



Churches can bring comfort to millions with bereavement care backup

Leaders in funerals and bereavement care ministry are calling on churches to be a part of the significant recovery effort now required to support grieving people throughout Christmas and next year.

Loss and HOPE is a Christian coalition which offers churches resources to help them support bereaved families. Its founder, the Revd Canon Yvonne Richmond Tulloch, says that due to pandemic restrictions, a very large number of the people bereaved in 2020 will be feeling isolated with ‘unprocessed’ grief, and that bereavement support charities, such as Cruse, are experiencing long waiting lists. Bereavement ministry through churches is now needed more than ever, she says.

“Grief is usually processed in a variety of ways before, during and after a funeral, but those helpful things have been missing for literally millions of people during the pandemic – things like hospital or care home visits as someone comes to the end of their life, the funeral itself, and opportunities to reflect, talk and hug others in the weeks and months afterwards,” explained Yvonne.

“The emotions of grief are likely to resurface, as they often do, at Christmas, a time when we particularly miss those we no longer see. Then as we move into 2021 and restrictions begin to be eased, I can see that resuming to more normal life could leave millions of people not knowing how to deal with the trauma and pain of the past few months. We are facing a ‘tsunami of grief’. If bereaved people are not enabled to process their loss, they could become depressed, or they may suppress their grief, leading, potentially, to longer term mental health problems. But I’m convinced that light and hope could come through churches. Being present in every community, they are ideally placed to help. They can be in touch with people, listen to stories and show kindness in these difficult times. In my experience, bereaved people really welcome anyone who reaches out to help.”

The Revd Sandra Millar, Head of Church of England Life Events agreed: “With Christmas almost here, there are many things to plan for, but making time and place for those who are grieving is important and helps people know their story is not forgotten. And however people connect, whether through online services or being in church for prayer, another simple thing to do is make sure bereaved people get information about where to get help. [Ataloss.org](https://ataloss.org) is the UK’s signposting website for the bereaved which will enable them to search and find help immediately. Churches could add the link to websites, service sheets and newsletters to help the bereaved over the next few weeks: www.ataloss.org. The next step after Christmas will be to think about how churches can build bereavement support into their longer-term ministry next year. Loss & HOPE has a wealth of support available to help Christian communities do this easily and really well.”

Yvonne added: “One very effective resource is *The Bereavement Journey* course – it’s very easy for any church to set up and run, both face-to-face and online, as everything that’s needed, including all the training and set-up advice, is provided.”

The six-session *The Bereavement Journey* course 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 katy@lossandhope.org.

Ends

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