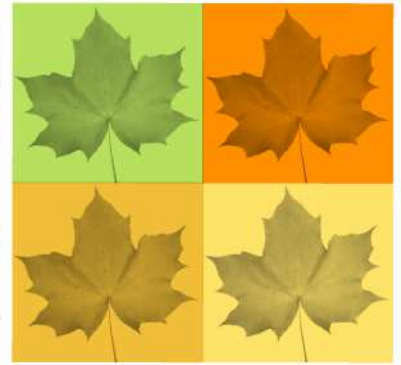


SEASONS

"Embracing the Seasons of Life."



May/June 2009

As this month draws to a close, our nation celebrates Memorial Day. Traditionally, this day has been set aside to remember and honor those members of the armed forces who gave their lives in our nation's wars. This day is now dedicated to the memories of all who have died.

In the past, those mourning the loss of a loved one were encouraged to remember significant events shared with the deceased. By keeping the memories alive, the deceased were honored as their significance and value were more firmly established and understood.

In today's society, the person grieving is encouraged to "get on with his/her life, and "stop dwelling on the past." Suppressing memories is equated with control. Memories not recalled or shared are forgotten, thereby decreasing the value and significance of the deceased.

In American culture, men tend to approach grief differently than conventional grief. It is true each individual is as unique as the way in which he or she expresses grief. However, there are some masculine patterns of grief. The following is an excerpt from *Living With Grief: Who We Are, How We Grieve*, edited by Kenneth J. Doka, and Joyce D. Davidson, Hospice Foundation of America, 1998.

In masculine grief, feelings seem to be muted or moderated. This may indicate masculine grievers view their losses differently than conventional grievers. For instance, masculine grievers value self-control. We are not saying masculine grievers do not have feelings about their losses, they do. Masculine grievers can experience feelings without outwardly appearing to do so.

Effective strategies for masculine and conventional grievers: **Conventional Grievers:** Join support groups; allow time for fully experiencing inner pain; openly express feelings. **Masculine Grievers:** Choose active means of expressing grief through physical exercise, competitive sports or hobbies; maintain a journal; seek companionship in lieu of support.

One of the greatest fears expressed by grieving family members is their loved ones will be forgotten once they've worked through the pain of their grief. The exact opposite is true. By sharing grief and recalling memories you are honoring the deceased. The following was written by Adolfo Quezada, as he discusses his old friend Grief:

"My old friend Grief is back. He comes to visit me once in a while to remind me that I am still a broken man. Surely, there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely, I have adjusted to a world without him. But the truth is we never completely heal; we never totally adjust. Such is the nature of loss that no matter how much time has passed, and no matter how much life has been experienced, the heart of the bereaved will never be the same.

“And so my old friend Grief drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. I’ll hear a certain song or smell a certain fragrance; I’ll look at certain pictures and I’ll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

“But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a sense of loss on anniversaries and holidays, when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in our throat six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting and because moving on with life does not mean we don’t take a part of our lost love with us. Of course, the intensity of the pain decreases over time, if we allow Grief to visit us occasionally. But if the intensity remains, we may be “stuck” and need professional help to move on.

“Sometimes, my old friend Grief sneaks up on me. I’ll feel an unexpected but profound sadness that clings to me for days. Then, I’ll recognize Grief and cry a little, and then I can go on. It’s as though the ones we have lost are determined not to be forgotten. My old friend Grief doesn’t get in the way of living, he just wants to come along and chat sometimes.

“Grief has taught me a few things about living I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis. Old Grief has taught me I can survive even great loss and although my world is different, it is still my world and I must live in it. He has taught me when I let go, I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes, not in spite of my loss but because of it.

“My old friend Grief has taught me the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he’ll be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and gain through loss and pain.”

In closing, we make the following book suggestions:

Resources: [The Courage to Grieve](#) *Creative Living, Recovery, & Growth Through Grief*, by Judy Tatelbaum.

[Don't Let Death Ruin Your Life](#): *A Practical Guide to Reclaiming Happiness After the Death of a Loved One*, by Jill Brooke. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you need to talk with one of our staff, privately, please call the nearest Diakon Hospice Saint John office. A member of the Diakon Hospice Saint John Bereavement team is available 24 hours a day.

Diakon Hospice Saint John Pastoral Care and Bereavement Team

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

*Rev. Brian Kern
Bereavement Coordinator
Allentown/Wyomissing Area
(888) 754-4608*

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

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

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

ALLENTOWN AREA
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
Grief Support Group Meeting

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

HAZLETON AREA
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 the Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer at (570) 459-6778.

Hazleton: Monday, May 4, 2009 and June 1, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m. at the rectory of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, 122 S. Wyoming Street, Hazleton.

Dallas: Tuesday, May 26, 2009 and June 23, 2009, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Dallas.

HONESDALE
Grief Support Group Meeting

For more information on Grief Support Groups please contact the Rev. Arthur Harshman at (570) 251-8712 or (800) 622-3315.

East Stroudsburg: Tuesday, May 5, 2009 and June 2, 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, May 6, 2009 and June 3, 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, May 21, 2009 and June 18, 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

Learning to Fall *The Blessings of an Imperfect Life* by Philip Simmons

Learning to Fall *The Blessings of an Imperfect Life* by **Philip Simmons**. Philip Simmons was diagnosed with ALS in his 30s. He died in 2002, leaving behind a wife and two children. A professor of creative writing before his death, Mr. Simmons wrote a collection of essays framed by his terminal illness.

The following is an excerpt from his book:

“We are all—all of us—falling. We are all, now, this moment, in the midst of that descent, fallen from heights that may now seem only a dimly remembered dream, falling toward a depth we can only imagine, glimpsed beneath the water’s surface shimmer. And so let us pray that if we are falling from grace, dear God let us also fall *with* grace, *to* grace. If we are falling toward pain and weakness, let us also fall toward sweetness and strength. If we are falling toward death, let us also fall toward life.”

This story focuses not so much on Philip Simmons dying as it does his “living.” As in life, it is our own vulnerability that opens us up to the world around us. If you are seeking to open yourself to a more broad reality, to walk the path others have walked before you, then this book is a must read. You may read this book expecting to learn how Philip Simmons learned to live with his own mortality, but you will instead learn how to deal with your own.

This book is both humorous and profound, a guide to living rather than dying. Mr. Simmons uses the backdrop of New England towns, weather, and life in general to remind us life is short and to follow through with our plans today, because there may not be a tomorrow.

Although this book is supposed to be about ALS, you will find it uplifting because the author has found acceptance in his prognosis because of his belief in God. It is difficult to find hope in such a devastating situation, but hope is exactly what the author found and in the process, teaches us all the true meaning of hope.

One becomes part of Philip Simmons’ life when reading this book because he lets us peek not only into his life and thoughts but also those of his wife and children. In the process, he teaches us all how to fall.