

St Mark Lutheran Church

2007

Death & Dying Guide



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Grief as a Journey



DEATH AND DYING GUIDE SAINT MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH 2007

MISSION STATEMENT

The experience for those who are dying and their families that surround them is the ultimate spiritual experience. This congregation, its staff, and pastors will strive to bring the kingdom of God into this spiritual experience through prayer, visitation, and love. Saint Mark's congregation will provide a ministry of presence in the face of death.

For the Christian, getting ready for death is not simply allowing death to come passively while submitting to medical and religious experiences. It is, as far as may be possible, the conscious, deliberate employment of prayer, connecting with those special relationships from life, and the forming or deepening of a special temper of soul and acceptance that will fit the human spirit as we prepare with some confidence before our Judge and Lord. Friends and family should deliberately take a positive role in their loved one's death, for it is the last inheritance and memory of who the person is and was, a memory that will be held forever by the survivors.

To place things in a proper perspective we give you "A child's understanding of death and dying" as a role model for the adult.

- Kids talk about death.
- Kids say goodbye and hug.
- Kids cry and laugh when they feel like it.
- Kids know the dead person they love is in heaven with Jesus; no doubt in a child's minds.
- Kids know heaven is a good place.
- A child's conversation on death is short and frequent; they then go back into what they do best, enjoying life.
- We are Children of God and we need to act like it especially as we prepare to meet our Lord and Savior as God the Father.

THE MEDICAL PROCESS WHEN WE ARE TERMINAL

1. The best way to deal with the medical questions is to seek out information via computer, magazines, DVDs, and especially from those who have been there. Get yourself informed on the illness.
2. It is hard and unfair that our bodies cease to serve us as they did in health. It seems a person, as he/she grows ill, will lose honor, modesty, and mental abilities. Prayer, love, and laughter is the process to deal with this injustice of life during



death.

3. It is the ill person's body, and, with family and friends as consultants, a person can make decisions about his/her treatment until he/she reaches the point he/she can't. Though a sick person feels out of control, take control and know you are.
4. The doctors and other professionals work for the patient and families; don't be afraid to ask questions and take their time. If a doctor or another professional will not give you their time and answer questions, get another professional, even a pastor.
5. Write down questions on note pads or cards to ask doctors and other professionals.
6. Find out from the doctor what activities can be done, what can be pushed and what cannot. It is sometimes important to let the person decide what activity to attend; pre-rest, do the activity, and know that the next day will be spent in bed.
7. Find out what each medicine and procedure will do to you positively and negatively.
8. Ask the doctor to have a medical file at each hospital and Emergency Room that outlines what the procedures will be for different contingencies. i.e. what drug medications at certain levels of pain.
9. Talk to the hospital social workers about what can be done at each level of medical care.
10. It is okay to get second opinions, even out of state. However, stay away from most forms of non-traditional medicine; faith healers and others are just out to take your money, preying on the fear of death.
11. Keep files and multiple copies of all medical forms and documents for insurance reasons. You know the medical insurance company is going to question everything. Use the doctor's office to help you pay off the insurance company.
12. Never let the doctor or pastor leave the ill person's room without giving some chance of hope.
13. There are internet blog and website systems for keeping family and friends aware of progress. This leaves a diary and lets people feel part of the process.

WINDING UP EARTHLY AFFAIRS

Forgiveness is the number one priority, for this leads to spiritual completeness. In heaven those sins we have committed don't matter. For the survivors, not being forgiven may last a lifetime.

1. Forgive those who have offended you and, for close family members, personally forgive them. Have your pastor help you through the forgiveness process
2. Family and friends need to forgive personally the offences the dying may have incurred.
3. The terminally ill person needs to forgive themselves for dying.

To help survivors have time to grieve and to give solace to the dying it is important to



a person's memory. The collected monies should be used to purchase something by which to remember the loved one who has passed.

AFTER SOMEONE DIES

1. Take your time dealing with things and paying bills. Grief and bereavement is what is important now.
2. Survivors often have "thin skin" after a death, so be nice to one another.
3. Death becomes a companion. "Companion" is born of the words, "com" for "with" and "pan" for "bread." Companion is someone with whom you eat. After someone dies, you eat death for a while.
 - ◇ Meals are awkward and empty- death is there.
 - ◇ Can't quit thinking about death's details.
 - ◇ The Holy Spirit is also our companion.
 - ≈ Brings up good memories
 - ≈ Brings in people to be with
 - ≈ Helps us get through the day
 - ≈ Prays for us when we can't
4. Grieve over secondary losses
 - ◇ Purpose in life- had been keeping someone alive
 - ◇ Lose your mechanic, or bookkeeper...
 - ◇ Time to be with kids- single parent now who is working
5. People are going to bring you food. They need to give the grieving family food because it gives them an action that says, "I want to care for you." Many families get more food than they need. Smile, say "thank you," let them place the food in the freezer for later or donate it to one of the many homes for the needy. In America food is love.

GRIEF-A PROCESS

1. You have joined a unique fraternity. You are a survivor of a loved one's death.
2. Your grief is unique to you, though many have gone through it before.
3. Grief is not a disease.
4. You will heal and you will become someone different; you will never be the same.
 - a. Honor the pain by allowing yourself to grieve.
 - b. Carry mementoes or photos.
 - c. Go through ceremonies.
 - d. Give yourself time.
 - e. Life is worth living and that belief will bring you to health.
5. Although it does not feel like it, you are in control.
6. The sorrow brought on by death demands the support and compassion from other



7. Don't be afraid to cry with your child and tell them your feelings. You are teaching them how to grieve.
8. The adult survivors need children at this time. It is okay to selfishly love your children and want to spend time with them.
9. Take them out of school to just be home or travel. At some point school can come back onto the agenda unless the child needs their friends, too.
10. Small children are radar dishes that pick up your emotions

THE SERVICE

1. The terminally ill and his/her family may meet with the pastor to discuss what they want for a service; place for the service, bulletins, hymns, music soloists and speakers may be chosen at this time. It is always fun to go through old photographs together, for it builds healthy memories and these photos may be used in the service by PowerPoint presentation or set in frames and placed about the church.
2. Discuss who will be at the service and what kind of space is needed, as well as if there will be a graveside service and if only family and friends are invited.
3. You will want to decide if the funeral home will help at the service.
4. Food is a great healer. Are you going to have a reception at the home, church, or a place of business?
5. In most churches and at Saint Mark there is a funeral coordinator who will help with details during the service.
6. Even if you place in the obituary that you want the cost of flowers to go to some benevolence, people will do both, send flowers and give to the charity. That's because they love you.
7. Tell the pastor if and who you want as the organist and as musicians. St. Mark does have an organist.

8. Suggested Order of Service

- a. Music prelude
- b. Gathering
- c. Greeting
- d. Hymn or solo
- e. Prayer of the Day
- f. Eulogy, speakers, and/or offering the congregation to speak. Be careful of having too many people speak for too long.
- g. Scripture reading or other written offering
- h. Hymn or solo
- i. Sermon
- j. Creed
- k. Prayers
- l. Communion, if desired. Many times we can have a special communion for



- family and close friends before the service in the Fireside Room.
- m. Commendation
 - n. Perfect time for any media offering
 - o. Postlude Music

9. Graveside Service

- a. Note: it is okay to save the graveside for a later day, or location, or until spring.
- b. Is there going to be military rights at the church, graveside, or at the federal cemetery? The funeral director can help make this decision, too.
- c. Arrival of the coffin or urn to the cemetery
- d. Scripture reading
- e. Prayer
- f. Blessing for the deceased
- g. Optional: dirt is placed on the casket as the words, "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to dust" are said.
- h. Prayer: Lord's Prayer
- i. Blessing for the family and friends
- j. Go eat.

CHURCH COSTS

- Congregational members do not have to pay for the pastor's services. Non-members should give the pastor(s) \$125 each.
- Organist- \$100.00
- Soloists-\$75.00; don't take family or friends for granted- offer
- Congregational funeral coordinator \$100.00
- Congregational members do not pay to use the building. Non- members should donate \$75.00
- Cash is preferable. Checks written to Saint Mark have to go through a volunteer system of treasurers for the pastor's, organist, and funeral coordinator to get any monies.

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