

Bereavement charity recruiting a Christian ‘army’ of volunteers to bring hope to the bereaved

Loss & HOPE, a coalition formed to encourage and equip Christian communities to support the bereaved, are calling for an ‘army’ of volunteers to help with the national relief effort now required to support bereaved people due to the coronavirus pandemic.

As this article was published, (Dec 2020) the number of UK Covid-related deaths had passed 60,000, with excess deaths at least a further 21,000, and all of these in addition to the usual 600,000 per annum. Furthermore, the number will continue to increase until such time as the spread of infection is brought under full control.

Loss & HOPE founder, the Revd Canon Yvonne Richmond Tulloch, said: “National and global tragedies such as pandemics and war don’t end when the enemy is defeated. What follows is a prolonged period of adjustment, recovery and healing.

“During this pandemic, restrictions on hospital visits, numbers attending funerals and severely reduced contact with family and friends means that almost everyone bereaved this year will have unprocessed grief and there are thousands more for whom the repeated talk of death is causing past pain to surface. There are literally millions of bereaved people across the UK who urgently need help to process their loss. Without it they could become depressed, or they may suppress their grief, leading, potentially, to longer term mental health problems.

“Bereavement counselling charities such as Cruse Bereavement Care are, and have always, offered vital services to those who grieve, but the task they now face is overwhelming.

“The UK is now experiencing a fast-growing and urgent need for bereavement support. There was great need anyway because the deep pain of grief tends to impact some time after the loss, and even under normal circumstances, people don’t know where to turn.

“We’re facing a ‘tsunami of grief,’ but I’m convinced that light and hope could come through the Church. In my experience, bereaved people welcome anyone who reaches out to help.”

Yvonne and all the coalition members: Church of England Life Events, Care for the Family, HOPE Together and AtaLoss.org, believe that with the right support and resources, Christian communities across the nation are well placed to bring comfort and an appropriate space to enable bereaved people to talk, share and move forward in their grief journeys.

Yvonne added: “I know that Christians worry about the time, commitment and skill required for this area, but that is why we’re here, to support and equip them. For those who have bereavement support very much on their hearts, perhaps even as a vocational calling, there is much we can offer. One very effective resource is *The Bereavement Journey* course – it’s very easy to set up and run, both face-to-face and online, as all the training and set-up advice is provided.”

The six-session *The Bereavement Journey* course is tried and tested at Holy Trinity Brompton, and was created by bereavement counsellor and trustee of AtaLoss.org, Jane Oundjian MBE. It has an optional session at the end with the Christian faith perspective, which is taken up by almost all attendees.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the course, and all of the other advice, resources, training and support offered through Loss & HOPE, is encouraged to visit www.lossandhope.org or contact admin@lossandhope.org.