope for that which the Lord has in store for me: the crown of life. Will you live in this hope too? I hope you will."

Our prayer is that you as a family, and all of us, will remember her with gratitude and will be comforted. May you continue to experience the support of friends and loved ones and, above all, the presence of him who is life's everlasting foundation, Jesus Christ.

This sermon was preached at the funeral of Katy D. Wiebe at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.  
It appears in a collection of John Neufeld's sermons entitled, *The Story That Shapes Us* (CMBC Publications, 1997).  
Used by Permission.



## 2. The Service at the Cemetery

The place of the burial may have been a major item of discussion in the family because of such issues as the many moves the family has experienced, the cost, and family dynamics. Usually the burial service is held following the funeral service in the church sanctuary. Sometimes people choose to have the burial prior to the service to assist them in creating more of a service of remembrance and praise.

The service at the cemetery need not be long. The weather should be taken into account when planning the service. The committal service may include brief comments, a scripture reading, a prayer and perhaps a song if the gathered group is oriented toward singing. When the committal services are more informal the bereaved and their friends share words of farewell or scripture passages with which they bless each other. Many families like to have the pastor distribute the flowers from the casket spray to immediate family members and friends. Some choose to throw these back onto the casket or into the grave. This symbolizes shared love, the giving of the body to the care of God's earth, and as a bidding farewell to their loved one. Some people like the casket to be lowered during the grave-side service, others prefer it to be lowered after the people have left. It is important to allow the family to decide how they would prefer to do it.

Other options to consider at the cemetery include writing farewell and love messages on the coffin, sprinkling handfuls of dirt onto the casket after it has been partially lowered, or having members of the family and friends shovel dirt to close the grave. Those standing by may wish to sing hymns while the grave is being closed. It is important, if the weather permits, to take whatever time the loved ones need at the grave side.

Where necessary, make arrangements with the funeral directors ahead of time. For example, the earth may be on a truck, making it impossible for the family to close the grave. Also check cemetery policies.

## Committal Services

Here are two sample grave-side services.

### Service 1 <sup>1</sup>

**Comments:** Dear friends, we have come to the final resting place of our loved one here in God's acre. We have come to lay in the kindly bosom of mother earth all that is mortal of the one we loved. The ground, from which the elements of (his/her) body was taken, will now receive the physical remains of the one we place in her keeping. Here will be recorded (his/her) name, and (his/her) years.

As we have come today, so may we come again from time to time, bearing tributes of beauty and fragrance to be placed here in (his/her) memory. The wound which we call (his/her) grave in the bosom of the earth will shortly be healed. Over it the green grass will grow. Here soft summer winds will blow. Here birds will sing their sweet songs of remembrance. And even though the clouds will rain tears of lamentation, the sun will shine brightly once again, greeting this spot with the first rays of the morning, and lingering long to gild it with the light of the departing day. When the cold is on the land, winter will spread over the last resting place a covering of white. But returning spring will call forth the green grass as the harbinger of hope renewed when death is past.

While here the body is placed at rest, the soul returns to God, who gave it. In the name of the One who said, "I am the resurrection and the life; because I live you shall live also," I bid you not to sorrow as those who have no hope. Christ has brought life and immortality to our world. So we comfort each other with these words.

**Prayer:** Almighty God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of our lives, we have no hope except in you with whom is hidden the secret of death and life. We commit to your keeping our loved one who has passed beyond our sight. Feed (him/her) in green pastures. Lead (him/her) by still waters. Fold (him/her) into your love and care. And when the night of death is past, bring us to meet (him/her) and all our loved ones again in heaven's glorious morning, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

And now may God's Spirit bless you who remain, and keep you. May God's Spirit shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God's Spirit smile upon you and give you peace. Amen.

### Service 2 <sup>2</sup>

**Opening Comments:** As we gather here with all sorts of feelings milling around inside of us, with all sorts of questions running through our minds, I would like to read some verses from I Corinthians 15.

"But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?' How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted by Darrell Fast, pastor of the Leamington (ON) United Mennonite Church, from a committal service written by G.T. Soldner, Bluffton, Ohio.

<sup>2</sup> By Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen, pastor of the West Abbotsford (BC) Mennonite Church, and former pastor of the River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg.

that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”

As we commit the natural body that housed \_\_\_\_\_’s spirit to the earth, we are reminded that this is not the end. In this passage Paul compares it rather to a seed that is sown in the earth, a seed that must die in order to come to life. And so we scatter these wildflower seeds as a tangible symbol of God’s promise that out of death, new life will come.

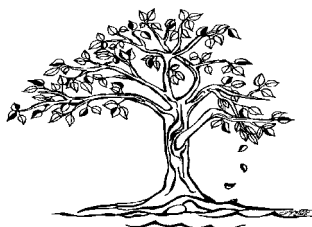
This passage reminds us that this perishable body that is sown in weakness will one day be raised in power, imperishable. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

**Prayer:** Our loving and eternal God, the One who knows our heart and from whom no secret is hidden. We come before You with all the sorrow and pain that is in our hearts today. For we have loved \_\_\_\_\_ and we will miss her/him. We bring our grief, our sense of loss before you. We also come before you with a sense of hope and expectation. For you have said that the death of this physical body is not the end. For you will clothe the perishable with the imperishable, the mortal with the immortal and death will be swallowed up in victory. It is this hope that sustains us, our God. It is this hope that we celebrate even as we grieve. It is with this confidence that we commit \_\_\_\_\_ to Your loving care. We pray for a continuing experience of Your sustaining love and grace in the lives of those who remain. Amen.

**Releasing of balloons:** As we place the seed of \_\_\_\_\_’s physical body into the ground -- the physical body that housed \_\_\_\_\_’s spirit -- we also want to find a tangible symbol to express the continued life of her/his spirit in the presence of the God she/he loved and served. In a moment, we will release several balloons to symbolize this release. As the balloons drift upwards we can envision what the book of Revelation promises: “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.”

### 3. The Gathering in the Fellowship Hall

The fellowship meal after the services in church and at the cemetery provides an opportunity to meet in a more informal manner with the family of the deceased, to surround them with love within the context of fellowship and food. This experience helps in the gradual reentry of the bereaved into "normal" life. This time together is given to sharing and reflection with the family regarding the one who has died. It is therefore appropriate to share anecdotes, stories or associations from the life of the deceased. This sharing should not be misconstrued as an opportunity to glorify or praise the deceased, but to lift out those qualities and experiences that will enhance our memory of the deceased, an important function in the grieving process. Some communities also like to spend some time singing, thus bonding the community together in a fellowship of caring.



### ***III***

---

## ***Special Situations and Needs***

### **The Funeral for a Child**

The death of a child or young person is particularly hard for parents, grandparents and the child's siblings and close friends. Most of the order of service and other aspects of the funeral may be the same as for an older person, but special acknowledgements of the child or young person should be considered. The involvement of children in some aspects of the service may be appropriate (see the section on "Involving Children" on page 10).

Some churches and schools have had ceremonies where they had the child's friends and classmates release balloons in memory of the deceased. Poems and artwork written and created by children from the community or school can be read and displayed.



### ***In Good Hands: A Letter to Stephanie Rose***

(A pastor's reflections at the funeral for a child with infirmities)

**By Benno Klassen**

Pastor of the Eigenheim (SK) Mennonite Church..

*He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads them that have young.* (Isaiah 40:11)

*I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.* (Mark 10:15)

Today the love of God attends us in the spirit of Christ. Jesus understands suffering and sorrow. It does not take the heartache away but it provides the source of strength to deal with it. Stephanie sets an example in innocence and purity. Her brief life and death can be instrumental in leading us. She invites us to have things right with God.

Let me share further meditational thoughts in the form of a letter.

Stephanie Rose, I remember the day you were born and my routine pastoral visit to see you and your mother. You were a very beautiful baby. I noticed you were a little jaundiced, but really very pretty. Your mother mentioned that you were a little poky when it came to eating, and it seemed that you didn't cry with a great deal of energy.

It took us all some time to accept the frailties of your existence. Somehow we didn't think it was really so. Stephanie, it is hard to admit how slow we can be, but God was ahead of the situation and had chosen parents particularly for you. There is a poem that is written to describe these circumstances. Let me share it.

*A meeting was held quite far from Earth.  
"It's time again for another birth,"  
Said the angels to the Lord above.  
"This special child will need much love;  
Her progress may seem very slow,  
Accomplishments she may not show,  
And she'll require extra care  
From folks she meets way down there.  
She may not run or laugh or play;  
Her thoughts may seem quite far away;  
In many ways she won't adapt;  
And she'll be known as handicapped.  
So let's be careful where she's sent  
We want her life to be content.  
Please, Lord, find parents who  
Will do a special job for you.  
They will not realize right away  
The leading role they'll be asked to play;  
But with this child sent from above  
Comes stronger faith and richer love;  
And soon they'll know the privilege given  
In caring for this gift from Heaven.  
Their precious charge, so meek and mild,  
Is Heaven's very special child."*

And so you came. For your dedication your Mom had you looking great! She has the gift of showing extra love and care. It was very touching to see.

Yes, you taught us many things, first about sensitivities and about how fragile life can be, and that a lot of care and love enters in to make the difference between being and not being able to be. Yet with the many limitations surrounding your existence you taught us about courage -- courage against all odds. When we struggled with decisions regarding medication and life supports, you just carried on.

Whenever you rallied, you came back to church. You put many able-bodied people to shame with your attendance. And when you got a little bigger, I could sometimes hear you from the pulpit -- it was part of your struggle for survival -- it never bothered me. Dad and Mom would take you out, but it was really okay.

You see others make different noises in church too, and for less important reasons. I want to thank you for the many times you came. After the service I would sometimes hold your little hand. I felt clumsy and inadequate, but you would smile. That was so natural for you.

How I pray that folks who have so many abilities would force themselves to smile more often and make it an important part of communication. It can be most helpful.

You never were able to tell me what you got for Christmas. The other children gathered with a lot of enthusiasm, eager to take a turn at the microphone. Now you are free of all the restrictions, and I believe you celebrate beyond our human comprehension.



While I'm getting choked-up to get some of this said, you're probably skipping through heaven's gardens and singing. And with your family's music ability and your heavenly body you're probably right on pitch, humming in harmony with the angel chorus, while we here are still thinking of you as a frail three-year-old.

I'm also thankful, as your pastor, for the brevity of your life for some reasons. You were spared some scrapes and falls, lying about sneaking cookies, fighting, and the difficulties of adolescence. You were spared the temptations of drugs, alcohol, addictions, the negative influence of TV viewing and other stuff that teenagers get caught in.

And so, since all life is in God's hands and He has received your life unto Himself again, I am thankful that you shared it with us briefly.

I will remember you often! I will remember you kindly and fondly. You touched my heart.

We will praise God with your parents for all the kindness, medical attention and care given to you. We never know when we will need it.

As I comfort your parents, we will seek the confidence of the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living --- trying to be strong and taking heart, knowing we will meet again. And of course Andrea will do her best to keep your parents busy.

Stephanie Rose, you are in good hands. You are now fully okay. -- With my love, Pastor Benno

Stephanie Rose Driedger, daughter of Denise and Frank Driedger, was born in Rosthern, SK, on August 24, 1987, and she died on January 6, 1991, at the age of three years, four months, and twelve days. She was hospitalized many times during her brief life because of seizures. After her death, the parents said, "Though we feel emptiness in our little family, we rejoice that we have the hope in Jesus Christ that we will be reunited with Stephanie Rose some day."



## Stillbirths and Miscarriages

The pain and trauma connected with stillbirths and miscarriages are sometimes overlooked by the extended family and the church community.

Jessie Kehler, Winnipeg, a chaplain who led one of the workshops at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses on funerals, offered the following suggestions to pastors and other friends from the church as they seek to walk with parents who have experienced a miscarriage or a stillbirth:

- ❖ Be present to them as they share their deep pain;
- ❖ Listen to the hopes and dreams they had for their unborn baby;
- ❖ Allow them time to grieve their loss;
- ❖ Give the fetus a name (offering a prayer for the fetus and releasing it into God's care can help begin closure);
- ❖ Visit the couple to keep in touch;
- ❖ Send a card or a note validating their loss;
- ❖ Remember them on the anniversary;
- ❖ Arrange a memorial service to validate the conception which led to the miscarriage;
- ❖ Give a symbol to the couple to acknowledge the loss.

Sometimes requests are made for a private service for an aborted fetus. Here are several responses pastors may wish to consider when such a request comes to them:

- ❖ Give opportunity for the person to share her story;
- ❖ Give opportunity for confession to be voiced to God and the fetus;

- ❖ Name the fetus;
- ❖ Write a letter to the aborted fetus;
- ❖ Read scripture and pray (offer a prayer of absolution);
- ❖ Free the spirit of the fetus to be received into the hands of God;
- ❖ Light a candle to help create an atmosphere of worship.



## ***And a Little Child Shall Lead Them***

(A meditation at the memorial service for a stillborn)

**By Walter Franz**

An administrative staff member of the Ministries Commission of Mennonite Church Canada and former pastor

**Text: Isaiah 6:11**

It is not uncommon for children to be heard arguing with each other: "My dad is stronger than your dad; My dad is the strongest man in the whole world."

The scriptures have an interesting view of power. At one point in the history of ancient Israel a virtually unarmed shepherd boy overcomes a fully armed military giant, a man of war. At another time, Israel's army is gradually reduced (under divine instruction) to a fighting core of a mere 300 men empowered to fight an enemy whose strength could not be numbered.

Seven to eight hundred years before Christ, Ahaz, the King of Israel, was threatened by an invasion of nations who had formed an alliance against Israel. "The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind." (Isaiah 7:2). Into this perilous situation a prophet by the name of Isaiah is sent with a word of divine assurance and guidance along with a sign of support and deliverance.

The sign from God in this time of peril would be the birth of a child called "Immanuel," meaning "God is with us" -- God is present. *A Child Shall Lead Them*. The strength of a little child, according to the prophet, will be able to stymie the forces and powers (symbolized by wild animals of prey) that threaten human welfare.

When all the powers and imaginations of the most powerful people fail, a child created by God will be able to lead them into the presence and power of God.

This theme is picked up much later (in New Testament times), when it is announced that a child (conceived by God) will be born as a sign of hope, of God's salvation. A mere child will be recognized as "Immanuel" -- "God is with us." He will be named "Jesus" (a form of Joshua), and he will save his people from bondage, trouble and sorrow, as well as their sins.

We have just celebrated Christmas, the coming of this child who took the form of a servant instead of a king, who was a healer rather than a warrior. His strength was love and peace, rather than force. *And a Little Child Shall Lead Them*. This child became Jesus of Nazareth, who taught that a child is a sign of God's rule, God's presence, God's way of coming into the world to claim the world as God's domain. "And he took the world into his arms and blessed them." (Mark 10:16) *And a Little Child Shall Lead Them*.

Sylvia and Paul, since Christmas Day -- the day we celebrated the birth of the Christ Child -- your hearts, like the hearts of others at numerous times in human history, have been "shaken as the trees of the forest (have been)shaken by the wind."

You have lost a child you dreamed about, hoped for, planned for and prayed for. You named this child Joshua Ethan. Joshua means "the Lord saves" and Ethan means "ever-flowing," ongoing, permanent. In the

biblical tradition of a child being a sign of the kingdom, this, too, is a *Child (that) Shall Lead Them*.

The wise Psalmist talks about a child being formed in the womb, and that at the time of conception all the days are recorded in God's book of life.

In Aboriginal wisdom, the count of human days (life) begins with conception, not with the emergence from the womb. According to that understanding, Joshua Ethan lived approximately eight months.

During his short life he surely changed your lives. He has been an "immanuel," a sign of God's presence, in your lives, bringing expectation and changes in your lives and in your life-style. So much so that you planned your activities around this child. Your thinking about family was changed, enlarged, filled with new dreams.

Sylvia, your body was changed (enlarged) by this child, as were your emotions and your spirit. *And a Little Child Shall Lead Them*.

This child was called into being by God, who alone creates life. God is life without beginning and without end. Joshua Ethan was conceived by the power of God and remains in the presence and care of God.

For our comfort we take solace in the understanding that children are a heritage, a gift from God. They belong to God and they are in God's presence.

Paul and Sylvia, for your further comfort, I encourage you to allow your children, Jared and Seth, to lead you in your time of grief: through their child-like faith; through their unqualified love and loyalty; by their presence as signs of the Kingdom of God; and by example as they face life moment by moment.

I invite you, and all of us, to be child-like in our faith. There is a time to bring our agonizing, unanswered questions into the presence of God, and there is room in our faith for the expression of doubts. However, in moments of utter grief, pain and loss, we may place our trust fully in God in the form of the prayer: "Take Thou my hand, O Father, and lead thou me." Amen

This meditation was preached at a memorial service in early January 2001 for Joshua Ethan, the stillborn child of Sylvia and Paul Friesen, Brandon, Manitoba.



## **Cross-Cultural Funerals**

The membership in our churches across Canada is covering an ever-widening range of cultural backgrounds. Community members who seek the assistance of a pastor when they have experienced a death in the family are best served when their cultural background is respected. Pastors, deacons and others in the congregation should become acquainted with persons in their church and community who can assist them in offering information and guidance which will enable them to offer spiritual care to a grieving family or individual of another culture. The grieving family should be asked what they need, what they usually do and what they are comfortable with. The expectations, traditions and practices of a culture that is strange to them should not be thrust upon them at such a time as this. This can be best achieved by the clergy maintaining their own integrity and at the same time honouring and respecting a different tradition.

In the section which follows comments and examples are provided concerning funerals for people of Hispanic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao and First Nations backgrounds. The variety of things which need to be taken into account with these groups point to some basic principles which can be applied to other cultures as well.

Mennonite Church Canada would appreciate receiving other examples of and guidelines for cross-cultural funerals. Please send these to Mennonite Church Canada so that this information can be included in future updates of this Resource Collection.

## **When the Deceased is Chinese or Vietnamese**

Luc Tran is pastor of a Vietnamese Mennonite Church and a Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg. He said the first step in getting ready for a funeral is to talk to the family. Let them decide what to do. Usually the “elder” in the family (an uncle or great uncle or another older relative) does the speaking. If the family is Christian, it is relatively easy to make plans, but if the person who died is not Christian and/or if his/her family is not Christian, it becomes more complicated.

Because everything in the Canadian culture is so different from their own experience, the family will sometimes ask the church to design the funeral service, choosing the place and even helping them to decide such things as whether or not to use cremation.

The funeral service includes prayer, scripture readings, hymns and a short sermon. If the persons who are attending the funeral are mostly non-Christian, the minister will use the occasion to introduce the Christian faith and to assure the family members and guests that there is life after death, using such texts as Hebrews 9:27. If the family and the persons in attendance are Christians, the sermon will focus more on providing comfort, using texts such as Revelation 14:13.

At the conclusion of the service everyone is invited to walk past the casket for a final viewing. Then the body is cremated. They may pick up some of the dust, thereby acknowledging that everyone will one day return to dust.

Sometimes Asian people, even if they are Christians, will include some traditional things at the funeral. For example, they may tie a piece of cloth onto their sleeve to indicate that they are in mourning. After the funeral service the family may give each of the persons in attendance an envelope with a token gift, such as a coin or a piece of sweetness.

Pastor Luc Tran pointed out that many of the practices related to funerals are in transition as the people from Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia seek to adjust to their new cultural setting here in Canada, but at the same time they seek to retain some of the things in their traditions which they hold dear.

## **When the Deceased is Laotian**

Sylang Kaneboodtra, pastor of the Lao Christian Fellowship, Abbotsford, BC, provided the following comments about funerals in a Laotian setting:

Our funeral services are very similar to services I have seen in other churches in BC. I have officiated at only four services in our church. Those families who adhere to the Buddhist tradition will cremate the body of a loved one. Our church members prefer a burial.

When I receive a call from the family of a deceased, I go to see them right away. That could be in a hospital or in their home. I spend time listening to them and praying with them. I also see to it that friends and relatives are notified.

After the death of a family member, the family will set up a special table in honor of the deceased. It will feature such items as a picture of the deceased, flowers, a Bible, a cross and a plate for donations.

I visit the home every evening between 6:30 and 7:30 up to the day of the funeral and three days after the funeral. We sing, pray and talk about the life of the deceased. After this time of reflection we continue to visit and fellowship. Friends come and go throughout the evening, and sometimes well into the night.

The funeral takes place in the church.

The period of mourning extends 100 days after the funeral. At the end of this time the family will invite their friends once more into their home. We spend time in sharing, worship and fellowship. This

is also the time when the family can bring closure to their loss and express their gratitude to friends for all the help the family has received.

The funeral service in church is very much like that in other local churches. We sing, read scripture, pray, read an obituary, spend time with the family and comfort them.

At the cemetery I lead the procession ahead of the coffin. As the coffin is placed over the grave, the relatives gather around the grave and lay flowers on the coffin. Some will throw soil on the coffin. The family and the pastor stay until shortly after the guests have left.

Later everyone is invited to a simple fellowship meal at the church or in a restaurant.

Our people, both Christians and non-Christians, are accustomed to practices which have been shaped by a Buddhist society. We are still trying to discern which practices we need to keep as part of that culture and which we need to abandon because they conflict with our Christian faith.

### **When the Deceased is Hispanic**

Rudy Baergen is pastor at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, which has a significant number of Hispanic persons in its membership. Rudy made the following comments about his congregation's experience with funerals for persons of Hispanic background.

We have not had many funerals for Hispanic people -- only two adults and one child. I don't know if one can generalize and make any categorical statements about Hispanic funerals in Canada. For many of them things are done very differently from their country of origin. It is customary for many in their country of origin to have an overnight vigil, and then to have the funeral the following day. Grieving is often expressed openly and dramatically, but not always. There is also a more matter-of-fact attitude about death. We have had an open-mike opportunity during the funeral service to allow people to express their condolences. That has been important. Whether individuals come from Roman Catholic or Evangelical (Protestant) background also makes a difference. Protestants of Pentecostal persuasion sometimes discourage grieving. The separation is only temporary, they say, and one should only rejoice. I have been amazed by the lack of grieving done by some. Those who are new Christians have little worship-related experience concerning funerals. I think perhaps the most basic and general comment would be that one needs to take extra care to be personally sensitive and not assume that the usual way of doing the funeral will meet the need.

Helmut Isaak, pastor of the First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver, a congregation which also has a sizeable number of Hispanic participants, provided these comments about overnight vigils: "Depending on the financial situation of the family, the overnight vigil is traditionally held at home with friends and family surrounding the dead person. Some people who can afford a funeral home have the vigil there. This vigil allows people to express their feelings and share memories of the deceased."

Helmut says that a good resource for Hispanic funerals is the *Manual Para Ministra*, by Leobardo Estrada Cuesta (published by the Baptist Publishing House).

### **When the Deceased is Aboriginal**

The information in this section was provided by Neill von Gunten, Riverton, MB, who has served with Mennonite Church Canada's Native Ministries program for many years.

In response to the question, "What guidance would you give to a pastor who is asked to lead a funeral for an aboriginal person?" Neill responded as follows:

If at all possible, make arrangements to spend time with the family before the funeral service -- getting to know them, listening to them share about the person and his/her illness or other cause of death, and finding out what they expect to be included in the funeral service. I use this time to find some clue on which to build my meditation, and a time to ask their help to make the service personal -- by writing a eulogy (even if I or someone else has to read it), picking the hymns, and even the Scripture readings, if they will.

Be flexible! I have gone to services and discovered that other people also want to have input into the service -- to sing, give additional eulogies, or even to do something "traditional" (for example, a Native person using sweet grass or an eagle feather in a ceremony before the casket is closed). Unless the family directs you not to give anyone this extra time, you need to allow others to contribute as well. After I close my part of the service, I always stand back awhile and wait for anything else to take place before I leave the room. That way I am not leaving anyone out. I also try to keep a line of communication open with at least one family member right at the service so that they can make me aware of anything or anyone I am missing.

My meditations, Scripture readings and prayers are designed to provide a Christian atmosphere of love, caring and encouragement. I try to find some clue from the person's life that I can use as a theme. For example:

1. *Christ is our lighthouse* (for the funeral of a former lighthouse keeper)
2. *Jesus is our anchor* (for a commercial fisherman)
3. *Jesus is our guide* (for a guide at a fishing lodge)
4. Lakes, rivers, the bush and the birds and animals -- in fact, all of nature -- are always good themes to build on.

At a funeral in fall recently, when the eagles were nested along the lake shore and by the road in the Matheson Island and Pine Dock area, the eagles were a very fitting theme on which to build the meditation (and Isaiah 40:25-31 fit perfectly as a text). I mentioned the surge of strength and courage I had received while I was driving up to Matheson Island for the funeral service just seeing hundreds of eagles flying around the area and sitting in the trees preparing to fly south. Many of the family members came from elsewhere for the funeral, and I found it interesting how many of them were parked along the roadside watching the eagles when we were driving home later in the day. My illustration obviously said something meaningful to them, too.

Story-telling is a big part of Aboriginal life, and I use several stories in my messages to help my point to be understood, to give credence to what I am saying and to help bring both comfort and healing to the brokenness and pain which the people are feeling.

Unfortunately many Aboriginal deaths are the result of an unhealthy lifestyle or of being victims of some form of violence. Even so, judgment has no place at the funeral service, even if one thinks the circumstances would warrant it. Rather, we are to be bearers of Christ's hope and courage for those surviving and grieving. When the people feel free to share with you, they will share their hurts and pain. Until then, you are only a guest on their turf.

I am always on the look-out for stories, readings, etc that might be applicable for messages. The paraphrase of Psalm 23 below was written by an Aboriginal elder, formerly from Fisher River First Nations and now of Winnipeg. I have found it to be very meaningful and appropriate.

***Psalm 23*** (a paraphrase)

*The Lord is my guide; so all my needs are met.*

*He locates the best camp sites.*

*He leads me across wide waters when they lie quiet and still.*

*He refreshes my very soul.  
He leads me along the right trails which He has chosen.  
Even though I must travel down Lake Winnipeg and face fierce storms,  
I will fear no danger that confronts me,  
For You are with me.  
Your songs and good medicines comfort me and heal me.  
Food is prepared for me even when I am surrounded by those who hate me.  
Your blessings rest upon my head.  
My cup is so full it runs over.*

-- by Stan McKay, Sr.

### **Role of the pastor at an aboriginal funeral:**

1. Sit and listen to the family tell what has happened (this is especially important when there has been a sudden death);
2. Offer comfort;
3. Reassure them of God's love for them and for the deceased;
4. Pray with them;
5. Help the family plan the funeral service so it will reflect the life of the person who has died;
6. Be available as much as possible whenever needed in the days before the funeral;
7. Encourage the family to write the eulogy, even if none of them feel prepared to read it aloud -- or have a friend do it (encourage them to have the eulogy reflect the person, including the use of humorous occasions and remembrances; this can be part of their healing process).

Most First Nations communities have wakes the two or three nights before the funeral service. The open casket is there, and the people spend hours singing hymns, reading Scripture and sharing. These wakes take place in the home of a family member or in the community hall. The pastor is expected to be there and to share each night.

I focus primarily on being with the family and the community during their time of loss because funerals are generally community events that most people try to attend. In small communities there is a lot of interrelatedness and almost everyone is hurting in some way.

Cremation is occurring more frequently, especially because it is more practical for winter funerals. In spring or summer the family gathers again for the burial of the ashes, and the pastor leads a short service at the grave-side. First Nations communities, however, usually have body burials, even in winter.

### **When the Deceased has Committed Suicide**

The church has not always dealt well with families when there has been a suicide. The refusal to have a funeral/memorial service in the church because the deceased committed suicide, or the refusal to grant burial in the cemetery, expresses God-like judgment which is beyond what humans are called to give. This is not the time for the church to add more pain to the major trauma which a family and the victim's friends are already experiencing because of the untimely death of a loved one.

Depression, low self-esteem, serious loss or failure, relational crises, loneliness, financial crises, legal problems, substance abuse, serious health concerns or other problems could be reasons that precipitated the suicide. These are all indicators of the need for pastoral and other care.

When a suicide happens the reasons may be complex, and they may never be fully known. This calls for the church and pastoral caregivers to minister with great sensitivity and love to the family. A listening ear to guide the family through the confusion and loss is needed. This calls for words from Scripture that provide reassurance of God's love, presence and acceptance.

## **Some Facts About the Causes and Frequency of Suicides**

*From ThinkQuest*

Every year, thousands of youth die in North America, not from cancer or car accidents, but by their own hand, they make the choice that they want to die, and they take their own life. Statistics show that suicide is the third leading cause of death among those 15-25 years of age, and it is the sixth leading cause of death among those 5-14 years of age. Five-year-old children, killing themselves! But it's the truth. Statistics show that more than 13 of every 100,000 teenagers took their life in 1990, and that number is rising every year. Many think that these are isolated incidents, but they aren't. It is estimated that 500,000 teenagers try to kill themselves every year, and about 5,000 succeed. That's right up there with cancer and homicide.

When somebody you know commits suicide, it can be one of the hardest things to deal with. Not only are you trying to cope with the loss of a friend, but you are also trying to cope with the fact that it was their choice. Also, very few people leave letters, explaining the reasons for their actions, so chances are you are asking the worst question of all. Why?

One of the things you have to know is that you are not alone, there are probably other people who are dealing with the loss as well. The best thing you can do for yourself, and other friends, is to talk about it. Talking is probably the best therapy, especially if it is with someone who is going through the same thing. If you are having trouble coping, you should find someone to talk to, if you don't know anyone who would understand, you may have to talk to a professional, a school counselor, or you can call one of the crisis lines, most of these are toll free calls, and totally confidential.

Just remember though, there are other people out there who are going through the exact same thing as you. You are not alone. So, talk to someone. The worst thing you could do is keep it all bottled up. So please, if you find yourself feeling suicidal, talk to someone, don't hesitate, they will understand, and if they don't, talk to someone else.

The suicide rate is substantially higher among First Nations teens, and for many reasons. For starters, any teenager is going through an identity crisis, they are trying to find out just who they really are. That alone puts a lot of pressure on, but on top of it, they have to live in a world where racism is on the rise, and they have to struggle to fit in.

Drug and alcohol abuse is also on the rise, affecting up to 70 percent of the First Nations population, related fatalities is three times higher among First Nations than the rest of the population. This increases the crime rate, lowers the educational achievement, and causes social problems, unemployment, and poverty. Situations like this would only make a teenager already dealing with problems of his/her own to try and 'find a way out'.

Young males are also more at risk for killing themselves, the ratio of young men to young women committing suicide is 4 to 1. Young women do however 'attempt' suicide four times more often than young men.



## Suggestions for Survivors of Suicides <sup>1</sup>

By Iris M. Bolton

1. Know you can survive. You may not think so, but you can.
2. Struggle with "why" it happened until you no longer need to know "why" or until you are satisfied with partial answers.
3. Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but all your feelings are normal.
4. Anger, guilt, confusion, forgetfulness are common responses. You are not crazy, you are in mourning.
5. Be aware you may feel appropriate anger at the person, at the world, at God, at yourself. It's okay to express it.
6. You may feel guilty for what you think you did or did not do. Guilt can turn into regret, through forgiveness.
7. Having suicidal thoughts is common. It does not mean that you will act on those thoughts.
8. Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
9. Find a good listener with whom to share. Call someone if you need to talk.
10. Don't be afraid to cry. Tears are healing.
11. Give yourself time to heal.
12. Remember, the choice was not yours. No one is the sole influence in another's life.
13. Expect setbacks. If emotions return like a tidal wave, you may only be experiencing a remnant of grief, an unfinished piece.
14. Try to put off major decisions.
15. Give yourself permission to get professional help.
16. Be aware of the pain of your family and friends.
17. Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
18. Set your own limits and learn to say no.
19. Steer clear of people who want to tell you what or how to feel.
20. Know that there are support groups that can be helpful, such as Compassionate Friends or Survivors of Suicide groups. If not, ask a professional to start one.
21. Call on your personal faith to help you through.
22. It is common to experience physical reactions to your grief, e.g., headaches, loss of appetite, inability to sleep.
23. The willingness to laugh with others and at yourself is healing.
24. Wear out your questions, anger, guilt, or other feelings until you can let them go. Letting go doesn't mean forgetting.
25. Know that you will never be the same again, but you can survive and even go beyond just surviving.

---

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted by permission from *Suicide and its Aftermath* (Dunne, McIntosh, Dunne-Maxim, Norton and Co., 1987)



***Meditation for Bob,  
“A Rambling Man”***

**By Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen**

Pastor of the West Abbotsford (BC) Mennonite Church; and former pastor  
of the River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg.

Tommy Hunter sings, "I'm a rambling man, following the breeze, travelling here and travelling there, gathering memories." Bob loved watching Tommy Hunter, and he loved this song. Perhaps because in many ways he too was a rambling man. He was a traveller, a restless wanderer never content to be in one place too long. So, whether it was coaching basketball, delivering Meals on Wheels, or helping out in last spring's flood relief efforts, Bob kept on moving.

Bob was at his best when he was in motion. Some of his happiest times were the annual summer trips he and DeeJay used to take. Out on the open road, going where he had never gone before, Bob seemed to find a degree of peace that at so many other times alluded him. He and DeeJay travelled together--the West Coast, the Maritimes, Europe and New York--all the while peppering each other with trivia questions about history and other things; each attempting to outdo the other. Those days on the open road together created the kind of memories that continue to sustain even now. For Bob was at his best when he was travelling--when he was in motion. Bob knew intuitively that it was true that we are always "on the road."

Life's journey is varied. A combination of personality, experiences and faith give each of our journeys unique characteristics. But we also have much in common as we travel through life. Each of us to a varying degree experiences portions of the journey where the breezes blow softly, the way is smooth and we travel surrounded by good company. Deep contentment, peace of heart, and gratitude to God characterize our walk. But it is also true that in each of our journeys we also encounter times when we falter as wild winds buffet us, as darkness obscures our path and we feel abandoned and alone. Our faltering steps are marked by pain, heartache and tears. No longer does the road rise before us, luring us onward, but it looms up before us daring us to defy its darkness. We stall on the road disoriented, having lost our inner road map. When we look at the road, we no longer have a sense of direction. We feel that we are going nowhere. Sometimes we even feel it is useless to continue on the journey because the road before us is so beaten up and broken apart.

It is a fearsome thing to experience this sort of dark disorientation on our journey. For some of us this part of the journey is relatively short-lived and we resolutely put it behind us. For others of us it becomes a space that we fear we will never be able to journey through. When we think of the Psalmist David, his psalms of assurance, joy and praise to God often come to mind. But those joyful psalms only characterized part of his journey. Psalm 31 gives us a glimpse into a stretch of David's life that was characterized by doubt and despair, rather than by expressions of faith and joy. He writes:

*Be kind to me, Yahweh God--I'm in deep, deep trouble again. I've cried my eyes out; I feel hollow inside. My life leaks away, groan by groan; my years fade out in sighs. My troubles have worn me out, turned my bones to powder. To my enemies I'm a monster; I'm ridiculed by the neighbours. My friends are horrified; they cross the street to avoid me. They want to blot me from memory, forget me like a corpse in a grave, discard me like a broken dish in the trash.*

It is not easy for some of us to read words in the Bible that are so raw, so real. We would rather turn our eyes away, avert our faces from darkness that is so deep, from pain that is so unabashed. These are the things we might feel but never speak of. This is not the stuff of prayer to a God who calls us to faith and victory. And yet David in an act of bold faith insists that it is right and good for us to bring even these experiences of disorientation and chaos before God. Nothing is out of bounds, nothing is precluded or inappropriate because his faith is in a God who is present in, participating in, and attentive to the darkness, weakness and displacement of life. A God who does not abandon us to the dark but walks through it with us.

For those of us who knew and loved Bob, we are currently journeying through a time of darkness and disorientation. The path before us right now is shadowed and unfamiliar. Its smooth predictability has been interrupted by unexpected curves and chasms. But we are not alone as we gingerly, painfully pick our way along the rubble-strewn path before us. In the midst of the isolation and disorientation of the moment, we feel the reassuring touch of a hand on our shoulder. We hear a voice gently assuring us that we will be able to continue the journey. He says to us in the words of Isaiah:

*I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.*

God says, "I will walk with you. In the chaos and disorientation of this moment, you are invited to allow my presence to orient you to a centre of love, a centre of faithfulness that journeys with you. For I will not leave you alone on this journey. I will never forsake you in the night. Although right now this may feel like the end, it is not. For we will continue to travel together, you and I, to that final destination where my presence that now at times seems hidden will be revealed in all its glory and completeness. I will remain with you until we reach our final destination where death will be overpowered by life, darkness will be blinded by light and despair will be obliterated by hope. For the day will come when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. You will dwell with me and I will dwell with you. You will be mine and I will be yours. And on that day, I will wipe every tear from your eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order will have passed away. Everything will become new."

In the meanwhile we take a moment to look around at the friends and family who are committed to continuing the journey with us. We consider the loving faithfulness of the God who walks with us and we find the courage to press on. We travel on through the night, along a path that has its bumps and unexpected corners, but whether we turn to the left or the right we hear a voice beside us saying: "In the darkness I will lead you, in the unfamiliar, I will guide you. I will give you enough light to see the next step. I will orient you inwardly even as you travel through terrain that disorients you outwardly. These are the things I will do. I will not forsake you." Let us continue to journey together from this day.

The above meditation was presented in November 1996 at a memorial service for a middle-aged suicide victim.



## **When the Deceased Was Not a Believer**

Sometimes a pastor is called upon to serve at the funeral of a person who has not left a clear testimony of faith in Christ, or who has made it clear that (s)he was not a Christian. Some of the considerations for such ministry include:

- ❖ Funerals are for the living and are opportunities to convey the love and compassion of Christ to people even if the deceased was not a believer.
- ❖ Perhaps members of the family are believers and connected with the church, so they need the embrace of the church community and the consolation of Scripture in their loss.
- ❖ It is not the pastor's responsibility to pass judgment on anyone. God is the one who knows the hearts and intentions of people; God is the one who makes the ultimate judgement. The pastor can with integrity entrust the person into the loving and merciful care of God.
- ❖ It is hard to speak of hope at a grave-side service if the deceased did not affirm that hope. Yet here, too, the spirit of the person can be entrusted to God without making claims that seem incongruent with the person's testimony.



## ***LIFE'S JOURNEY***

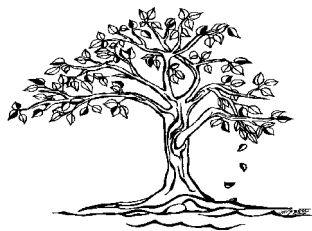
**By Anne Warkentin**

Chaplain in Extended Care at the Surrey (BC) Memorial Hospital and  
a member of the Cedar Hills Mennonite Church.

Life's journey has an unknown length and end beyond the far horizon,  
Out of view or suddenly around the nearest corner, eternal sunrise one day welcomes you.

The ones who go before us clear the way, to wait forever with warm embrace.  
They reach into our thoughts from day to day with memories that time cannot erase.

Although we cannot take them by the hand, or share the dear companionship and talk,  
we just go on with life as planned, and sense their presence in our daily walk.  
We know that someday we shall reunite in everlasting joy and love and light.



## *IV*

---

### *Other Death and Dying Issues In Our Culture*

#### **Should it be a Memorial Service or a Funeral?**

Memorial services, where the body has already been buried or cremated, or where it is the family's choice not to have the body at the service, are becoming more common. A memorial service can take place the same day as the burial, with the burial being a smaller more private event. This gives the family more privacy at the grave side, and the family members can then return to the church to receive the support of the congregation.

#### **What About the Casket?**

Purchasing a casket from the funeral home can be expensive. Some congregations have made arrangements to have a group within their church construct caskets for members and their immediate families if they desire. First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio, for example, has a group of volunteers within the congregation who construct and line caskets for use by their members. They request a \$350 donation for each casket. This money is put into a fund which covers the cost of the materials used for the construction of the caskets. **(Appendix 1 [pages 61-62] gives directions for building a casket.)**

#### **Is Cremation an Option?**

Choosing to dispose of bodily remains by cremation is becoming increasingly common in Canada. In the year 2000 cremation was used in 45% of all deaths in this country. The percentages, by region, ranged from approximately 25% in the Maritimes to 75% in BC. In between were Quebec 35%, Saskatchewan 43%, Ontario 44%, Manitoba 48% and Alberta 56%.

Is the use of cremation to be encouraged, discouraged, embraced or condemned? Here are some factors that should be considered:

1. Cremation does not affect God's ability to provide a resurrection body to the person. The resurrection body will be new. Whether from ashes or from dust, resurrection is God's miracle.
2. Reasons for or against cremation tend to be culturally or emotionally based. For many cultures, cremation is the normal and natural way of disposal. In cross-cultural ministries, it is important to recognize the patterns that are familiar and used.
3. For those who are used to burial rather than cremation, the choice for burial seems to represent greater respect for the body, is consistent with biblical examples, and seems less violent.

4. Yet, practical considerations enter in as well.
  - ❖ Cost
  - ❖ Land availability
  - ❖ Request or preference of the deceased
  - ❖ The transfer of the remains from one community to another
5. If a family has decided not to have a viewing of the deceased person at the funeral, it is possible to have a private viewing prior to the cremation. For this private viewing the body of the deceased need not be embalmed.
6. In most or all provinces it is illegal to scatter the ashes on public property. Although these laws are not strictly enforced and there have been instances where families have had private ceremonies to scatter the ashes of a loved one in public areas, persons should be made aware of the legalities concerning the disposal of the ashes in this way.
7. One of the advantages of having the ashes in an urn is that they can be transferred quite readily to another community for interment. Even if the ashes are buried close to where the memorial service took place, the family can decide to wait with the burial until a later date, giving them the opportunity to have a grave-side service apart from the memorial service, which can be helpful in the grieving process.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Cremation<sup>1</sup>**

Here are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about cremation.

Keep in mind that laws and procedures vary from province to province and from provider to provider.

### **What is Cremation?**

To begin with, it is probably easier to describe what cremation isn't. Cremation is not final disposition of the remains, nor is it a type of funeral service. Rather, it is a process of reducing the human body to bone fragments using high heat and flame.

### **Is a Casket Needed For Cremation?**

No, a casket is not required for cremation. All that is usually required by most provinces and states is an alternative container constructed of wood or cardboard, which is cremated with the body.

### **Is Embalming Required Prior to Cremation?**

Absolutely not and it is against the law for a funeral home to tell you otherwise.

### **Can the Body Be Viewed Without Embalming?**

Yes, most cremation providers allow immediate family members to briefly view the deceased prior to cremation.

### **Can the Family Witness the Cremation?**

Yes, in many cases, cremation providers will allow family members to be present when the body is placed into the cremation chamber. In fact, some religious groups include this as part of their funeral custom.

---

<sup>1</sup> This information has been taken from the Internet Cremation Society's Web Site

### **Is Cremation Accepted by All Religions?**

Today most religions allow cremation except for Orthodox Jewish, Islamic, Eastern Orthodox and a few conservative Christian denominations. The Catholic Church accepts cremation as long as it is not chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teachings. Some people believe that cremation is against the teachings of the Bible, but according to one famous Bible scholar, "What occurs to the body after death has no bearing on the soul's resurrection. The body that rises is not made of the same substances as the one that was buried, or cremated, but is immortal and incorruptible."

### **Can an Urn Be Brought into Church?**

Nearly all Protestant churches allow for the urn to be present during the memorial service. Most Catholic churches also allow the cremated remains to be present during the Memorial Mass. In fact, if the family is planning on a memorial service, we encourage the cremated remains be present as it provides a focal point for the service.

### **What Can Be Done with the Cremated Remains?**

There are many options and laws vary state to state and province to province. Remains can be buried in a cemetery lot or cremation garden, inurned in a columbarium, kept at home, or scattered.

### **Do People Choose Cremation Only to Save Money?**

While some people select cremation for economy, many choose this option for other reasons. The simplicity and dignity of cremation, environmental concerns, and the flexibility cremation affords in ceremony planning and final disposition all add to its increasing popularity.

### **Don't Most Funeral Homes Have a Crematory?**

Most funeral homes subcontract this delicate procedure out to a third party provider in another town where the funeral home has little or no control over the crematory's operating procedures. Often, the family incurs additional transportation expenses and needless delay. By contrast, many cremation societies operate their own cremation facility.

### **How Can I Be Sure I Receive the Correct Remains?**

All reputable cremation providers have developed rigorous sets of operating policies and procedures in order to maximize the level of service and minimize the potential for human error. If you have questions, ask the cremation providers what procedures they use.

### **How Long Does the Actual Cremation Take?**

It depends on the weight of the individual. For an average-size adult, cremation takes from two to three hours at normal operating temperature between 1,500 degrees F to 2,000 degrees F.

### **What Happens after the Cremation Is Complete?**

All organic bone fragments, which are very brittle, as well as non-consumed metal items are "swept" into the back of the cremation chamber and into a stainless steel cooling pan. All non-consumed items, like metal from clothing, hip joints, and bridge work, are separated from the cremated remains. This separation is accomplished through visual inspection as well as using a strong magnet for smaller and minute metallic objects. Items such as dental gold and silver are non-recoverable and are commingled in with the cremated remains. Remaining bone fragments are then processed in a machine to a consistent size and placed into a temporary or permanent urn, selected by the family.

**Can Two Cremations Be Performed at Once?**

Never. Not only is it illegal to do so, most modern cremation chambers are not of sufficient size to accommodate more than one adult. Thus it would be a practical impossibility to conduct multiple cremations simultaneously.

**What Do The Cremated Remains Look Like?**

Cremated remains resemble coarse sand and are whitish to light grey in color. The remains of an average size adult usually weigh from four to six pounds.

**Are All the Cremated Remains Returned?**

With the exception of minute and microscopic particles, which are impossible to remove from the cremation chamber and processing machine, all of the cremated remains are given back to the family.

**Do I Need an Urn?**

An urn is not required by law. However, an urn may be desired if there is to be a memorial service or the remains are to be interred in a cemetery. If an urn is not purchased through us, or provided by the family, the cremated remains will be returned in a temporary plastic container.

The servant of a wealthy man was making purchases in the marketplace when he ran into Death. That's right, Death. The fellow with the black hood that covers his skull-like face, and who carries that antique farm implement.

The servant was surprised to see Death out in public, but he was even more surprised when Death apparently made threatening gestures towards him. The servant fled to the home of his master and requested that he be allowed to travel to Samarra. When the master asked why the servant said, "I encountered Death at the marketplace a few moments ago, and apparently he has come for me. If I leave now I can be in Samarra by nightfall. I will lie low for a few days and then return. Perhaps I can escape my fate."

The master gave his permission. So the servant finished his hurried packing and made his departure. Later that day the master made his way to the marketplace where he too found Death. "Death," the master said, "why did you threaten my servant so?" Death replied, "I did not threaten your servant; it was an expression of surprise. I wasn't expecting to see him here for I have an appointment with him in Samarra tonight."

Mark Vincent, *Untold Stories of Advent*, p. 39



## V

---

# *What Else Can A Congregation Do?*

### **Do Not Forget Those Who are Grieving**

For many people grief is not a short-term thing. The church's work is not finished when the funeral is over, or even when the first anniversary is past. The pastoral team, deacons and other caregivers and friends in the congregation should be encouraged to give sensitive attention to persons in their midst who are continuing to grieve the loss of a spouse, parent or child months and even years after the loved one's death.

Even the first anniversary of the death of a dear one, as is sometimes supposed, does not necessarily bring closure to the grief. As one of the participants noted in a workshop at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses, "In saying that anniversary services are helpful, it should be remembered that it is not only the first anniversary that is important. For some people commemorating anniversaries is important for many years."

### **Arrange Services of Remembering and Healing**

#### **Memorial Sunday** (also called Eternity Sunday or *Totensonntag*)

A growing number of churches are focussing their worship service on the last Sunday of the church year (the Sunday before the start of Advent) on remembering loved ones who have died. The sermon and other aspects of the service can center on this theme. Some congregations have candles set up in front of the sanctuary for this service. Family members and friends of people who have died during the past year are invited to come forward to light a candle, naming the person in whose honor the candle is being lit.

Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, devotes 5-10 minutes during its regular worship service on Memorial Sunday to the theme of remembering, and then it has a special service in the afternoon to which grieving family members and friends are invited. A letter of invitation goes to all the persons in the congregation who have lost a loved one in the past year.

Here's part of the letter of invitation prepared by Ruth Boehm, associate pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church, which was sent to all the households which had experienced a death in the foregoing year:

You are invited to attend and participate in a Memorial Service and a time of refreshments on Sunday, November 21, at 2:30 p.m. at Bethel Mennonite Church in the dining room.

The service will take place the last Sunday of the church year, Memorial Sunday. This will be a time to remember each person who has passed away during the past church year. The afternoon will begin with a time of worship, which will include prayers and singing. This will be followed by a time of eating and

remembering around tables. You are invited to bring refreshments to share. Bring a food or drink which reminds you of the person you are remembering at this time. You may also bring a photograph of the person you are remembering. You will have an opportunity to share a memory with a small group... If you are unable to attend, you are invited to send a short letter and/or poem in memory of your loved one, and we will read it at the service.

**Order of Service**  
**for Bethel Mennonite Church's Memorial Sunday Afternoon Service:**  
**A Time of Remembering**

Prelude

Call to Worship and Welcome

Hymn *When Peace Like a River*

Lighting candles of remembrance

Hymn *How Great Thou Art*

Prayer

Special music

Poetry

Scripture: Psalm 62:5-8; Romans 4:24-5:5

Hymn *In the Rifted Rock I'm Resting*

Litany of Thanks

It doesn't seem to get any better...

But it doesn't get any worse either

**For that, I am thankful.**

There are no more pictures to be taken...

But there are memories to cherish.

**For that, I am thankful.**

There is a chair missing at the table...

But the circle of family gathers close.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The days are shorter...

But the nights are softer.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The pain is still there...

But it lasts only moments.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The calendar still turns, the holidays still appear

And they still cost too much... But I am still here.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The room is still empty, the soul still aches...

But the heart remembers.

**For that, I am thankful.**

*(Continued on next page)*

The guests still come, the dishes pile up...  
But the dishwasher works.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The name is still missing, the words still unspoken...  
But the silence is shared.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The snow still falls, the sled still waits,  
And the spirit still wants to...

**For that, I am thankful.**

The stillness remains...  
But the sadness is smaller.

**For that, I am thankful.**

The moment is gone...  
But the love is forever.

**For that, I am thankful.**

Love was once (and still is)  
A part of my being...

**For that, I am thankful.**

I am living...

**For that, I am thankful.**

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful.

Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wondrous reason of all.

(from a Hospice publication)

Hymn *Great is Thy Faithfulness*

Announcements

Benediction - Jude 24,25

## **“Blue Christmas”**

Christmas is seen by most people as a time to be happy and to celebrate. For people who have experienced a recent loss this “forced” joviality may deepen their sorrow and sense of hopelessness and alienation. They feel “blue” – very blue.

Some congregations have a service each year on the longest night of the year (December 21) for people who have suffered losses during the past year. This includes not only deaths, but divorces, separations and other painful losses. It’s a way of remembering and providing support for those who are in the midst of bereavement. A “Blue Christmas” service provides an opportunity to offer hope in a very dark and difficult time – a time when they are expected to be happy too.

The following liturgy and prayer were used in a Blue Christmas service at the Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite Church:

## **A Liturgy of Remembering And the Lighting of Four Candles**

- One: This first candle we light to remember those whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices, the memory that binds them to us in this season.
- All: We praise God that we do not have to grieve as those without hope. We praise God for eternal life through Jesus Christ!
- One: This second candle we light to redeem the pain of loss: the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, the loss of health. We pause to gather up the pain of the past and offer it to God, asking that from God's hands we receive the gift of peace.
- All: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.
- One: This third candle we light is to remember ourselves this Christmas time. We pause and remember these past weeks and months: the disbelief, the anger, the down times, the poignancy of reminiscing, the prayers, hugs and handshakes of family, friends and all who stood with us in our pain. We give thanks for all of the support we have known.
- All: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.
- One: The fourth candle is to remember our faith and the gift of hope that the Christmas story offers to us. Emmanuel has come! God is with us. God understands! God calls us to come to him with our burdens! We remember that the God who shares our life promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.
- All: Let us remember Jesus Christ, the one who is the way, the truth and the life. Praise God for his coming!

### **Prayers of the People**

- One: In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask God for all the things we need; for ourselves as we participate in whatever way we can this Christmas. God hear our prayer. . . .
- All: And in your mercy answer.
- One: For our family and friends that they may continue to support us. God, hear our prayer. . . .
- All: And in your mercy answer.
- One: For the person we have loved that has died, for all the loss that we know, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer. . . .
- All: And in your mercy answer.
- One: For the peace proclaimed by the Christmas angels, to come throughout the whole world. God, hear our prayer. . . .
- All: And in your mercy answer.
- One: God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Christ who has taught us to pray together, saying:
- All: Our Father who art in heaven . . . .

## **Organize a Community-wide Memorial Service**

In towns or rural communities it might be appropriate to organize an annual community-wide memorial service. This will give opportunity to provide consolation to both church-goers and persons who may not be close to a church. It would also help to build bridges among the congregations in the community.

## **Educate the Congregation about Death and Dying**

### **Why and How?**

John Klassen, pastor of the Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, had a workshop on this topic at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College Special Courses. In response to the question, “Why is it so important to educate our congregations about death and dying?” he listed the following reasons:

- ❖ to live well, we need to know how to die well;
- ❖ death is an inevitable experience;
- ❖ dealing with death before we enter this process helps us to prepare ourselves and to know some options we face;
- ❖ as a Christian church we have a tremendous avenue for ministry here, within the church as well as within the larger community;
- ❖ we live in a culture where death is faced with significant denial; and
- ❖ in spite of their fear, anxiety and denial, people really want to know about death and dying.

John Klassen suggests the following structured teaching times where this topic could be addressed:

- ❖ a Sunday school elective (anywhere from 4 to 13 weeks);
- ❖ a series of public evening presentations;
- ❖ training sessions for deacons and other caregivers.

### **Workshops and Special Classes**

A growing number of congregations are offering workshops on themes related to death, dying and grief. Here are some examples:

East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, Ontario, had a sermon one Sunday morning on the theme, “Embracing the Reality of Death”; and that evening they invited people to come to a workshop to discuss the following topics: (a) funeral costs and related stewardship questions; (b) various traditions and rituals; and (c) changes which have been occurring, such as burial prior to the memorial service.

First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon recently had a series of four weekly workshops on the following topics: (a) loss, grief and growth; (b) growing in awareness of our loss; (c) increasing our sensitivity to others’ losses; and (d) learning to appreciate the dynamics of grieving.

## **Encourage Special Support Groups**

Some good resources are available to help with the process of establishing support groups. One excellent example is the booklet, “When Your Spouse Has Died: A Guide for the Bereaved.” It was prepared by several widows in First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, who lost their husbands within a ten-month period. Evelyn Rempel Petkau described the contents of this guide as follows in an article in the *Canadian Mennonite*:

(The booklet) provides concise information on funeral arrangements, settling the estate and getting personal and financial matters in order. It includes a section of comforting Bible verses, a bibliography on the topic of death and mourning, and a list of suggestions about dealing with loss. It also contains a living will, a check-list on getting financial matters in order, and a list of suggestions about dealing with loss.<sup>1</sup>

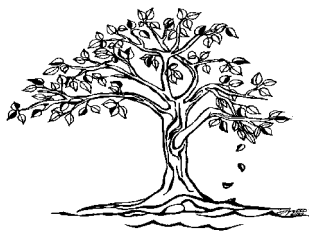
### **Consider Building a Columbarium**

A Columbarium is a site where urns containing the cremated ashes of dead persons can be placed. It's the equivalent of the cemeteries many rural churches have.

The Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Arizona, decided recently to create a columbarium. Peter B. Wiebe, a retired pastor and a member of this congregation, describes the process: "We found the need for a living memory in the form of a columbarium. We needed a place where we could recall the memories of our deceased. Cremation has already become acceptable. We discovered that we could get 126 niches in one columbarium for the price of two burials, and this was not even counting the cost of funeral home charges. Our columbarium is like the rural church's cemetery. The setting is peaceful, under the shade trees, near flowering bushes."<sup>2</sup>

### **Urge Members to be Prepared**

The pastoral staff and other caregivers in the congregation should encourage members of the congregation to come in for an interview and to complete a form which describes their wishes concerning their funeral or memorial services, living wills, etc. Samples of forms which can be used for this purpose can be found in the next section of this Resource Collection. The congregation should keep copies of the completed forms on file so that this information will be available to the pastoral team when a death or emergency occurs. These files should be kept confidential.



---

<sup>1</sup> "Widows compile guide for bereaved," by Evelyn Rempel Petkau (*Canadian Mennonite*, September 18, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> "Preparing for Death," by Peter B. Wiebe (*Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary Alumni News*, Summer 1999)

## VI

---

### *Being Prepared*

The Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ontario, recently prepared a *Funeral and Memorial Service Handbook* for its members. It provides helpful advice to individuals and families on what they can do to be better prepared for death. Most of the items in the following section are taken from that handbook.

#### **1. Preplan your funeral**

By early planning you can make rational choices without the pressure of grief or sorrow at the time of death. Funeral directors are prepared to work with persons in pre-arranging funerals and offer a wide range of services and products. Make an appointment to visit your funeral director and discuss the options that are available and that reflect your values. Depending on your personal financial situation, you may choose to pre-pay what you have arranged.

Pre-arrangement can also be made with the pastor. (See Form 4, pages 54-57)

#### **2. Make Sure You Have an Up-to-date Will**

Don't let the government decide how your possessions should be distributed and how your loved ones should be cared for. Choose a competent executor to settle your estate. Select a guardian to provide a home for minor children. Go to a lawyer to have your wishes expressed in a legal will.

#### **3. Let Your Family Know Where Everything Is**

A carefully written will is of no value unless it can be found. A safe place at home may be a better place to keep a will than in a safety deposit box at a financial institution, which may be less accessible should a death occur over a weekend.

(A form is provided in the next section [Form 6, pages 59-60] on which people can indicate to their survivors where their will, insurance policies, tax returns safety deposit boxes, stock certificates, funeral and burial wishes and other documents are located.) Give a copy of this to your children, other family members, executor or trusted friend.

You should review your instructions every five to six years or whenever there are major changes in your life.

#### **4. Give Someone Power of Attorney for Personal Care and Power of Attorney for Property**

If you should become incompetent before you die, who will take care of your financial affairs or make health care decisions for you?

You can handle all of this by giving someone a Power of Attorney, perhaps a son or daughter, who will have the authority to make decisions and act on your behalf.

A Power of Attorney for Personal Care makes health care decisions for you. A Power of Attorney for Property deals with your financial affairs. You may appoint the same person for both types of Power of Attorney, or two different people.

(An additional consideration is a "living will," which gives advance directives that express your preference and wishes about health care decisions [especially end-of-life care] when you can no longer speak

for yourself, due to unconsciousness or mental incompetence. Check your province's requirements for a living will.)\*

#### **4. Transfer Some Things During Your Lifetime**

Consider giving your children some things now, when they need help most. Or you may transfer some assets to church causes, either as outright contributions or into plans that provide lifetime income. There might be some significant tax advantages. Discuss these options with your accountant or financial planner.

#### **5. Project Your Need for Life Insurance**

The main question is this: *Will your death create any financial hardship among your survivors?* Financial protection is the principal function of life insurance. Many people who have lived long enough to accumulate an estate don't need any life insurance. But many younger people with substantial family needs may need some protection. Make sure you buy only as much coverage as you need and when you need it.

#### **6. Other Places to Receive Counsel**

In addition to your lawyer and accountant, the Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) is a source of guidance and counsel. It helps Mennonites to be faithful stewards of accumulated possessions by suggesting ways that your resources can be distributed for the work of the church at the close of life. (See more about MFC on the next page.)

#### **7. Select a Memorial Fund/Charity**

Memorial funds are a way of perpetuating charitable causes you believe in deeply. Furthermore, a memorial fund is a tangible way for friends to show their grief. Include your memorial instructions in your funeral and burial plans.

#### **8. Purchase a Burial Plot**

Burial plots may be purchased in advance in some communities. Check out the possibilities in your area.

#### **9. Consider an Organ Donation**

The donation of organs to medical science or to persons awaiting transplants is an important contribution. Discuss your wishes with your family members.

(If you plan to donate your body for medical research, you should make arrangements in advance with a medical school. The school will provide the necessary forms. After the research is completed, the body is cremated. The medical school will bury or return the ashes, as you prefer. It is still possible and appropriate to have a memorial service.)\*

---

(\*) Comments from a booklet prepared by a committee at Goshen College Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN, and available on the Third Way Café – Mennonite Media – web site: <http://www.thirdway.com/facing/dwd>

#### **Other Pre-Planning Suggestions:**

- ❖ Write your obituary;
- ❖ Consider donating your corneas to an eye bank after your death;
- ❖ Make a list of relatives and friends to be informed of the death (See Form 3, page 53).





# Estate Planning Guide

## A Step-by-Step Guide for Estate Planning and Record Keeping

Published by Mennonite Foundation of Canada in 2001

This 50-page MFC workbook has information about the following issues:

- |                            |                       |                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Intestacy               | 6. Assets/Liabilities | 11. Marriage Contract   |
| 2. Estate Planning         | 7. Bequests           | 12. Power of Attorney   |
| 3. Your Will               | 8. Trusts             | 13. Succession Planning |
| 4. Executor/Estate Trustee | 9. Personal Effects   | 14. Probate             |
| 5. Guardians               | 10. Common Disaster   | 15. Final Tax Returns   |

The workbook also contains a four-page **Planning Your Will** form.

Copies of the “Estate Planning Guide” and other information and counsel can be obtained free of charge from any of MFC’s four offices:

### **Winnipeg Office:**

12-1325 Markham Rd., Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6 Tel. (204) 488-1985  
Toll free tel. 1-800-772-3257 Email: mfcwpg@mennofoundation.ca

### **Kitchener Office:**

50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 Tel. (519) 745-7821  
Toll free tel. 1-888-212-7759 Email: mfckit@mennonitecc.on.ca

### **Abbotsford Office:**

303-32025 Dahlstrom Ave., Abbotsford, BC V2T 2K7 Tel. (604) 850-9613  
Toll free tel. 1-888-212-8608 Email: mfcabbot@telus.net

### **Niagara Office:**

Carlton Heights Plaza, 22-595 Carlton St., St. Catharines, ON L2M 4Y2 Tel. (905) 934-0484  
Toll free tel. 1-888-212-8731; Email: mfcnia@mennonitecc.on.ca

MFC’s web site is [www.mennofoundation.ca](http://www.mennofoundation.ca).

*Remember that when you leave this earth,  
you can take with you nothing that you have received –  
only what you have given:  
a full heart enriched by honest service,  
love, sacrifice and courage.*

– St. Francis of Assisi

## VII

---

### *Forms and Other Resources*

In the pages that follow there are forms which can be used for various aspects of the church's ministry in the area of death and dying. You may adapt them for your own setting and copy them.

**Form 1** (2 pages) – pages 49-50: **Funeral/Memorial Service Preparation Form**

It can be used by the pastoral staff, in consultation with family members, when a death has occurred.

**Form 2** (2 pages) – pages 51-52: An invitation letter by the pastoral team to congregation members to record their wishes concerning funeral plans. This document and the two forms which follow were drafted by the Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

**Form 3** (1 page) – page 53: A form which can be completed by members of the congregation. It names the people whom the signatory wishes to have contacted when she/he dies.

**Form 4** (4 pages) – pages 54-57: **A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning a Christian Funeral for the person who is completing the form.**

**Form 5** (1 page) – page 58: **A Living Will Declaration.**

**Form 6** (2 pages) – pages 59-60 **Personal Record of Will/Papers/Documents** (adapted from the *Funeral and Memorial Service Handbook*, prepared by the Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, ON.)

**Appendix 1** (2 pages) – pages 61-62: **Directions for making a handmade casket.**

Are you interested in getting more information on the death and dying theme? In the last section of this Collection there is a listing of other resources you may wish to consider:

**Books, videos and web sites on the topic of death and dying** – pages 63-66:

The resources listed on these pages have been suggested by individuals and groups who are experienced and knowledgeable about various aspects of the topic. There is also a list of all the books that relate to this general theme which Herald Press has in print at the present time. It's a fascinating inventory. Pastors, caregivers and others are encouraged to scan it and perhaps add some of these titles to their church libraries.

**What's available at Resource Centres in Kitchener (Mennonite and Brethren in Christ) and Winnipeg (Mennonite Church Canada) and from the Columbia Bible College Library in Abbotsford ?**

They have each provided us with a list (pages 67-75) of all the items which they have available on loan which relate to the death and dying topic. Give them a call if you want to use some of their books, videos or periodicals.

# Funeral/Memorial Service Preparation Form

[for the pastor and the family when a death has occurred]

1. Did the deceased person complete a Planning Form for a Funeral prior to his/her death? Where is this information located? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Full name of the Deceased: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of spouse (if married): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Funeral Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Next of kin in charge of arrangements: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Burial or Cremation? Burial  Cremation

If cremation is planned, visitation place and time: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Viewing: When and where? \_\_\_\_\_

8. The Funeral/Memorial Service:

(a) Location and time: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Officiating Minister(s) : \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Pallbearers (6): \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Ushers: \_\_\_\_\_

(e) P.A. system operator: \_\_\_\_\_ Tapes: Yes  No

(f) Table(s) to receive Memorial charitable gifts prior to the service: Yes  No

Designated organization(s) for memorial gifts: \_\_\_\_\_

(g) Music: Organist: \_\_\_\_\_ Pianist: \_\_\_\_\_ Choir director: \_\_\_\_\_

(h) Obituary (Life Story):

Who will prepare the obituary? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will read the obituary at the service? \_\_\_\_\_

(i) Suggestions for the Service:

Scripture Text(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Songs: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribute(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. The Grave-side/Committal Service:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. The Fellowship Meal:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Details about the Deceased's Family:**

(a) Surviving members of the immediate family: \_ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Family members who have pre-deceased him/her: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**12. Church membership, date of baptism and other church-related details:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**13. Other items:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

(Name of Congregation)

## **AN INVITATION TO RECORD YOUR WISHES CONCERNING FUNERAL PLANS**

The ministry team invites you to consider the events which you wish to follow your death. Attached to this introductory statement are two forms - a form on which you can record personal data and a form where you can indicate your wishes regarding funeral plans. We encourage you to contact the pastor and arrange for an interview. At that interview opportunity will be provided to complete the forms. These forms will then be placed on file in the church office.

Each of us will die sometime. None of us knows when. There are at least three reasons why each of us does well to record our wishes concerning plans for our own funeral.

1. Unless we record our wishes no one will know.
2. Unless we record our wishes the values we wish expressed in our funeral may not be expressed.
3. Unless we record our wishes, others will have to make all the decisions. Recording our wishes is an act of love to them.

It is never too early to begin. Discuss your wishes and feelings with your spouse, family, and/or friends as appropriate. There are distinct advantages to indicating your preferences while you are able. Planning ahead provides the opportunity for your wishes to be known so that your funeral may reflect your values.

We would all do well to share with those close to us our values and wishes. Doing so helps everyone to face the reality and inevitability of death. Your initiating the subject opens the possibility of conversation about a subject which is often difficult for them to initiate. If these issues have not been openly discussed those close to you can only guess what your wishes may have been. Available alternatives can be considered with more than a few days to decide which options best fit with your lifestyle and expression of faith.

### **Remember your Principles and Beliefs**

As you plan, find ways to express your Christian faith and lifestyle values. Consider simplicity and stewardship issues. Unless you have considered and discussed these values ahead of time it can be very easy for those close to you to allow guilt or the perceived community practice to make more elaborate and/or expensive choices than you would want made. Take time to consider the wide range of alternatives available.

Plan so that the events following your death reflect your beliefs and are carried out with dignity and respect as well as warmth and assurance. Plan so that this may be a time when all persons are drawn closer to God.

## **Discover Resources and Alternatives**

- 1. The pastor and other members of the ministry team** will be glad to answer your questions and discuss your concerns.
- 2. Memorial Societies.** A memorial society provides its members with any of several inexpensive alternative funeral plans.
- 3. Funeral Homes** Funeral directors are happy to discuss the services which they provide. They are required by law to provide price lists or consumer information detailing the costs of various services to those who request them. These can be helpful to you as you explore the issues involved, including legal requirements surrounding death and disposal of the body.

### **Some alternatives of which you may not be aware:**

- 1) Embalming is not always required. However, the time the body can be kept is much shortened without embalming.
- 2) The funeral director is obligated to use a casket or urn which you supply.
  - a) You, or someone else may construct the casket or urn. Perhaps someone from the congregation or community could construct such caskets and make them available to the congregation.
  - b) The casket or urn may be purchased from a casket store.
- 3) The funeral director need not be in charge of all procedures. Family or friends may do more of the actual work surrounding transportation of the body, visitation, etc.
- 4) Cremation is becoming increasingly common. A casket may be purchased, used in the viewing and cremated with the body. A casket may also be rented with a liner, so that after viewing and visitation only the liner and the body are cremated. It could also be possible for the church to have such a casket for the repeated use of members and adherents.
- 5) You may wish to anticipate which newspapers should carry the death announcement. You may also wish to suggest the wording to be used.

### **Summary**

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives a clear statement of what needs to happen in the events following death: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

# Personal Data

for the files of

---

(Name of Congregation)

Please complete this personal data form before continuing with the Funeral Planning form. If more space is needed for any item, please use the back of the sheet.

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

## PERSONS TO BE CONTACTED BY THE CONGREGATION AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Please circle the name(s) of the person(s) to be contacted first,  
and place an asterisk (\*) beside the names of persons with whom you have shared  
your wishes concerning funeral plans.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Relation to you</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

This supersedes any previous documents. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of congregation)

## A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning a Christian Funeral for

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Your Name)

As you make decisions about your funeral, make choices which will express your faith and values. Complete the sections of this form where you are ready to register your wishes. Other sections may be completed at a later time. Remember as you register your wishes, that while those who will make decisions at the time of death need to know your wishes, **they also need the freedom to make decisions based on current circumstances.**

This form is intended to be completed in dialogue with the pastor or other designated member of the ministry team. Following that interview, a copy of this form will be placed on file in the church office. You should also give a copy of this form to family members and/or others who will be responsible for your affairs after death.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 1. YOUR CHURCH CONNECTION

Normally, the lead minister of the church where you have been worshiping is the one to give pastoral guidance and support at the time of death. However, there may be circumstances which will lead you to choose that your funeral be held in another church. If you are not a member here, the pastor will want to be in touch with the minister of your home church.

The Lead Minister should be contacted as soon as possible following death.

Complete

My church membership is at \_\_\_\_\_ Church

I wish my funeral to be held at \_\_\_\_\_ Church

### 2. FUNERAL HOME

Choosing a funeral home in advance of death makes it easier for family or others who become responsible at the time of death.

Complete

I have chosen as the funeral home to be contacted at my death \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I have notified the funeral home: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Preplanned: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_      Prepaid: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_



**3. BURIAL OR CREMATION?**

It is best to consider the wishes of those close to you when making this decision.

Choose one:

I choose that my physical remains be buried: \_\_\_\_\_

I choose that my physical remains be cremated: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. FINAL RESTING PLACE**

Choose one:

a) I choose to have my body buried at the following cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

I have purchased a plot there: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

b) I choose that after cremation my ashes be placed as follows (check your choice):

\_\_\_\_\_ in a columbarium provided by my church (if available)

\_\_\_\_\_ in a columbarium elsewhere (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ buried in \_\_\_\_\_ cemetery. I have purchased a plot there: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ scattered at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. ORGAN DONATION**

Seriously consider an organ donation. At the time of death, you offer the gift of life to others. Be sure your driver's license or other official document stating your wishes is signed and that your family and doctor are informed.

Complete

I have completed an organ donation form: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

It is stored at \_\_\_\_\_

My wishes regarding organ donations are: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. VISITATION PLANS**

A time of visitation before the Funeral/Memorial Service is an important step in the grieving process. Except in special circumstances, viewing of the body at the visitation should be considered as helpful to family and friends in facing the reality of the death, and thus important to the grieving process.

For persons to whom the church has been an important part of their life, an appropriate location for visitation and viewing is the church building where they have regularly worshiped and where birth, baptism, marriage and other events of life are celebrated.

Complete

I prefer visitation to take place at \_\_\_\_\_

If possible, I request that viewing be available at the same time \_\_\_\_\_

Other suggestions or concerns I have: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. THE RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

Those who are left need opportunity to hear the words of comfort in Scripture. They need the opportunity to express their faith in song. They need to be lifted up in prayer. They need to worship with their community of faith. Thus, the Funeral or Memorial service is another important experience in the process of grieving.

A funeral precedes burial of the body or cremation. A memorial service takes place after burial of the body or cremation.

Particular circumstances may call for other religious services such as:

- ! a service at a later date for the final disposition of ashes;
- ! a memorial service at a later date when the funeral or memorial has been held at a distance.

Complete

I prefer a Funeral \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer a Memorial Service \_\_\_\_\_

Scriptures I suggest are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hymns I suggest are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other suggestions I have are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. FELLOWSHIP MEAL**

Our church is prepared to provide a simple fellowship meal following the Funeral/Memorial Service. This is a time to reconnect with life and with relationships. Sometimes "open mike" sharing is appropriate.

Complete

My preferences regarding the fellowship meal are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. PALLBEARERS**

If you designate pallbearers remember to keep the list updated. Six pallbearers will be required.

Complete

I suggest as pallbearers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10. DONATIONS**

Many people like to designate a charity to which gifts of money may be given as memorials.

Complete

I suggest the following charity(ies) to receive memorial gifts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. OTHER PREFERENCES OR CONCERNS WHICH I WISH TO REGISTER**

Complete

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. AFTER THE FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE**

After a death in the congregation, we as a church commit ourselves to provide ongoing pastoral support to those within the congregation most affected by the death. If you wish, you may identify specific concerns or hopes regarding such care in the event of your own death.

Complete

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**These are my wishes as I have recorded them today. However, I give those close to me the freedom to do what seems appropriate at the time of death.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**LIVING WILL DECLARATION**

TO MY FAMILY, PHYSICIAN AND ALL OTHERS CONCERNED:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being of sound mind, willfully and voluntarily, direct that if the time comes when I can no longer take part in decisions for my own health care, that this statement stand as an expression of my wishes and directions.

If at any time my attending physician certifies that: (1) I have an incurable injury, disease or illness; (2) my death will occur within a short period of time; and (3) the use of life-prolonging procedures would serve only to artificially prolong the dying process, I direct that such procedures be withheld or withdrawn, and that I be permitted to die naturally with only the performance or provision of any medical procedure or medication necessary to provide me with comfort care or to alleviate pain, and if I have so indicated below, the provision of artificially supplied nutrition and hydration. (Indicate your choice by initialing or making your mark before signing this Declaration.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I wish to receive artificially supplied nutrition and hydration, even if the effort to sustain life is futile or excessively burdensome to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I do not wish to receive artificially supplied nutrition and hydration, if the effort to sustain life is futile or excessively burdensome to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I intentionally make no decision concerning artificially supplied nutrition and hydration, leaving the decision to my family and my physician.

*(Example of other instructions that may be added.)*

It is my wish that, at the time of my death, any of my body organs that are usable (and desired by organ donation facilities) be made available for donation.

As a Christian, I am not afraid to die, for I believe that death is as much a reality as life itself. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, death has been swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54). I am confident of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore I make this declaration of my wishes.

This declaration is made after careful consideration and with a full understanding of its import. It is in accordance with my strong convictions and beliefs. I want my wishes and directions carried out to the extent permitted by law.

DATED at \_\_\_\_\_, in the Province of \_\_\_\_\_,  
this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*The Living Will should be witnessed by at least two persons, preferably those individuals who are most likely to be in charge of carrying out the health care wishes and directions of the person who is completing this form.*

**PERSONAL RECORD OF WILL/PAPERS/DOCUMENTS**

(To be filed with a family member, executor or friend)

Name of Person Completing this Form \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. Will Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Register No. \_\_\_\_\_

Place kept \_\_\_\_\_

Living Will

Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Place Kept \_\_\_\_\_

2. Birth certificate/marriage certificate/Social Insurance card

Place kept \_\_\_\_\_

3. Mortgage I owe a mortgage Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If YES, mortgage is held by \_\_\_\_\_

Method of payment \_\_\_\_\_

4. Insurance Name of Company Policy Number Name of Agent

Life \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Auto \_\_\_\_\_

Property \_\_\_\_\_

Place Kept \_\_\_\_\_

5. Bank/Credit Union Accounts

Name of Financial Institution Account Number

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Automobile Loan Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_ Method of Payment \_\_\_\_\_

7. Investments

	Plan Number	Institution	Place Kept
Bonds	_____	_____	_____
Stocks	_____	_____	_____
RRSPs	_____	_____	_____
Mutual Funds	_____	_____	_____

8. Personal Guarantees or Pledges Made

Amount	To Whom	For Whom
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

9. Bank Loans

Amount	Name of Institution
_____	_____
_____	_____

10. Safety Deposit Box

Location of Box \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Key \_\_\_\_\_

11. Tax Returns

Place Kept \_\_\_\_\_

12. Charge Accts/Cards

Account Number	Name of Company
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

13. Burial or Cremation Plot Location \_\_\_\_\_

14. Funeral Pre-Planning Filed at Church and/or Funeral Home Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If YES, which church \_\_\_\_\_

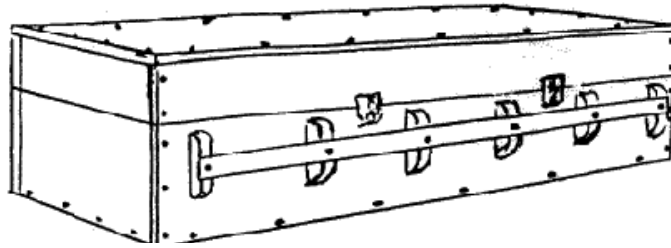
Which funeral home \_\_\_\_\_

15. Please Identify the Following:

	Telephone
Lawyer _____	_____
Accountant _____	_____
Executor _____	_____

**DIRECTIONS FOR A HANDMADE CASKET**

by Millard Osborne, 3430 Dawn Drive, Harrisonburg VA 22801  
Used by permission



Sketch A

**A. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

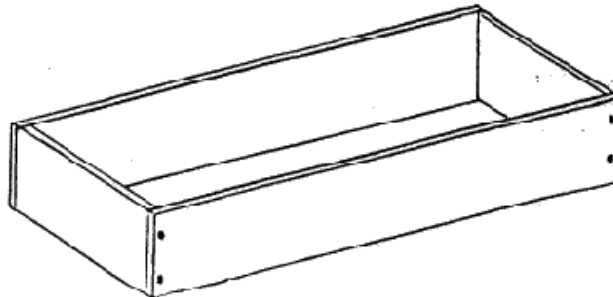
1. These plans will make a casket with outside dimensions of 28" x 78" x 17 3/4". This would accommodate an average person up to 6'3" in height. Larger or smaller caskets can be made by simply adjusting the dimensions.
2. Sand all surfaces before assembling.
3. Round-head brass screws are suggested, to eliminate the need to countersink the screw heads. Leave them exposed. (See note in D2 below.)
4. These directions assume some basic knowledge of carpentry skills, such as clamping for edge-gluing, drilling appropriate holes for screws, etc.
5. After assembly, the casket may be finished naturally with 2 coats of polyurethane, or the wood may be stained before finishing.

**B. MATERIALS LIST**

3	14'	1x12	pine	1	6'	brass piano hinge (or "continuous hinge")
1	6'	1x12	pine			(a 4' length would also work)
2	14'	1x6	pine	60	#8 1/2"	round.-head brass screws
1	6'	1x6	pine	12	#6 1/2"	round-head brass screws
1	6'	2x2	pine	24	#8 1/2"	flat-head steel screws
2	6'	1x2	pine	18	#8 1/4"	flat-head steel screws
1	6'	1x4	pine	2	brass fasteners - like sash locks or chest clocks	

**C. ASSEMBLY**

1. Begin by cutting all 14' boards into 7' lengths. Choose the best surfaces for the top of the lid section. Edge-glue and clamp two 7' 1x12's on either side of a 7' 1x6, thus making a flat surface 84" long and about 28 1/2" wide. Later trim to 78" x 28".
2. In the same way glue two 7' 1x12's and one 1x6 for the bottom of the lower section. Boards with rough surfaces may be used here. Later trim to 76 1/2" x 26 1/2".
3. Cut the remaining two 7' 1x6's to 78" lengths. Cut the 6' 1x6 into 2 pieces 26 1/2" in length. These four pieces form the frame of the lid section. Assemble with the side pieces overlapping the end pieces. Use #8 brass screws. See Sketch B.

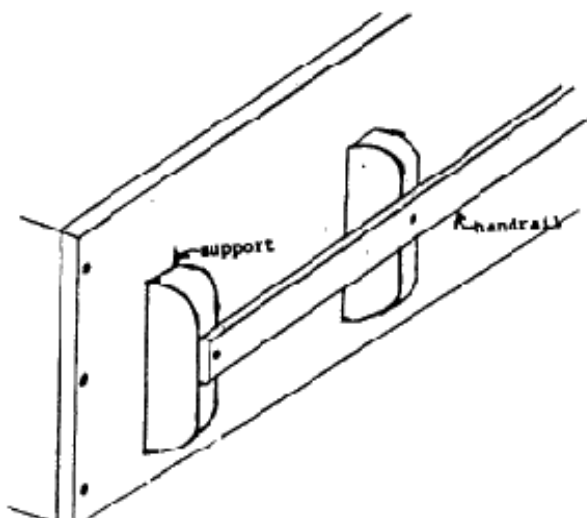


Sketch B - not drawn to scale

## HANDMADE CASKET

page 2

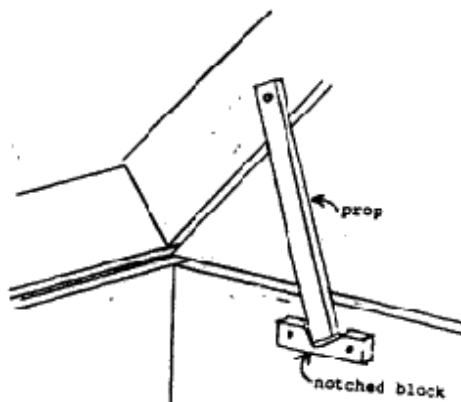
4. Place the top of the lid section (C1 above) on top of this frame and fasten with #8 brass screws around the perimeter of the top.
  - ❖ The frame for the lower section of the casket is constructed in an identical manner using 1 x 12's. The bottom (C2 above) is then fastened inside the frame keeping the bottom flush with the lower edge of the frame. Use #8 brass screws.
  - ❖ Cut the 1x4 into 3 equal pieces and simply attach these crosswise to the bottom inside the lower section, at suitable spacings, using the 1/4" flat head screws with 6 screws in each 1x4 board. These cross braces will reinforce the glue joints of the bottom.
  - ❖ Make 12 handrail supports from the 2x2. See Sketch C. Make each support 5 1/2" long and sand two corner round as illustrated. Attach to the sides of the lower section using two #8 1 1/2" flat head screws for each support. Space the supports evenly – 6 to each side. Make sure the overall distance from the first to the last support does not exceed 6'. See also Sketch A.
  - ❖ Attach a 1x2 handrail to each side with a #6 brass screw into each handrail support. (See Sketch C)
  - ❖ Attach the lid to the lower section now with the piano hinge on the back of the casket. This may simply be surface mounted.
    - ❖ To hold the lid open make two props of scrap lumber. Attach on to either end of the lid, mounted inside with one screw. Locate a notched block inside the lower section of the casket to receive the prop when the lid is opened. See Sketch D. (These items are not included in the Materials List on page 61.)
    - ❖ Attach the two brass fasteners at suitable spacing.
    - ❖ Finish with two coats of polyurethane or your choice of finish



Sketch C - not drawn to scale

### D. ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. Foam cushioning or pillows may be used inside the casket. Consider wrapping these with a blanket or quilt.
2. Make your own adaptations of these plans. One idea to try would be to substitute dowel pins for the round-head brass screws in the overall assembly. This would require drilling appropriate holes, inserting glued dowels, cutting and sanding flush, and waiting for the glue to dry. Time is a factor here.



Sketch D from inside casket



## Books, Videos and Web Sites

---

*In the section which follows, books, videos and web sites are listed which have been recommended by various groups, individuals and publishers.*



The following list of recommended books is taken from *FACING DEATH*, the guide which has been produced by a committee from the Goshen College Mennonite Church and which can be accessed on the Mennonite Media - Third Way Café - web site on Facing Death: <http://www.thirdway.com/facing>

- Arnold, Johann Christoph. *I Tell You a Mystery*. In a society that is afraid of death, Arnold tells 23 stories that illustrate how the God who loves us will walk with us “all the way,” giving us assurance of the Resurrection and eternal life. Plough Publishing House of the Bruderhof Foundation, 1996.
- Barber, Dr. Cyril J. and Aspenleiter, Sharalee. *Through the Valley of Tears*. Recovering from the loss of a loved one takes time. The authors lead the reader through a valley of tears to a sense of wholeness. Their sensitive, biblical approach will help people through their bereavement and healing. Revell Publishing, 1987.
- Berton, Walton F. *Who Will Decide*. A funeral preplanning discussion guide. Augsburg Publishing, 1983.
- Brock, Ira. *Dying Well*. It tells stories about tragedy, but also about love, commitment and courage; stories of people living in the shadow of death while growing within themselves and becoming closer with the ones they love. Riverhead Books, New York, 1997.
- Callahan, Daniel. *The Troubled Dream of Life: Living With Mortality*. This leading philosopher and ethicist attacks the prevailing societal notion that medical progress will eventually eliminate almost every illness. Callahan makes a strong case for graceful acceptance of our mortality. He also argues strongly against euthanasia. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1993.
- Davidson, Glen W. *Understanding Mourning: A Guide for Those Who Grieve*. Guidelines for healthy mourning. Augsburg Press, 1984.
- Hewitt. *After Suicide*. The author offers much needed information and clinically tested advice for those struggling to cope in the aftermath of a suicide. Westminster Press, 1980.
- Knox, Lucinda and Michael Knox. *Last Wishes: A Handbook to Guide Your Survivors*. A 177-page workbook to be completed by people of all ages. Ulysses Press, Berkeley, 1994.
- Kuenning, Delores. *Helping People Through Grief*. Your next-door neighbor has a miscarriage; your mother calls to say your father has been diagnosed as having cancer; your daughter calls to tell you her husband has filed for divorce. What do you say? Each chapter is based on a true experience. Caregivers are supplied with practical advice and insight, appropriate scripture and a list of recommended books and support groups. Bethany Publishing, 1987.
- Mennonite Medical Association - Healthy Living Series. Life Issues: Death. *A Time to Live, A Time to Die*. MMA, Goshen, IN, 1997.
- Mennonite Medical Association - Healthy Living Series. Life Issues: Grief. *A Time to Grieve*. MMA, Goshen, IN, 1996.
- Mellonis, Bryan and Robert Ingpen. *Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children*. Bantam Books, New York, 1983.
- Nouwen, Henri. *A Letter of Consolation*. Six months after his mother’s death, the author wrote this letter to his father. Harper and Row, 1982.
- Oliver, Samuel. *What the Dying Teach Us*. These stories are about living each moment of our lives filled with love, hope and gratitude. Dying people teach us to live each moment as a gift. The Hawthorn Pastoral Press, 1998.

- Oosterveen, Gerald. *Too Early Frost*. A father's account of losing his first child is a true testimony of faith by a man, a father and a minister who thanks God for the memories he has and for God's love that gives us "a bright hope for tomorrow when doubt is swept away and faith will be sight." Zondervan, 1988.
- Rupp, Sister Joyce. *Praying Our Good-byes*. We all have our own unique good-bye times when we lose someone or something that has given our lives meaning and value. With the touch of a poet the author gives us a book about the experiences of leaving behind and moving on, the stories of union and separation that are written in all our hearts. This is about the "spirituality of change." Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN.
- Schmidt, Abraham. *Dialogue With Death*. Moving and vivid accounts of personal encounters with death. Deals with feelings rather than profound explanation. World, Inc., 1976.
- Sittser, Gerald L. *A Grace Disguised*. A drunk driver on an Idaho road caused the tragic loss to Sittser of three generations of his family: his mother, his wife and his young daughter. The book is more than a chronicle of the author's sorrow; it is a very moving reflection on the losses we all suffer and the amazing grace of God that can transform us. Sittser reminds us that it is better by far to live in an unfair world where grace is available and we get more than we deserve, than to live in an absolutely fair world without grace, and where we get what we deserve. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1996.
- Studer, Gerald C. *After Death What?* A thought-provoking biblical study of life after death. Herald Press, 1976.
- Sutherland Fox, Sandra. *Good Grief*. Helping groups of children when a friend dies. New England Association for Education of Young Children, 1985.
- Vaux, Kenneth and Sara Vaux. *Dying Well*. An excellent study of the many dimensions to help us achieve the goal of a good death. The book has two sections: 1) basic issues (medical, social, theological), and 2) case studies and reflections. The book includes instructions for use as a group study. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1996.
- Weaver, Henry. *Confronting the Big C*. How one man worked through the diagnosis of cancer with the help of his wife, his doctors and his own inner strength and faith. Herald Press, 1984.
- Westberg, Granger. *Good Grief*. A Lutheran chaplain, who is well known for his writings about the intersection of faith and health, presents a constructive approach to the problem of loss. Fortress Press, 1962 (reprinted 1997), 64 pages.
- Zunin, Leonard M. and Hilary Stanton Zunin. *The Art of Condolence*. This practical, easy-to-read book covers three common areas of concern: What can I write? What can I say? What can I do? The authors address such issues as special circumstances (suicide, sudden death, the death of a parent or child). Harper Perennial, 1992.



**The following books are recommended in *WHEN YOUR SPOUSE HAS DIED: A GUIDE FOR THE BEREAVED*, a list prepared by a support group in First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. It can be accessed on the following web site: [www.members.home.com/griefsupport](http://www.members.home.com/griefsupport)**

- Aldrich, Susan Picklesimer. *Will I Ever Be Whole Again? Surviving the Death of Someone You Love*. West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Publishing Company, 1999.
- Bouvard, Marguerite. *The Path through Grief: A Compassionate Guide*. Amhurst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998.
- Curry, Cathleen L. *When Your Spouse Dies*. Notre Dame, NY: Ave Marie Press, 1997.
- Feinberg, Linda. *I'm Grieving As Fast As I Can*. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, 1994.
- Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Mourning Handbook: The Most Comprehensive Resource Offering Practical and Compassionate Advice on Coping with All Aspects of Death and Dying*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.
- Ginsburg, Genevieve. *Widow: Rebuilding Your Life*. Tucson, AZ: Fisher Books, 1995.
- Kinnaman, Gary. *My Companion through Grief*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1996.
- Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. Toronto: Seabury Press, 1963.
- Lightner, Candy, and Nancy Hathaway. *Giving Sorrow Words: How to Cope with Grief and Get On with Your Life*. New York: Warner Books, 1990.
- Martin, John. *I Can't Stop Crying*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1992.

Prend, Ashley Davis. *Transcending Loss: Understanding the Lifelong Impact of Grief and How to Make It Meaningful*. New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 1997.

Rando, Therese A. *How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.\*

Sanders, Catherine M. *Surviving Grief and Learning to Live Again*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1992.

Sittser, Gerald L. *A Grace Disguised*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Staudacher, Carol. *A Time to Grieve*. San Francisco: Harper, 1994.\*

Williams, Robert A. *Journey through Grief*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991.

(\*) **Highly recommended**



**The following books on the death and dying theme have all been published by Herald Press, Scottdale, PA. The prices listed are in Canadian \$.**

Greaser, Frances Bontrager. *And a Time to Die*. Greaser exposes her soul in this book. In a moving account of confronting the shock of learning her son is a homosexual and has AIDS, she describes the grief of life fading into death. Greaser's vulnerability in telling her story will provide comfort to people who have lost a child to AIDS. *And A Time to Die* tells of anguish. Yet the images which finally triumph are those of hope and faith, life and resurrection. Winner of 1996 Silver Angel Award from Excellence in Media. 1995. 160 pages; \$16.29.

Bedsworth, Philip and Joyce. *Fight the Good Fight*. Leukemia. Kidney failure. Lung cancer. The diseases are common. For all three to strike the same person is not. Surviving them demands a fight which nearly wrenches a family apart. Phil, who repeatedly nears death, confronts the terror and fatigue which accompany unending sickness and faces the complex decisions made possible and inevitable by modern technology. Joyce struggles to survive as job demands and responsibilities as wife and mother threaten to tear her apart. Sara and Steven know Daddy may die any time. This is a story for anyone who has been forced to wrestle with chronic illness and for those who care for them. 1991. 128 pages; \$11.99

Dodd, Robert V. *Helping Children to Cope With Death*. Dodd helps parents and other adults to know how to assist children in dealing with their feelings about death-that of a friend or loved one, or their own anticipated death. 1984. 56 pages; \$7.49.

Gary L. Watts. *Painful Questions: Facing Struggles With Faith*. We want a world without pain, fear or heartache. When trouble comes our way, we cry, "Why me?" Why do we suffer? Why does God let bad things happen to good people? To find answers, we must look beneath the surface of life, using the eyes of faith. Is anyone listening? We shake our fists at heaven. We plead our case before God and others. We are sure we deserve better. In this certainty lie seeds of hope. Will someone help ease the pain? For this to happen, we must dare to build something good out of life's broken pieces. This is the work of love. As we join our answers together like pieces of a puzzle, the picture begins to look like a cross, reminding us of God's presence. 1999. 240 pages; \$19.29.

**Herald Press's Visitation Pamphlet Series. Each pamphlet is 16 pages in length with a four-color cover. Cost per copy: \$4.49.**

**By Still Waters:** John M. Drescher shares meditations based on the Twenty-third Psalm. Revised 1988.

**God's Presence in Time of Trouble:** John M. Drescher draws from Scripture to show that God not only remembers us, but also stands by us to meet our needs, especially in troubled times. 1989.

**Grief's Slow Work:** Harold Bauman explains the process of grief and the experiences one normally goes through during the bereavement. 1960.

**I Lift My Eyes:** John M. Drescher shares words of prayer by persons from the past that express the longings of many who may be suffering, confined or discouraged to draw upon the resources God provides. 1976.

***In Grief's Lone Hour:*** John M. Drescher provides an understanding of the grief experience. Revised 1986.

***Into Thy Hands:*** Robert W. Rae covers three main areas in which a person can prepare for his or her own death. 1988.

***The Lord Is Near:*** John M. Drescher provides these short meditations that give guidance and light when it seems that God may have forsaken us. 1989.

***Miscarriage: A Quiet Grief:*** The loss of a baby through miscarriage can leave parents filled with doubt, anger, and many questions. Nelson and Ellen Kraybill share the struggle they experienced in dealing with this pain. 1990.

***Sources of Spiritual Strength:*** John M. Drescher provides words of comfort and encouragement that will bring blessing to readers. 1975.

***Strength for Suffering:*** John M. Drescher writes for those experiencing severe suffering. 1969.

***Suffering and God's Presence:*** John M. Drescher shares a guide to understanding suffering in the light of God's will. 1971.

***Why Suffering?*** Paul W. Nisly reviews the problem of human suffering and helps readers trust the God who created us to care for us. 1980.

### **For young children**

Bender, Esther. ***April Bluebird.*** Two bluebirds huddle on the feeder as a young boy and his sister watch. Their mother says, "They came back too soon." In the morning, the boy finds the dead papa bluebird. He carries it to school where his teacher picks up the interest of the children for a science lesson. On the way home from school, his sister says, "Let's take it to the bird carver." From the bird carver, the children learn lessons of patience. When at last the boy buries the bird, they share the wonder of a mystery: the bluebird lives! For ages 6-to-10. Story by Esther Bender. Full-color art from acrylic paintings by Edna Bender. 1995. 32 pages; \$13.49

### **For elementary-aged children**

Frost, Dorothy R. ***Dad! Why'd You Leave Me?*** When ten-year-old Ronnie's father dies, he is angry, confused and lonely. His friends seem afraid to talk to him. As Ronnie and his family grieve, they learn that they are still a family. With each other's help they can make it through the bad times. For ages 8-to-12. Sherry Neidigh, illustrator. 1992. 96 pages; \$8.99.

### **For youth**

Bach, Ann and Rebecca Slough. ***Deal with It: The Bible on Death and Dying.*** This is part of the Generation Why youth resource material. Six sessions. \$19.29.



### **Web Sites**

Mennonite Media - Third Way Café - Facing Death: <http://www.thirdway.com/facing>

First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, support group for persons whose spouse has died:  
[www.members.home.com/griefsupport](http://www.members.home.com/griefsupport)

***CareNotes*** produced by Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, Indiana, can be ordered on their web site [www.carenotes.com](http://www.carenotes.com) (Their 75c booklets cover such topics as Coping When Someone You Love is Dying; What Everyone Should Know About the First Year of Grief; Facing Death with Faith and Courage; Grieving at the Graveside; Getting Through the First Weeks and Months After the Funeral; etc.)

# Materials Available at Resource Centres and Libraries

---

## RESOURCE CENTER Mennonite Church Canada

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4  
Telephone: 204-888-6781  
800-665-1954  
Fax: 204-831-5675  
Email: [resources@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:resources@mennonitechurch.ca)

### A. Books

- Because You Care: Practical Ideas for Helping Those Who Grieve*, by Barbara Russell Chesser, 1987. Word Book Publisher: Waco, Texas. 196 pages.
- Beyond the Mirror*, by Henri Nouwen, 1991. Crossroads Publ., New York. 74 pages
- Bittersweet...Hello Goodbye: a Resource in Planning Farewell Rituals When a Baby Dies*, by Sister Jane Marie Lamb, OSF, 1988. Prairie Lark Press: Springfield, IL. 200 pages.
- Care of the Dying Child*, by Robert W. Buckingham, 1990. Continuum: New York, NY. 169 pages.
- Deal With It: The Bible on Death and Dying*, by Rebecca Slough and Ann Bach, 1999. Faith and Life Press, Newton, KS. 43 pages.
- Death: The Final Stage of Growth*, by Elisabeth Kuebler-Ross, 1975. Prentice-Hall. 181 pages.
- Explaining Death to Children*, by Earl A. Grollman, 1967. Beacon Press: Boston. 296 pages.
- Funerals and Funeral Planning*, by Melvin D. Schmidt, 1980, Faith and Life Press, 72 pages.
- Helping Children Grieve: When Someone They Love Dies*, by Theresa Huntley, 1991. Augsburg: Minneapolis. 79 pages.
- In Memoriam*, by Henri Nouwen, 1980. Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, IN. 61 pages.
- Meditations for the Terminally Ill and Their Families*, by Judy Osgood (editor), 1989. Gilgal Publications: Sunriver, OR. 70 pages.
- Meetings at the Edge: Dialogues with the Grieving and the Dying, The Healing and the Healed*, by Stephen Levine, 1984. Doubleday: New York, NY. 147 pages.
- Miscarriage: A Quiet Grief*, by Ellen and Nelson Kraybill, 1990. Herald Press: Scottdale, PA. 16 pages.
- My Mom Is Dying: A Child's Diary*, by Jill Westberg McNamara, 1994. Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN. 28 pages.
- Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring*, by Henri Nouwen, 1994. HarperCollins Publishers: San Francisco. 118 pages.
- Psalms of Lament*, by Ann Weems, 1995. Westminster Knox: Louisville, KN. 104 pages.
- The Summer of the Great-Grandmother*, by Madeleine L'Engle, 1974. Crosswicks: USA. 245 pages.
- Turn Again to Life: Growing Through Grief*, by Abraham Schmidt, 1987. Herald Press: Scottdale, PA. 136 pages.
- When a Friend Dies: A Book for Teens about Grieving and Healing*, by Marilyn E. Grootman, 1994. Free Spirit: ON 107 pages.

## **B. Books for Juveniles**

*The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages*, by Leo Buscaglia, PhD 1981. Slack, Incorporated: Thorofare, NJ. 16 pages.

*The Cherry Blossom Tree: A Grandfather Talks About Life And Death*, by Jan Godfrey and Jane Cope, 1995. Augsburg: Minneapolis, MN. 26 pages.

*Daddy's Old Robe: A Story about a Parent's Illness*, by Shawn Alyne Strannigan, 1996. Standard Publishing: Cincinnati, Ohio. 20 pages.

*Someday We'll Play in Heaven: A Story about Grieving*, by Shawn Alyne Strannigan, 1995. Standard Publishing: Cincinnati, OH. 16 pages.

*It Must Hurt a Lot: A Child's Book about Death*, by Doris Sanford, 1985. Multnomah Press: Portland, OR. 30 pages.

*Thumpy's Story: A Story of Love and Grief Shared by Thumpy, the Bunny*, by Nancy C. Dodge, 1984. Prairie Lark Press: Springfield, IL. 19 pages.

*Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Children*, by Doris Stickney, 1982. Pilgrim Press 22 pages.

## **C. Periodicals**

*Bereavement* magazine: A magazine of hope and healing. Current and back issues available for loan.

## **D. Videos**

### ***Begin With Goodbye***

six-part video series, 30 minutes each. This series of six videos is designed to help people cope with personal loss, separation, grief and new beginnings. The series deals with life's transitions and the fears that accompany them.

V-139-1 ***Changes***: introduces the series and deals with the challenges of personal loss and separation.

V-139-2 ***Turned Loose***: focuses on job loss, especially being "laid off" or retired.

V-139-3 ***Exits and Entrances***: shows us the common and disruptive partings with those close to us: children growing up and leaving home, and couples faced with separation or divorce.

V-139-4 ***Mirror, Mirror on the Wall***: looks at our changing body image as we grow old or ill, especially focussing on the loss of health through mastectomy or heart attack.

V-139-5 ***A Time to Cry***: treats grief, and what it means to be left behind when a loved one dies.

V-139-6 ***The Death of Ivan Ilich***: looks at our feelings about our own dying. A Tolstoy short story is dramatized, followed by comments from a group of terminally ill patients who respond to what they have seen, from their own perspective.

### ***Saying Goodbye Series***

five-part video series, 30 minutes each. This dramatic series deal with the issue of grief and bereavement.

V-228-1 ***A Grief Shared***: A young family has their lives shattered by the sudden death of their baby. This program reaches into the self-imposed isolation of the bereaved parents showing their grief as a natural response to loss and a stage from which they can emerge and learn to enjoy life.

V-228-2 ***Thunder in My Head***: Jennifer Dale stars as a young widow struggling with the emotional, financial and social problems resulting from her husband's death in a car accident.

V-228-3 ***At Home Alone***: This program focuses on the pain of an elderly widower when his wife of many years dies unexpectedly. Contrary to the norm in which the wife outlives her husband, it is the husband who is left on his own and he is totally unprepared for this eventuality.

V-228-4 ***A Promise Broken***: When a young man succumbs to personal, parental and social pressures and commits suicide, his friends and family are left struggling to come to terms with it.

V-228-5 ***The First Snowfall***: Kate Reid stars as a terminally ill patient who wants to spend her remaining days at home with her family. Family conflicts arise when her husband and son are supportive but her daughter opposes the idea, regarding it as an acceptance of defeat.

***Unsung Lullabies***

Video, 47 minutes. In this documentary couples talk candidly about how a miscarriage affected them, their families and their friends. They also share the individual ways in which they are coming to terms with their loss, completing the cycle of grieving and beginning to look ahead with renewed hope. V-536

***Death of a Gandy Dancer***

Video, 26 minutes. This program sensitively explores a family's varied emotional needs, the value of honesty and unity in a time of crisis, and stresses the continuity of life. Inter-generational. V-340

***Beyond the News: Facing Death***

Video, 34 minutes. Listening to stories of persons who have faced death, opens the way for viewers to talk with friends and family about the inevitable experience. This video is divided into three segments with a study guide. V-770



## **Mennonite & Brethren In Christ Resource Centre**

50 Kent Avenue  
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
Telephone: 519-745-8458  
Email: [anneb@mennonitecc.on.ca](mailto:anneb@mennonitecc.on.ca)

*As a video library, our resources are available at \$6/title/week. In the case of video series, there is a 25% discount, working out to \$4.50/week. People are invited to call or email with their requests.*

### **Video Resources on Grief, Death and Dying**

***Beyond the News: Facing Death***

34-minute video, produced by Mennonite Media, 1999.

By listening to stories of those who have faced death, viewers may find it easier to talk with friends and family about this inevitable experience. The video is divided into 3 discussion segments with suggested discussion questions after each. Sandy's Story: Relationships take priority as Sandy and her husband share how her cancer affects the way they live. A Good Death: A family cares for their dying mother in their home. Hospice care and family provide support; decisions are made for her funeral. Prepared for Death: Moses has built his own coffin and made his own funeral plans. A pastor, doctor, and funeral director discuss making decisions about the end of life.

***Ending The Journey: The Euthanasia Debate***

40-minute video, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 1994.

This video takes a hard look at the current trend towards public support of euthanasia. Individuals with long term diseases along with palliative care workers and others such as Jean Vanier challenge viewers to evaluate the basic assumptions and beliefs of the "right to die" movement.

This video is accompanied by "***Life Worth Living: Issues in Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide***" a Brief and Study Guide prepared by the Council on Faith and Life (CMC, 1995).

### ***Exploring The Sacred in Death And Dying***

6-part series, 20-25 minutes each, produced by UCom Productions, 1997.

Death is not an easy topic to talk about especially when someone close to us is dying or when we are trying to support someone else whose loved one is dying. Has your church ever considered offering a course where people can share their experiences and offer support to each other? This series may be a helpful resource. In it, Ron DelBene (Praying in the Midst of Life) shares many personal stories and offers helpful suggestions for how to walk with people during this very sacred time. 1. Saying Goodbye 2. Living Through Grief 3. Telling the Stories 4. Recognizing the Sacred 5. Communicating 6. One Family's Story.

### ***Fall of Freddy the Leaf: a Story of Life for All Ages***

17-minute video produced AIMS, 1985.

Why do we have to die? Where do we go when we die? This allegory addresses these questions in a way that will help adults and children appreciate the changes of nature and accept the season of death.

### ***Great Stories of Faith***

6-part video series, 13-18 minutes each, produced UCom Productions, 1995.

A variety of storytellers share stories about the transforming, healing, renewing power of faith. A great series for further group discussion. Study Guide.

1. ***Transformation*** - Transformation is at the heart of the Gospel.
2. ***Breaking Down Barriers*** - We are all one in Christ; the key is to live as though the barriers are down.
3. ***Ritual and Symbol*** - We need memories and acts that connect us to larger meanings of life.
4. ***The Light Way*** - Sometimes our religion is so heavy, it's difficult to share it with others.
5. ***Facing Death*** - Christ died, but death did not win. How does this fact of death affect our living?
6. ***God With Us*** - In a secular world, it's important to be alert for signs of God's presence.

### ***Growing Through Grief: Personal Healing***

6-part video series, 30 minutes each, produced by UCom Productions, 1985.

Pastoral counselor Dr. Howard Clinebell leads this video series designed to help hurt and grieving people find personal healing. 1. The Five Tasks of Grief Work 2. Healing Guilt 3. Fear and Anger 4. Growth From Divorce 5. Infections of the Grief Wound 6. Saying "Goodbye" To Our Losses.

### ***Healing Our Grief with Laughter and Tears***

7-part video series, produced by UCom Productions, 1996.

Grief is part of life. This series features Dr. Annette Goodheart, an expert in helping people regain their natural healing powers through laughter and tears. Watching as she works with individuals and groups, we learn how to heal our own grief and to help others.

1. Changing Our Perspective
2. The Crying is the Healing
3. Longing to Laugh
4. Big Men Do Cry
5. Goodbye, Mom and Dad
6. How Could My Husband Leave Me?
7. Not Only to Survive But thrive.

### ***Late Frost, a***

55-minute video, produced by Sunmark Productions.

Takes the viewer on a poignant and inspiring exploration of some of the concerns and issues of aging. Interspersed with interviews of children and aging men and women, the video shows how we can face the challenge of life...that of growing old. An excellent resource for any group that wants to learn more about growing old well. The video is divided into 10 segments: Change, Remembering, Forgetting, Seeing More Clearly, Living Until We Die, Worth, Going On (2), Dusk, Dawn. Discussion Guide.

### ***A Place Prepared: Helping Children Understand Death and Heaven***

4-part video, 10 minutes each, produced by Paraclete Press, 1999.

What does die mean? Where is Daddy now? In heaven? Can I see him? What is heaven? This video resource helps adults talk with children about death and heaven, and helps prepare them for the inevitable losses that they will experience throughout their lives. 1. Being honest with ourselves, as adults, about death 2. Understanding death and children's emotional response to it 3. Talking with children about funerals 4. Talking with children about heaven



### ***Questions of Faith - What Happens after Death?***

27-minute video, produced by EcuFilm.

Presents a variety of contemporary Protestant, Catholic and Jewish thinkers reflecting on the question of death. Their responses help stimulate our own reflections. Throughout, it is hoped that the listeners will be able begin a process of finding fresh insights into their own faith. Study Guide.

### ***Surviving with Style***

8-part video series, produced by Franciscan Communications, 1988.

Clayton Barbeau provides a unique approach to emotional self-help. The programs are meant to offer help for someone who may be experiencing temporary emotional distress. They may also be helpful to groups wanting to study some of the following topics.

1. Surviving Depression (26 min.)
  2. Surviving Loneliness (24 min.)
  3. Surviving Broken Relationships (21 min.)
  4. Surviving Life Transitions (26 min.)
  5. Surviving Anger: Yours and Others' (32 min.)
  6. Surviving Rejection and Failure (34 min.)
  7. Surviving Grief (24 min.)
  8. Surviving Difficult People (40 min.)
- Study Guide.

### ***Through The Shadowlands***

73-minute video, produced by Vision Video, 1985.

Follow the journey of C.S. Lewis during the days prior to and after the death of his wife from cancer. Experience with him the love, grief, pain, and sorrow so shattering that his basic beliefs are called into serious doubt. Watch as he moves forward in faith out of his depression, realizing anew that "real life has not even begun yet."



## **Columbia Bible College Library**

2940 Clearbrook Rd., Abbotsford, BC V2T 2Z8

Telephone: (604) 853-3567

Fax: (604) 853-3063

Email: [cbclibrary@columbiabc.edu](mailto:cbclibrary@columbiabc.edu)

*The following list includes a selection of items published after 1980, held at Columbia Bible College Library. If items are not available at your local library, you may request them from the Columbia Bible College Library.*

*All items are loaned free - you pay return postage only. For a complete listing of resources, please check the library catalog at the CBC website at: <http://www.columbiabc.edu>. Click on Library.*

*To search the Library catalog, use "keyword" search and type in keywords such as "death," "dying," "grief," "AIDS disease," "ethics and death," "funerals," "terminal illness," etc.*

### **A. Books - Death/Dying**

Albers, Gregg. ***Counseling the Sick and Terminally Ill***. Dallas, TX: Word Pub., 1989. Call Number 259.4 A332 1989.

Anderson, Ray. ***Theology, Death and Dying***. Oxford, Eng: Basil Blackwell, 1986. Call Number 236.1 A549 1986.

Anthony, Nancy. ***Mourning Thoughts: Facing a New Day After the Death of a Spouse***. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991. Call Number 242.4 A628 1991.

Buckman, Robert. ***I Don't Know What to Say: How to Help and Support Someone Who Is Dying***. Boston: Little Brown, 1989. Call Number 155.9 37 B925 1989.

Carmody, John. ***God Is No Illusion: Meditations on the End of Life***. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997. Call Number 242.4 C287 1997.

- Chirban John T., ed. *Coping with Death and Dying: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Lanham, MD: University Press Of America, 1985. Call Number 306.9 C783 1985.
- Connelly, Douglas. *After Life: What the Bible Really Says*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Call Number 236.2 C752 1995.
- Dodd, Robert V. *Helping Children Cope with Death*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984. Call Number 155.9 37 D639 1984.
- Donnelly, Katherine Fair. *Recovering from the Loss of a Parent*. New York: Berkley Books, 1993. Call Number 155.9 37 0854 D685 1993.
- Gerber, Samuel. *Learning to Die*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984. Call Number 242.4 G362 1984.
- Graham, Billy. *Facing Death and the Life After*. Minneapolis: Grason, 1987. Call Number 236.1 G738 1987.
- Greene, H. Leon. *If I Should Wake before I Die: The Medical and Biblical Truth about Near-Death Experiences*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997. Call Number 236.1 G799 1997.
- Glaven, Denise. *Hospice, a Labor of Love*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999. Call Number 362.175 G552 1999.
- Greaser, Frances. *And a Time to Die*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995. Call Number 362.19697920092 G786 1995.
- Hein, Marvin. *Like a Shock of Wheat: Meditations on Death*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981. Call Number 236.1 H468 1981.
- Hostetler, Helen M. *A Time to Love: When AIDS Takes a Son, a Friend*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992. Call Number 174.24 K48 1992.
- Hunt, Gladys M. *Close to Home: Reflections on Living and Dying*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1990. Call Number 236.1 H941 1990.
- Johnson, Christopher Jay. *Encounters with Eternity*. Philadelphia: Charles Press, 1991. Call Number 291.23 H847 1881.
- Kilner, John F. *Life on the Line: Ethics, Aging, Ending Patients' Lives, and Allocating Vital Resources*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992. Call Number 174.24 K48 1992.
- Kilner, John F. and Arlene B. Miller and Edmund D. Pellegrino, eds. *The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity Presents Dignity and Dying: a Christian Appraisal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. Call Number 241.697 C397 1996.
- Kuebler-Ross, Elizabeth. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Collier Books, 1970. Call Number 155.9 3 K95 1969.
- Kuebler-Ross, Elizabeth, ed. *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, [1975]. Call Number 155.9 37 D285 1975.
- Kuebler-Ross, Elisabeth. *AIDS: The Ultimate Challenge*. New York: Macmillan, 1987. Call Number 362.196979200973 K95 1987.
- Klopfenstein, Janette. *Tell Me About Death, Mommy*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977. Call Number 236.1 K66 1977.
- Larson, Edward. *A Different Death: Euthanasia & the Christian Tradition*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998. Call Number 179.7 L334 1998.
- Leon, Irving. *When a Baby Dies: Psychotherapy for Pregnancy and Newborn Loss*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Call Number 155.9 37 L579 1990.
- Limbo, Rana K. *When a Baby Dies: A Handbook for Healing and Helping*. LaCrosse, WA: Resolve Through Sharing, 1991. Call Number 155.937 L733 1991.
- Krementz, Jill. *How It Feels When a Parent Dies*. New York: Knopf, 1988. Call Number 155.9 37 K92 1988.
- Meyer, Charles. *Surviving Death: A Practical Guide to Caring for the Dying & Bereaved*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988. Call Number 259.6 M612 1988.
- Munday, John S. *Surviving the Death of a Child*. Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox Press, 1995. Call Number 155.9 37 M965 1995.
- Nouwen, Henri. *Beyond the Mirror: Reflections on Death and Life*. New York: Crossroad, 1990. Call Number 236.1 N934 1990.
- Nystrom, Carolyn. *What Happens When We Die?* Chicago: Moody Press, 1992. Call Number 236.1 N998 1992.
- Peachey, Mark. *Facing Terminal Illness*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980. Call Number 248.86 P355 1980.
- Phipps, William. *Death: Confronting the Reality*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987. Call Number 306.9 P573 1987.
- Platt, Larry. *Resources for Ministry in Death and Dying*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988. Call Number 259.6 R434 1988.

- Price, Roger. *Explaining What Happens After Death*. Eng: Sovereign World Ltd., 1992. Call Number 236.2 P946 1992.
- Richards, Larry. *Death & the Caring Community: Ministering to the Terminally Ill*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980. Call Number 259.4 R516 1980.
- Schiff, Harriet. *Living Through Mourning: Finding Comfort and Hope When a Loved One Has Died*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Call Number 155.9 37 S333 1987.
- Schemmer, Kenneth E. *Between Life and Death: The Life-Support Dilemma*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988. Call Number 174.24 S323 1988.
- Shelly, Judith Allen. *Dilemma: A Nurse's Guide for Making Ethical Decisions*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980. Call Number 174.2 S545 1980.
- Simpson, Sheila. *The Survivor's Guide: Coping with the Details of Death*. Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1990. Call Number 306.9 S613 1990.
- Sproul, R.C. *Surprised by Suffering*. New York: Walker and Co., 1991. Call Number 236.1 S771 1988.
- Sunderland, Ronald. *Handle with Care: A Handbook for Care Teams Serving People with AIDS*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. Call Number 259.4 S958 1990.
- Uhlmann, Michael M. *Last rights?: Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia debated*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1997. Call Number 179.7 L349 1997.
- Walsh, Froma and Monica McGoldrick, eds. *Living Beyond Loss: Death in the Family*. New York: Norton, 1991. Call Number 306.9 L785 1991.
- Watson, Jeffrey. *Courage to Care: Helping the Aging, Grieving, and Dying*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992. Call Number 259 W339 1992.
- Wennberg, Robert N. *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989. Call Number 179.7 W476 1989.
- Whytehead, Lawrence and Paul Chidwick, eds. *Dying: Considerations Concerning the Passage from Life to Death*. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1980. Call Number 174.24 D996 1980.
- Winslade, William. *Choosing Life or Death: A Guide for Patients, Families, and Professionals*. New York: Free Press, 1986. Call Number 174.24 W777 1986.

## **B. Books - Funerals**

- Aries, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Call Number 306.9 A713 1991.
- Anglican Church of Canada. *The Burial of the Dead*. N.p.: Anglican Church of Canada, N.d. Call Number 264.035 A589.
- Biddle, Perry. *A Funeral Manual*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994. Call Number 265.85 B584 1994.
- Blair, Robert. *The Minister's Funeral Handbook: A Complete Guide to Professional and Compassionate Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990. Call Number 265.85 B635 1990.
- Iseron, Kenneth V. *Death to Dust: What Happens to Dead Bodies?* Tucson, AZ: Galen Press, 1993. Call Number 306.9 I78 1993.
- Morgan, Ernest. *A Manual to Death Education & Simple Burial*. Burnsville, N.C.: Celo Press, 1980. Call Number 128.5 M847 1980.
- O'Connor, Joey. *Heaven's Not a Crying Place: Teaching Your Child About Funerals, Death, and the Life Beyond*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1997. Call Number 248.866 O18 1997.
- Peterson, Eugene H. and Calvin Miller and others. *Weddings, Funerals, and Special Events*. Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1987. Call Number 253 W388 1987.
- Richmond, Kent. *A Time to Die: A Handbook for Funeral Sermons: Includes Sample Sermons for Difficult Funerals*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. Call Number 252.1 R532 1990.
- Roman Catholic Liturgy Committee. *In Sure and Certain Hope: An Anthology of Exemplary Funeral Messages*. Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 1985. Call Number 252.1 I35 1985
- Schmidt, Melvin. *Funerals and Funeral Planning*. Newton, KS: Faith And Life Press, 1980. Call Number 265.85 S353 1980.
- Swords, Liam, ed. *Funeral Homilies*. New York: Paulist Press, 1985. Call Number 252.1 F981 1985.

*The Word Is Life: An Anthology of Funeral Meditations*. Lima, OH: CSS Pub. Co., 1994. Call Number 252.1 W924 1994.

### C. Books - Grieving

- Bair, Alisa. *A Table for Two: A Mother and Her Young Daughter Face Death Together*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1998. Call Number 248.866 092 B163 1998.
- Cook, Alicia Skinner. *Dying and Grieving: Lifespan and Family Perspectives*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, And Winston, 1989. Call Number 155.9 37 C771 1989.
- Cushenbery, Donald C. *Coping With Life After Your Mate Dies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991. Call Number 248.86 C984.
- Deits, Bob. *Life After Loss: A Personal Guide Dealing With Death, Divorce, Job Change, and Relocation*. Tucson, AZ: Fisher Books, 1988. Call Number 155.93 D325 1988.
- Donnelly, Katherine Fair. *Recovering from the Loss of a Parent*. New York: Berkley Books, 1993. Call Number 155.9370854 D685 1993.
- Drescher, John M. *In Grief's Lone Hour*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986. Call Number 242.4 D773 1986.
- Greenson, Charlotte and Mary Hollingsworth and Michael Washburn, eds. *The Grief Adjustment Guide: A Pathway through Pain*. Sisters, OR: Questar Publishers, 1990. Call Number 248.86 G848 1990.
- H., Arthur. *The Grieving Indian*. Winnipeg: Intertribal Christian Communications, 1988. Call Number 248.86 H111 1988.
- Heavilin, Marilyn. *December's Song*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1988. Call Number 155.9 37 H442 1988.
- Heegaard, Marge Eaton. *Coping With Death & Grief*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1990. Call Number 155.937 H458 1990.
- Huntley, Theresa. *Helping Children Grieve: When Someone They Love Dies*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991. Call Number 155.937 H954 1991.
- Johnson, Sherry E. *After A Child Dies: Counseling Bereaved Families*. New York: Springer Pub Co., 1987. Call Number 155.937 J69 1987.
- Jones, Doris Moreland. *And Not One Bird Stopped Singing: Coping With Transition and Loss in Aging*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1997. Call Number 248.866 J76 1997.
- Kuenning, Delores. *Helping People Through Grief*. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1987. Call Number 259.6 K95 1987.
- Lafond, Virginia. *Grieving Mental Illness: A Guide for Patients and Their Caregivers*. Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1994. Call Number 155.93 L165 1994.
- Mannino, J. Davis. *Grieving Days, Healing Days*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997. Call Number 155.937 M283 1997.
- McCall, Junietta Baker. *Grief Education for Caregivers of the Elderly*. NY: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1999. (In Process).
- Miller, Jolanda. *You Can Become Whole Again: A Guide to Healing for the Christian in Grief*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981, 248.86 M648 1981.
- Mitchell, Kenneth R. *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs: Resources for Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983. Call Number 253 M681 1983.
- Munday, John S. *Surviving the Death of a Child*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Call Number 155.937 M965 1995.
- Neufeld, Elsie. *Dancing in the Dark: A Sister Grieves*. Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1990. Call Number 248.86 092 N482 1990.
- Rando, Therese A. *Grief, Dying, and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers*. Champaign, IL: Research Press Co., 1984. Call Number 155.937 R192 1984.
- Rando, Therese A, ed. *Loss and Anticipatory Grief*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Health, 1986. Call Number 155.937 L881 1986.
- Shapiro, Ester R. *Grief as a Family Process: A Developmental Approach to Clinical Practice*. New York: Guilford Press, 1994. Call Number 155.937 S529 1994.
- Schiff, Harriet Sarnoff. *Living Through Mourning: Finding Comfort and Hope When a Loved One Has Died*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Call Number 155.937 S333 1987.

- Shaw, Luci. *God in the Dark: Through Grief and Beyond*. Grand Rapids, MI: Broadmoor Books, 1989. Call Number 362.196994240092 S535 1989.
- Shuchter, Stephen R. *Dimensions of Grief: Adjusting to the Death of a Spouse*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986. Call Number 155.937 S562 1986.
- Smith, Joanne. *How to Say Goodbye: Working through Personal Grief*. Lynnwood, WA: Aglow Publications, 1990. Call Number 248.86 S651 1990.
- Sunderland, Ronald. *Getting through Grief: Caregiving by Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993. Call Number 259.6 S958 1993.
- Schmitt, Abraham. *Turn Again to Life: Growing through Grief*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1987. Call Number 248.86 S355 1987.
- Taylor, James. *Surviving Death: Healing and Growing through Grief*. Winfield, BC: Woods Lake Books, 1993. Call Number 155.9 37 T243 1993.
- Taylor, James. *Letters to Stephen: A Father's Journey of Grief and Recovery*. Kelowna, BC: Northstone, 1996. Call Number 155.937 T243 1996.
- Wangerin, Walter. *Potter*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994. Call Number E W246 1994. (Children's Book - Restricted loan)
- Wangerin, Walter. *Mourning into Dancing*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. Call Number 248.86 W246 1992.
- Weems, Ann. *Psalms of Lament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Call Number 811.54 W397 1995.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Comforting the Bereaved*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985. Call Number 259.6 W648 1985.
- Williams, Donna Reilly. *Grief ministry: helping others mourn*. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 1992. Call Number 259.6 W722 1992.

#### D. Audiovisual Resources

- A Child's View of Grief: A Guide for Caring Adults*. Video recording. Service Corp. International, 1990. Call Number VID 155.9 37 C537c 1990. (VHS 20 Minutes. Home Use Only. Includes Guide).
- Living with Grief After Sudden Loss: Suicide, Homicide, Accident, Heart Attack, Stroke*. Video recording. Service Corp. International, 1996. Call Number VID 155.9 37 L785 1996. (VHS 21 Minutes. Home Use Only. Includes Guide).
- Someone You Love Is Dying. How Do You Cope?* Video recording. Service Corp. International, 1992. Call Number VID 155.9 37 S693 1992. (VHS 21 Minutes. Home Use Only. Includes Guide).
- Wimber, John. *Healing the Dying*. Audiocassette. Vineyard Ministries International, 1985. Call Number CASS 234.13 W757 1985.
- Working Through Your Grief*. Video recording. Service Corp. International, 1989. Call Number VID 155.9 37 W926 1989. (VHS 21 Minutes. Home Use Only. Includes Guide).

