

In Life and in Death
We Belong to God



White Memorial Presbyterian Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

Dear Friend,

Writing several years ago, Lisa Hebacker, our former Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care shared these words: “Death is a paradox. It is an absolute mystery with absolute certainty. Reports of near-death experiences notwithstanding, death is an absolute mystery for every living person. It is certain that one day each of us will cease breathing and death occur. I suppose it is the blend of mystery and certainty that makes discussion of matters relating to death almost taboo. Instead of facing matters related to death, we tend to do everything we can to delay it, ignore it and avoid it.”

Good words from a good pastor.

If you are holding this book you have made the choice (or perhaps it has been made, as a matter of circumstance, for you) to not ignore the reality of death. Either someone you love is facing death, you are facing death, you are curious about death, or someone you loved has already died. Perhaps you are wondering, “what’s next?” Or, “how do I prepare my family and friends for life after my life has ended?” In any case, we, at your church, are grateful for the honest way you are engaging the mystery. We are grateful that we have much to share, for the reality of death is one of the drivers of faith and faithfulness.

This book is an introduction to the matters of life and death. It is an introduction to what our faith in God as creator, Jesus as savior, and the Holy Spirit as sustainer have to teach us about living and believing even when death is imminent. Parts I and II of this booklet have much to say about faith in the face of one’s own, or even a loved one’s, mortality.

Some pages are entirely pragmatic: funerals, grief, scriptures, and “things to think about” when planning for the end of life. Part III is where the pragmatic matters are considered in full.

Parts IV and V are about grief, bereavement, and learning the “new normal” that a meaningful death always demands of us. They also contain directions to find resources about how grief can change, challenge, and in some cases, enrich life.

Our prayer as a church family is that you will be enriched in hope as you read this book. Death is scary and life-altering. But faith and the promises of God are strong. In fact, we believe as Jesus taught us: that God is stronger than death. As you read and study, please be at liberty to contact a pastor or reach out for a Stephen Minister. As you consider the weighty matters of this booklet, be in prayer: prayer for understanding; prayer for hope; prayer for the wisdom that comes from God, and God alone.

May hopeful grace abound,
Christopher Edmonston
Pastor

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I. CONSIDERING LIFE AND DEATH

The Gift of Life and the Reality of Death

"In the beginning God...." The image of God creating the first human is in my mind every time I conduct a burial or committal service. I can see the One who is eternal life and love scooping up lifeless clay, giving it shape, and then breathing life and love into that first human creature. It is a tender and powerful image, particularly poignant when one is reciting "Earth to earth and ashes to ashes."

One understanding of God is that God is absolutely beyond limits - all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present. God is infinite love and eternal life. Eternal life, I mean, in the sense that God's life has no beginning and no ending – God simply IS.

Not so for us creatures. We receive a healthy dose of God's life-force, to be sure, but our very nature as creatures means we are faced with limits: Limited power; limited knowledge; limited spans of influence, as well as an inclination toward less-than-perfect love and, well, limited lifetimes. For most of us, we spend most of our lives pushing up against those limits. And, collectively, we might press most firmly against our limited lifespan. Think about all of the medical advances in the last ten years or so or in the last fifty years or so, even in the last 500 years or so. We are preventing more illness than ever before, curing more disease than ever before, and living longer than any who have come before us. Yet we have not managed to reduce the death rate one iota. Indeed, we will, every one of us, die. It is a 100 percent certainty.

Some of us will die as the culmination of a long process of deteriorating health; others of us will die suddenly or unexpectedly. Some of us will die in the fullness of old age; others of us will die in the prime of our lives or even before we reach our prime years. Accident. Disease. Assault. Neglect. We will die in all kinds of ways, yet we will all die in the same way; though it comes

about from a variety of causes, death comes when our breathing ends and our hearts cease to beat.

Resurrection Transforms Life, Death and Grief

And then what? What is on the other side of that last breath? Only faith can offer answers to that question. And Reformed faith will answer that question from the perspective of its central doctrine of the resurrection. What we know and observe is only part of all there is. Creatures are only able to see a shadowy reflection, a cloudy suggestion of the whole picture – or in Paul's words to the church at Corinth, "for now, we see in a mirror dimly." The resurrection of Jesus suggests to us that death is not the final word, that there is yet life beyond this life. And the words of Jesus give us promises that he intends never to forsake us, even when life as we know it is ended.

In Paul's ongoing conversation with the Christians at Corinth he seeks to help the church grapple with the reality of resurrection:

"Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

In the same chapter Paul uses the metaphor of a seed and plant to convey the hope and promise of resurrection. The seed's life must end if the plant is to be born. Such a seed sown is:

"perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Human life is a beginning, a hint of the fullness to follow. Indeed, this life is but a suggestion – and a dim suggestion – of something yet to come.

The promise of resurrection shapes our view of life and alters our view of death. Because of resurrection we can view life as something significantly bigger than what we currently know and experience. Because of resurrection we are freed from viewing death as an ending and freed for viewing it as the beginning of something new. Because of resurrection we are freed to live this life to the full all the way up until the time that we die.

Similarly, resurrection changes the way we grieve the death of those whom we love. Paul again, this time writing to the church at Thessalonica:

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

It is important to be clear that Paul doesn't instruct us to set grief aside. Faith does not mean that that we cannot feel sadness, but it does mean that we need not become lost in sadness. Faith trusts that there is yet life beyond death. That faith allows us to mourn with a foundation of hope beneath us to bolster us and support us through all our losses and griefs.

II. FACING MORTALITY WITH HOPE

Resurrection hope opens the way for us to face our mortality by making end-of-life decisions and putting plans in place. This list of considerations and conversations can guide you through the process of clarifying your own thoughts and recording your own instructions for those who may need to speak for you at some point. Draft your plans concerning the final days of your life, discuss them with medical, legal and personal conversation partners and then review and update your plans occasionally or as indicated by transitions in life. A willingness to leave written directions and to discuss them with close family or friends is a sign of maturity and an act of selfless love.

1. Select about five people whom you trust to be your *community*. Tell them you have chosen them to help you should a need arise, even if it is after midnight. Keep the list of your *community*, with telephone numbers, in a visible place. As you work through these steps, tell your community and close family members where your important papers are kept and how to gain access to them.

2. Consider writing your obituary. Making a record of your life clarifies your sense of accomplishment and suggests hopes you might have for the rest of your life. As you write, think about what is beneath the words you commit to paper. What does life mean to you? How would you define *quality of life*? In what kinds of situations would you want to receive every possible medical treatment and when might you prefer palliative (hospice) care instead?

3. Using your thinking from #2, complete a living will and a health care surrogate form (healthcare power of attorney). Include information on prescriptions, healthcare providers and their telephone numbers, and any other information that would be needed should you need emergency hospital care. For a healthcare power of attorney or a living will to have authority, your doctor must have a copy. It is also important for you to have

had a conversation with your physician so s/he understands what you mean to communicate about your wishes. In case of emergency, the hospital may require copies of these documents. It is helpful to provide the church with additional copies.

4. Put your legal and financial house in order. Secure a safe deposit box if you don't already have one and put key papers there, with copies in an accessible place in your home or office. Consult an attorney about preserving your financial assets should you become incapacitated, about disposing of your assets at death, and about executing the necessary legal documents (will and durable power of attorney).

Writing a will or updating one can be good for your family, but also can be an opportunity for you to make provisions for the church. A simple bequest in a will can have important benefits later. Estate planning techniques such as a charitable remainder trust and charitable lead trust can create immediate gifts with long term benefits for the church and your family.

Endowments and bequests are ways church members and friends make contributions to the church which are designated either by the donor or by the Session as Endowment Funds. The White Memorial Foundation has been established to invest and administer such gifts under the terms established by the donor. A listing of funds that are possible recipients of planned gifts is available from the church office. The funds are also listed in the annual Memorial Evensong program. If you need further information please call one of the pastors.

5. Consider the disposition of your body after your death. Decide whether you want your body donated for medical purposes and if not, decide between cremation or burial. Both are accepted procedures for Presbyterians. Cremation offers many advantages in terms of cost and ease of arrangement, but some people find burial to be more emotionally satisfying. This is a personal decision which ultimately is made by the family or the person

given legal authority to make final arrangements; however, the desires of the deceased are almost always honored if they have been clearly expressed. If you choose cremation, realize that North Carolina law prohibits cremation until at least twenty-four hours after death occurs.

6. Talk with a respected funeral director, or burial or cremation society representative. Prearranged services are a big help, especially if family lives in a distant place. Costs for cremation are about \$1,000 and up, depending upon additional services desired. Burial costs begin at about \$3,000 and can go much higher, depending upon additional services such as the cost of a casket, vault, etc. Invite a family member, pastor, a respected elder, or a trusted friend to go with you to make decisions. Generally speaking, it is good to have someone you trust with you when you are making emotional decisions.

7. Complete the form *Expression of Wishes Surrounding Death* and make a copy available to the church. A copy of the form is enclosed with this booklet; extra copies are available from the church. This form will provide the pastors and your family with helpful information regarding your end-of-life and funeral wishes.

8. Sit down with a few family members and discuss desires and thoughts about death. Having legal documents is not enough. If children or close friends do not know of your plans, then unnecessary, perhaps expensive, delays and consultations may be required to conclude business and personal affairs. This may be the most challenging of all of these suggestions, because people are generally hesitant to have this conversation. At the same time, family members and friends are generally relieved to know their loved one's thinking when they are faced with decisions on their behalf. You can start the conversation simply and directly: "I've been thinking about life and death and want to share some of my thinking with you." A preliminary conversation with a pastor may make the conversation with family or friends easier to initiate.

9. Having carefully made plans and having shared them, get on with life! Enjoy each day to the fullest, giving thanks to God for the friendships and activities which bring meaning to life

III. WHEN DEATH HAS OCCURRED

We are not left to face death in isolation. God has called us to faith in the midst of a community, and that community offers sustaining care and concern in times of grief. When a death has occurred, please notify the church immediately in order that the pastors and congregation may help the bereaved during their time of need.

If the deceased has communicated his or her wishes, then many of the decisions that must be made at the time of death will be fairly straightforward. One of the first decisions regards the disposition of the body, such as by burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. If the deceased's wishes are unclear, this decision should be made by the family in consultation with the pastor. Along with the decision about disposition of the body, survivors will need to decide which service provider will tend to the body. From cremation societies to funeral homes, there is a range of possibilities and it is wise to make an informed choice of service provider.

A second series of decisions has to do with the service(s) of worship that will take place in response to the death. There are two broad categories of service: one that returns the earthly remains to the ground (the committal service) and one that claims the promise of resurrection as a way to move forward in hope (the service of witness to the resurrection). Both services are ordinarily held shortly after the time of death, and the committal service ordinarily precedes the service of witness to the resurrection. This pattern enables the bereaved and the congregation to deal first with the disposition of the body and then to gather in worship in order to be grounded in hope as they face the future. These services may be combined or altered in

consultation with a pastor according to the wishes of the deceased and the desires of the family and friends.

Service of Committal

The Christian service of committal should be conducted with dignity and brevity in the immediate presence of the members and friends of the family of the deceased. The primary purpose of the service is to return (commit) the earthly remains to the ground and to entrust (commit) the deceased to God's eternal care. This service ordinarily occurs in the location where the remains will be placed (i.e., Memorial Garden, graveside, mausoleum). Words of scripture, prayer, and blessing are sufficient for this purpose. Since the service of committal is typically held in conjunction with a service of witness to the resurrection, it tends to be of short duration.

Service of Witness to the Resurrection

The service, one of dignity and simplicity, is a witness to God's love given to all people, a love that strengthens and supports, even in the midst of grief. It is a witness to God's promises in Jesus Christ, as attested by Christ's resurrection from the dead, and to the sure and certain hope that Christ has gone to prepare a place for the children of God. Emphasis is placed upon the readings of scripture for the declaration of Christian hope. Any further readings or music are selected to reiterate God's power over death. As an expression of their common faith, it is appropriate that those assembled join in the singing of hymns that declare belief in the life everlasting. A homily may be preached which likewise bears testimony to hope and promises set forth in scripture. Thanks may be offered for the life of the deceased as well as for family members and other loved ones who grieve. Because the proper object of the service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living, it follows that the body of the deceased is not necessary to the service. The Christian service of witness to the resurrection is considered complete in itself, so another hour and place should be appointed for any fraternal or civic rite.

The service of witness to the resurrection proceeds in similar fashion to a Sunday morning worship service, though it is compressed into a shorter timeframe. A typical order of worship for the service of witness to the resurrection is presented below; modifications may be made in consultation with the pastor(s).

Organ Prelude

(Processional by the family and pastors)

Call to Worship

Hymn of Praise or Thanksgiving

Prayer of Invocation

Readings from the Old Testament

Hymn (optional)

Readings from the New Testament

Brief remarks by the pastor

Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

Hymn of Affirmation (optional)

Words of Committal

Benediction

(Recessional by family and pastor)

Organ Postlude

Sequence of Services

Given the two types of service, two sequences are possible. Most typically, both services, the committal and witness to the resurrection, are held on the same day. The two descriptions that follow presume this circumstance. Family needs may dictate a different approach and this should be decided in consultation with the pastor(s).

1. Committal and/or burial followed by a memorial service: This order allows the focus to be on Christian worship and enables the family to remain at the church following the service to visit with friends. When this sequence is chosen, the family, others invited to attend, and the pastor(s) gather at the cemetery or in the Memorial Garden about an hour prior to the announced time for the service of witness to the resurrection. The committal and/or burial is held and then the family goes to the Jane Bell Gathering

Space (henceforth *Gathering Space*) at the church prior to entering the sanctuary. Following the service, the family ordinarily returns to the Gathering Space to receive friends.

2. Funeral service followed by committal and burial: This sequence begins with the family and the pastor coming to the Gathering Space, then entering the sanctuary together, where the casket may or may not be present. If present, the casket is covered with a pall (a beautifully embroidered cloth designed to cover the casket and available from the church). If a blanket of flowers is used, the flowers are removed while the casket is in the sanctuary. Following the service, the casket is removed and the pastor(s) and family follow the casket out. A funeral procession is formed and the family, invited friends and the pastor(s) travel to the cemetery where the committal service is held.

Resources for Service Planning

While the pastors are willing to plan the entire service and often do so, family members are encouraged to assist in the planning. Such assistance may include a choice of hymns and scripture lessons as well as input into the prayers and remarks.

1. Hymns: Hymn singing is central to the service of witness to the resurrection. Singing offers both a release of emotional response and a source of strength. Hymns often say what needs to be said more eloquently than words alone can convey. Finally, hymn singing offers a way for the gathered congregation to participate in the service. Any and all hymns are appropriate for singing at a service of witness to the resurrection. The list that follows represents some of the more frequently used hymns.

Abide With Me (#836)

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound (#649)

Be Thou My Vision (#450)

Day Is Done (#676)

Fairest Lord Jesus (#630)

For All the Saints (#326)

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God (#730)

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (#611)
Lead On, O King Eternal (#269)
Lift High the Cross (#826)
Now Thank We All Our God (#643)
Our God, Our Help in Ages Past (#687)
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty (#35)
The Church's One Foundation (#321)
The Day of Resurrection! (#233)

2. Scripture readings: Selections from both the Old and New Testament are read during the service of witness to the resurrection, and anything in the Bible is fine for reading at the service. Family members may make selections or speak with the pastor(s) for help in selecting passages that reflect the life or faith of the deceased and the needs of the family, as well as the hope of resurrection. The list that follows represents some of the more beloved choices.

Job 19:23-27
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15
Isaiah 40:1-11
Isaiah 40:28-31
Isaiah 65:17-25
Psalm 23
Psalm 46:1-5, 10-11
Psalm 90:1-10, 12
Psalm 103
Psalm 121
Psalm 130
Psalm 139:1-12
Matthew 18:1-5, 10
Mark 10:13-16
Luke 23:33, 39-43
John 11:17-27
John 14:1-6, 25-27
Romans 8:14-23, 31-39
Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58

2 Corinthians 4:16—5:1

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

3. Prayers and remarks: One of the most helpful parts of service planning is spending time with the pastor(s) talking about the deceased and your relationship to him or her. Such pastoral conversation is helpful to the pastor whether or not s/he knew the deceased, and it is often helpful to the family as a support to the beginning of grief work. Prepare for this time by considering how this person influenced the family and others and what particular attributes from his/her life have contributed to the lives of others. Think in terms of the question, "What are the good and gracious influences which passed from the life of the deceased into our lives and for which the world is better because of her/his having lived among us?" or, "How was the image of God uniquely revealed in the life of the deceased?"

WMPC Guidelines

These guidelines are offered as a way to anticipate some of the practical questions surrounding the planning of a service of witness to the resurrection at White Memorial Presbyterian Church.

1. Ordinarily, at least one WMPC pastor presides at services for members of the church family. Leadership of the service may be shared by other pastors if the family so desires and the Session approves of the invitation. The pastor(s) shall be in sole charge of the service. Please consult a pastor about his or her availability and the availability of church facilities *before* confirming or publishing the time or date of any service.

2. Members of our church family are urged to talk with one of the pastors about plans and desires to be carried out at the time of death. Forms are available from the church office to facilitate this pastoral care conversation. (Earlier sections of this booklet address the preparation in detail.)

3. Members of the church family are encouraged to hold services in the church sanctuary and/or in the Memorial Garden. However, the pastors are willing and available to conduct the service in the place the family chooses, including the home, a funeral parlor, cemetery or mausoleum.
4. WMPC pastors do not expect payment for conducting services for members of the church family. Honorariums are at your discretion and are gratefully accepted .
5. There is no charge for use of any church facility. If the family or estate of the deceased wishes to make a contribution to the church, it will be received with appreciation, but such a contribution is neither requested nor expected.
6. Flowers may be ordered for the service. However, they are limited to one arrangement on the stand (or table) at the back of the chancel. For safety reasons, such arrangements must fit in the church's vases. In lieu of purchased flowers, the church's silk flower arrangements, or fresh flowers remaining from a previous service, may be used. Please coordinate flowers with the Pastoral Assistant.
7. All music will be under the direction of the Director of Music. Outside soloists or instrumentalists may be invited to supplement the music offered by WMPC staff musicians; fees charged for their services shall be paid by the family or estate.
8. The Witness to the Resurrection Guild supports the conducting of the service of witness to the resurrection. A member of the Witness to the Resurrection Guild will be present in the narthex to assist as needed. Other Guild members will serve as ushers for the service. Ushers will distribute registration cards to the congregation as they gather for worship; ushers will also collect the cards after the service and deliver them to the family.

9. Guild members handle all arrangements involving the casket while it is in the sanctuary. The family may identify pallbearers to handle the casket at the place of burial. Designated seating for the service of witness to the resurrection may be reserved for pallbearers, typically across the aisle from reserved family seating.

10. The casket, if present during the service, shall be closed at all times. A funeral pall is available as a covering to the casket while in the church. The pall (or an American flag, if appropriate) is always used over the casket when the casket is in the sanctuary. A travelling pall is also available to cover the casket at the cemetery.

11. A flag may also be present for memorial services, folded on a stand and placed in the nave.

12. We request no photography in the sanctuary or chapel during the service.

13. The service is ordinarily digitally recorded and copies are provided for immediate family members.

14. The church, through Presbyterian Women Circles or the Bereavement Care Teams, offers a variety of services to families. This ministry includes preparing and serving a meal to the family and out of town friends of the deceased, providing someone to stay in the home during the service, and offering a bag of essentials such as cups, napkins, and other supplies to facilitate visits in the family home. There is no charge for any of these ministries, although gifts to our bereavement care fund are gratefully received.

15. Memorial Garden Guidelines:

- a) White Memorial Presbyterian Church has set aside a plot of land known as the H. Edwin Pickard Memorial Garden for the scattering or the inurnment of the cremated remains of members of the church, their families, and others approved by the Session. Note that the term *scattering* refers to burial of ashes without use of an urn, so the ashes are loose - scattered - in the ground. WMPC makes no provision for broadcasting ashes on top of the ground in the Memorial Garden. *Inurnment*, on the other hand, refers to placing a container of cremains into a niche in the wall.
- b) Cremated remains may be scattered (as defined in 15a) in the Memorial Garden or inurned in the niches within the Memorial Garden. Urns are used only for inurnment in the niches. Please note that niches will only hold small urns.
- c) A memorial tablet or plaques within the Memorial Garden may contain the deceased's name and dates of birth and death.
- d) Although no fee is charged, contributions to the Memorial Garden fund are encouraged and ordinarily will be expected from the estate or family when the Memorial Garden is utilized. Suggested contributions range from \$50 for scattering only; \$200 for scattering and/or a memorial plaque; \$1,000 for a niche and a plaque, and \$200 for a second inurnment using the same niche and plaque. Additional contributions to defray costs of maintenance and landscaping will be appreciated.
- e) This booklet provides brief highlights from a longer document of detailed guidelines and policies governing eligibility and use of the Memorial Garden. Copies of the longer document, along with related paperwork for

arranging use of the Memorial Garden, are available from the church office upon request.

Memorial Gifts

Often the deceased or the family expresses the desire that flowers not be sent by relatives and friends and that instead contributions be made to organizations or causes in which the family has a special interest. The newspaper may include such a desire in the paid funeral notice; however, out-of-town friends and relatives may not know of the wish and others may decide to send flowers anyway.

1. All memorial gifts sent to the church are acknowledged to the donor, and on a regular basis (typically monthly) the family is notified of names and addresses of donors.
2. Memorial gifts are placed in the fund designated by the donor or, if no designation is made, in the fund designated by the deceased or the family. When unrestricted memorials exceed \$500, the Memorials Fund Committee will consult with the family regarding use of the funds. Otherwise the contributions are placed in the general Memorial Fund of the church.
3. It is the policy of the church not to acknowledge memorials through the use of plaques; rather, memorials are acknowledged through entries in the annual Evensong booklet located in the Gathering Space.
4. Special memorial funds may be created in the name of the deceased. Ordinarily, these funds have an initial balance in excess of \$50,000. Consult a pastor to explore creating a memorial fund.

IV. FINDING A NEW NORMAL

Bereavement is the state of having had something or someone you love removed from your life. There is quite literally a gaping hole in your life and the normal that you once knew will never exist again.

How does one begin again after the death of a loved one? For some it may seem impossible. The emotional bond may have been so strong that death leaves an open wound, which nothing can heal.

For others, death may mean release – release from a long and difficult illness and the strain of nursing someone through the final days of life. Death may offer relief from a difficult, not particularly happy, relationship.

In any event, death creates a feeling of loss; the death of a loved one leaves a void. Suddenly extra time is available, or a financial advisor is missing. A parent or grandparent is no longer available for a child to talk to. Perhaps the object of resentment and wrath is gone. Often the survivors closest to the deceased do not know how to go on with life. People who work extensively with those in grief offer the following suggestions to those facing the transition to life after loss:

1. Resist internalizing advice that tells you how you *should* grieve, and instead give yourself permission to grieve in whatever ways and over whatever timeframe feels right for you. That said, some process of grief is necessary. It is a myth that time heals all wounds; and grief is not likely to go away without some intentional work. Grief may well attend you for the rest of your life, but with some work, it can find a comfortable, even useful place in your life.

2. Realize that life will never be the same again, but life can be good again. New friendships and interests need to be

developed; a new way of looking at life needs to evolve. When survivors choose to feel sorry for themselves and refuse to try to recover, some friends will offer pity, but others will avoid them.

3. Being active is a good way to work through sadness. Accept invitations to go out with others, take advantage of church and civic affairs, promise to call someone every day and offer a word of encouragement, take a shut-in a flower, give a non-driver a ride, volunteer to help at the church or somewhere else in the community. There are a thousand ways to fill the day with people – and most will cause others to be eternally grateful to you.

4. Balance activity with intentional grief work by finding someone with whom to talk out feelings. Death stirs up resentment, guilt, anxiety and anger as well as fond memories. A good friend, a pastor, a Stephen Minister, or a skilled counselor can listen as the bereaved works through the feelings that follow death. Keeping feelings bottled up inside eventually causes sickness, either physical, emotional and/or spiritual. Our church offers regular grief workshops. The pastors can give more information about other community resources such as the Horizon Grief Center at Transitions LifeCare and additional support services provided by WMPC.

5. Many times children and grandchildren need someone to talk to about the loss of a loved one. Find a way to help the child sort through confusion, perhaps by making a scrapbook incorporating photos and anecdotes about all the ways that person has been important in his or her life. A church school teacher or family friend can also help in this regard. In addition, the church library has a collection of books that have been found helpful to encourage children to talk about their feelings.

6. Realize that the death of a loved one can lead to a new relationship with God. Death puts life into new perspective. Read the Psalms. Work through a book such as St. Augustine's

Confessions, Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, or Howard Rice's *Reformed Spirituality*.

7. Try not to make any major decision concerning money, disposition of property, job change, etc., for at least six months and preferably one year. Tell those who may contact you seeking to encourage you to invest that you already have received advice. Put any money you receive from insurance into insured Certificates of Deposit or treasury bills for a year. Take your time before you invest life insurance proceeds or inherited funds. When a loved one dies, major decisions may appear necessary or desirable, but time has a way of resolving some of these issues. Grief can impair your usual clear thinking, so it is wise to make significant decisions slowly, carefully and deliberately.

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Thanks be to God.**

V. READING RESOURCES ON GRIEF

From the White Memorial Library

A. For Those Who Grieve...

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis. In this very personal journal, Lewis shares his anguish, pain, and his faith of the death of his wife. (RC242.4/LEW)

In Memoriam, by Henri J.M. Nouwen. Theologian Nouwen tells of his experience of and reflections on his mother's death. (248.2/NOU)

Lament for a Son, by Nicholas Wolterstorff. The author offers a simple, honest, and poignant expression of his grief following his son's death. (1559/WOL)

Psalms of Lament, by Ann Weems. This lovely book of poetry is "for those who weep and those who weep with those who weep." (811.54/WEE)

Mourning Into Dancing, by Walter Wangerin, Jr. Here we find the stages of grief, with suggestions on how to help the grief-stricken and to find a loving God in our grief. (248.8/WAN)

Life After Loss, by Bob Deits. Deits offers practical ways to work through grief and to find renewal of life. (155.93/DEI)

B. For Parents of Grieving Children...

Helping Children Grieve, by Theresa Huntley. Huntley tells how children at various ages understand death and offers positive ways to help them grieve. (155.9/HUN)

Healing the Bereaved Child, by Alan Wolfelt. Using gardening as a model, the author explores the ways in which bereaved children can not only heal but grow through grief. (155.9/WOL)

Lifetimes: A beautiful way to explain death to children, by Bryan Meelonie (E/M)

C. For Children Who Grieve...

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney, by Judith Viorst. (JF/VIO)

Aarvy Aardvard Finds Hope, by Donna O'Toole. (E/O)

Remembering Mamma, by Dara Dokas. (E/D)

The church library has a large number of books on death, grief, and loss. Look in the computer under the subjects: Grief, Death, Bereavement.

Stephen Ministry and a special gift in loving memory of Robert L. and Miriam P. Conder, Sr. have underwritten the cost of the printing of this publication. This booklet is dedicated to the members of this congregation who serve as Stephen Ministers, with gratitude to God for their gifts and their compassion.