

Community Grief

Provided by St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church

Ideas about helping a community through its grieving process:

1. We pull together in times of grief. Gathering for a community memorial service may help—as do small group gatherings like today.

2. We want to do something in our grief. Why do we take food and send flowers during a time of grief? Because it is our way of doing something with our grief. It is our way of saying to the family, “We’re with you.” It is our way of saying to the community, “We care.” In our helplessness, doing something helps ease the pain.

3. We want to identify with the grieving. The folks in our church had a lot of stories about those who had died. Letting people tell those stories provides a measure of healing as they identify with others who grieve, as well.

4. We want some assurance that we will get through this. As pastors, we cannot give easy, glib answers to the questions people have during times of grief, but we can assure them that God is with us in our grief, and that we will move through this time of grief. We must acknowledge grief while holding up hope—sometimes a fine line.

5. We need anchors in the midst of our grief. Gathering at the Table for communion, all people can celebrate both the death of Christ in his broken body and shed blood, and the victory of Christ in his resurrection. Communion can be a memorial of hope for a community. Prayer is an anchor that also gives hope.

6. We do not want our grief used as a pretext for other agendas. Community grief provides an opportunity to share the love and hope of Christ with others. The focus is on our grief and our hope, not on other agendas.

7. We want others to acknowledge our loss. We want others to show respect for our loss and churches could lead the way in this expression of sorrow. Perhaps a remembrance service or posting people’s names on a website – there are many ways to acknowledge a community’s grief instead of suppressing it within. Open acknowledgement opens the door to healing.

We, as the church of Christ, do not have to provide easy answers, but we can provide the presence of Christ who understands our suffering and sorrow.