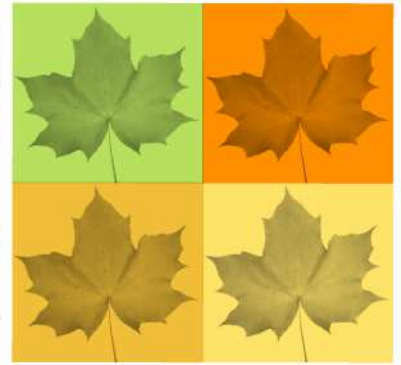


SEASONS

“Embracing the Seasons of Life.”



March/April 2009

A well-known saying states: March roars in like a lion and leaves like a lamb! March is a month of changes – from winter to spring, from coldness to warmth, from inactivity to signs of new and renewed life. The process of grieving can be compared with the month of March, for grieving involves change.

It is hard to predict exactly what or when something will occur. Strong emotions such as sadness, fear, guilt, anger and rage are hard to predict. Like the storms of March, these strong emotions are a normal and natural part of grief.

Sadness typically occurs due to the loss of the loved one and the consequences of that loss. When we lose a loved one we also lose our security in that relationship, our dreams for the future with that person, and our identity related to that person. Sadness can intensify especially at holidays, Anniversaries, or other family events. Intense sadness can lead to situational depression. If, for a sustained period of time, the grieving person finds it difficult to do typical daily activities it may be appropriate to seek counseling.

Fear is also an emotion often experienced in grief. Our fear can be focused on different issues: fear of “What is going to happen to me now?”; fear of carrying on the responsibilities of home and family without the loved one; fear of financial loss. Facing and talking about our fears can help calm them.

Many people express feelings of guilt or regret following the death of a loved one. The term guilt is often misused, since the person may feel “guilty” in spite of having done nothing wrong. The more appropriate term may be “regret”. The griever often expresses regrets over not having done enough for or said enough to their loved one. It is easy to take upon ourselves the “should’ve, could’ve, would’ve” feelings – “should I have done that, could I have done better, would my loved one still be alive if...” It is very difficult to talk someone out of these feelings. The griever needs to remember that they are a human being with limitations and they did the best they could to take care of their loved one. Often we remember the times we were not readily available to our loved one and forget the many times we did so much for them.

Anger can, and often is, focused on specific individuals or groups of people. Family, friends, and medical personnel often become the focus of anger for the person mourning a loss. This anger arises from the hurt and pain of what was done or not done, said or not said, during the crisis time of illness and/or death.

If grief, anger is frequently expressed towards the deceased loved one. The death may be seen as a result of the deceased one’s own action or inaction. The deceased is perceived as being “at peace” or “at rest,” while the grieving person is left to struggle on alone in turmoil and pain.

Anger can also be turned inward on one’s self. There is a heightened awareness of one’s own vulnerability and inabilities. Anger leads to and feeds on feelings of guilt and fear.

Sometimes God or a Higher Power can be the focus of anger. If God is in control of things, then hurt, pain, isolation and loneliness are seen as God's action. It is perceived that God made (or at least allowed) this to happen; therefore, it is God's fault that the human hurts.

In grief we must expect these emotions to occur, anticipating that the degree of emotion will be better on some days than others. The death of our loved one has perhaps left us feeling isolated, restless, not sure what to do next. These are all normal and natural reactions to loss. Time does heal, but it is important to do the "work" of grieving. A vital part of this process is acknowledging the feelings as they come and finding someone trustworthy to talk with about these feelings.

Here are some suggestions for coping with the anger and rage of grief:

1. **Remember, Honesty is the Best Policy.** Be honest with yourself about your feelings.
2. Safe communication is the key to coping with the energy and tension of anger. If you try to control and contain anger, it often will show itself in innuendos, snide remarks and bitterness, which can cut off all communication. If you allow anger to express itself safely, it can often bring about constructive changes and better communication in the future. Anger often requires loud physical expression. Doug Manning talks of a woman who breaks cheap dishes as a way of releasing her anger. Stomping on aluminum cans will produce the same effect, as well as helping to recycle. Punching pillows can work, but many people have found slapping a washer or dryer or cleared counter top with a wet towel is more effective since a sound is heard. Screaming at people can cause further hurt feelings and isolation. Consider, instead, a good old-fashioned temper tantrum in the privacy of your own basement where you can scream, yell and cry your anger out in safety and privacy.

Once the energy and tension of the anger is expressed and released, the anger itself is no longer the focus of attention. Attention can now be paid to the source of the anger, and a healing process can begin.

For more reading material regarding anger in grief, we make these suggestions:

- Kushner, Harold, *Who Needs God?* New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1989.
- Kushner, Harold, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People.* New York: Schocken Books. 1981
- Wolff, Pierre, *May I Hate God?* Paulist Press. 1983.

If you need to talk with one of our staff, privately, please call the nearest Diakon Hospice Saint John office. Please see attached calendar for upcoming Bereavement groups.

Diakon Hospice Saint John Pastoral Care and Bereavement Team

The Rev. Linda Williams Allentown Area (610) 391-2300 (888) 754-4608	The Rev. Linda Haring Wyomissing Area (610) 320 – 7980 (610) 882-4530	The Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer Hazleton Area (570) 459-6778 (877) 438-3511	The Rev. Arthur Harshman Honesdale Area (570) 251-8712 (800) 622-3315
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*The Rev. Brian Kern
Bereavement Coordinator
Allentown/Wyomissing Area
(888) 754-4608*

*The Rev. Tom Neuviller
Bereavement Coordinator
Hazleton/Honesdale Area
(800) 622-3315*

Please remember if you are feeling cut off and alone in your pain, we are here to listen; we do care.

ALLENTOWN AREA

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meetings

Bereavement support is provided by the Allentown chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Linda Williams at (610) 391-2308 for information about grief support groups being held in your area.

WYOMISSING

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meeting

Bereavement support is provided by Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Lynda Haring at (610) 320-7980 or Family Life Services at (888) 499-2699 for the latest information on the location of these groups.

HAZLETON AREA

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meetings

These information gatherings are open to all those who are grieving. There is no cost, however, registration is required. For more information or to register for a Grief Support Group please contact Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer at (570) 459-6778.

Hazleton: Monday, March 2, 2009 and April 6, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m. at the rectory of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, 122 S. Wyoming Street, Hazleton.

HONESDALE

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meeting

For more information on Grief Support Groups please contact Rev. Arthur Harshman at (57) 251-8712 or (800) 622-3315.

East Stroudsburg: Tuesday, March 3, 2009 and April 7, 2009, 1:00-2:30 p.m., at Pocono Lutheran Village, 329 E. Brown Street, East Stroudsburg. This support group is open to the public.

Milford: Wednesday, March 4, 2009 and April 1, 2009, 1:00-2:30 p.m., at Belle Reve, 404 East Hartford Street, Milford. This support group is open to the public.

Hawley: Thursday, March 19, 2009 and April 17, 2009, 10:30-12:00 noon, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 405 Church Street, Hawley. This support group is open to the public.

Book Review this Month; *The Shack* by William Paul Young

This incredibly popular offering from a virtually unknown author has been storming the bestseller lists for the past two years, having been described by reviewers as a book that “will change the way that you think about God forever.” To date three million copies are in circulation and the enthusiasm is still high regarding the unique blend of theology and storytelling the author uses to tackle some of the deepest questions we all share about God and the way He works.

The story centers on a middle-aged American male, Mackenzie Allen Phillips and his nuclear family. There is a tragedy that decimates this family when the youngest daughter Missy is abducted and murdered during a family camping trip by an infamous child serial killer. Mackenzie has been wrestling with the question of God’s goodness and purpose since this incident, and then one day receives an invitation in his mailbox to meet with “Papa” (a name his wife had used for God) at the shack in the mountains where the evidence of his daughter’s murder was discovered. Following his decision to accept the invitation to go, he travels to the shack and consequently enters into a visionary state where he is given the opportunity to have intimate dialogue not only with “Papa”, but also with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This troubled soul is given space to talk through and wrestle with the conflicts of why bad things happening to good people, why God doesn’t always protect the innocent from evil, and how the Trinity works together to intervene in the lives of human beings.

Some readers may have difficulty with the personification of the members of the Trinity which should at least be referred to as atypical. He also has a very interesting way of describing how the individual members work together. There are also a number of contradictory teachings that surface regarding the issues of salvation, forgiveness and free-will. However this book, with its shortcomings, does a wonderful job of holding the readers attention, even when it is primarily using only dialogue to carry the story. The writer reaffirms that wonderful truths that

- 1.) God is inherently good
- 2.) We can only trust Him if we believe that He is good.
- 3.) That there is a human tendency to create our image of God by looking only at the qualities of people and
- 4.) Evil only exists in relation to what is good. If you have come to a place in your life recently where these questions have once again become relevant then *The Shack* may be just the book for you.