



THE CARE COURIER

November -December 2020, Vol 6 Issue 4

Welcome Introduction to Holiday Care Courier

The Rev. Maureen Doherty, Grief Support Coordinator

As we come to the final couple of months of the year the general feeling is that this will be a good year to bring to an end; it has been heavy and complicated in too many ways. As we think about this though, we are also looking ahead to the most traditional holidays of the year for many—Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Eid al-Fitr (the breaking of the Ramadan Fast). Some of these are religious holidays, some cultural, some National but each is a time of gathering, celebrating, remembering and annually we look forward to this. This year it will be different.

The year has brought us to a time of making decisions about “gathering in wellness and safety.” What about church, mosque, synagogue services? How about family and friends, community meals? This is hard and for those of you who are grieving this adds a layer to your already heavy hearts. You have lost loved ones, spouses, parents, children, friends and the grief journey is long. Holidays have a way of bringing about gladness, laughter, good memories, and many tears. So how do we walk the next couple of months in wellness?

A few years ago in our Grief Support Group, one participant who had lost her husband reminded the group that when things get hard, “GO TO THE GOOD MEMORIES.” These words have worked their way into each group and, there is great wisdom in this. As you look at Thanksgiving traditions, Christmas decorations, listen to the music of the season, what are the best memories? Let these touch your heart and in this space decide what will be the best way for you and family to celebrate, or not this year.

This week I turned to those who are currently attending group to advise you on how to walk through the holidays. Who better to speak to each grieving heart than those who are on the journey? The advice went this way:

Go somewhere different, not where the holidays were spent for the last 30, 40, 50 years.

For this year, try to keep a few of the old ways and start a new tradition.

Holidays are sacred times. Do something sacred. Like reading a letter, saying a loved prayer, singing a favorite song, eating something that your loved one enjoyed. JUST a little something, don't overdo.

Share a dessert. Bring out one pie and lots of silverware and dig in!

Talk about the good memories. Ask each person gathered to share a memory. Laughing, crying, take a moment of silence...all good.

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Silent Night

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Please feel free to bring a friend — All groups are free and open to the public.
WEATHER ALERT: If schools or businesses are closed, the meeting is canceled.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE REV. MAUREEN DOHERTY 319-505-3048.

DATES: November 12, 19
December 10, 17
January 14, 21, 28 (2021)

WHERE: Kearns Funeral Service
3146 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo

TIMES: 11:00 AM-12:30 PM or
5:30 PM-7:00 PM

Afternoon & Evening
Grief Support Groups

*We will provide pizza for all. Bring a drink!
DATES: November 5
January 7 (2021)

WHERE: Kearns Funeral Service
3146 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo

TIME: 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Grief Support Pizza Night

JOIN US every Thursday!
2020 Continuous Care Support Groups



Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, and we can add you to our quarterly newsletter list.



Don't try to avoid talking about the death of your loved one. Every person gathered is thinking about it.

If you have not been doing it, start writing a journal each day. What are your memories, joys, sorrows, good steps forward, moments of feeling stuck. You begin to see how you are doing and treasure the past and each day.

What decorations do you need? What is special? How about a tree? It may be hard to put somethings out, a yet sadder if you don't do something.

It is an "uppy / downy" time. Walk one day at a time.

Take the time you need for yourself. Let friends and family know when you just need space and honor the space that they may need.

This might not be the best season of the year to think about clearing personal items, selling, moving, just be where you are and give thanks. Draw strength from what each holiday is meant to give.

"Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name, make known his deeds among all." Blessings as you walk each day of these holy, holiday, grieving, remembering days.

***This issue also deals very specifically with COVID 19 and the grief that this has added to so many. Know that you are not alone. Support is here if you need an ear, people to be with.



Living Gratefully in the Time of Coronavirus

Article published at www.gratefulness.org/

"As life becomes harder and more threatening, it also becomes richer, because the fewer expectations we have, the more the good things of life become unexpected gifts that we accept with gratitude." — Etty Hillesum

At A Network for Grateful Living we often refer to gratefulness as an orientation to life with an unconditional and expansive embrace. One that isn't reserved for that which is pleasant, desired, or going our way, rather an embrace that accepts and includes the great fullness of life — the entirety of our experience. Such an embrace opens us to the teachings and opportunities within every moment. It offers us what we need not merely to survive difficult times but to appreciate their gifts, even when the gifts take time to reveal themselves. When life feels too small or too big to handle, too predictable or too uncertain, this is when we need gratefulness most.

In the midst of times of uncertainty it serves us to reflect on how gratefulness might help to calm us, reduce fears and expectations, open us to greater clarity and love, and fuel action grounded in our deep intentions. Gratitude is not a panacea. It may not cure or solve our anxiety or concerns but it can foster ease, connection, kindness, and well-being — all valuable qualities which would be good to "go viral" these days. Gratitude cannot save us from sickness or suffering, but it can change how we experience sickness, and it may change our relationship to suffering.

So, what might this mean with regard to how we respond to the immediate concerns of COVID-19? How might gratefulness impact what we do, how we do it, and who we are during this time? How might we seek out and treasure the unexpected opportunities of the moment? In the midst of losses, how can we direct our attention toward the gifts that remain in our lives so as to build greater capacity to face what is challenging?

Here are some possibilities:

Reflect on Goodness — Reflect with gratitude on the sacrifices of health and service workers and all those who are self-quarantining; adjusting habits and lives; working overtime to do research, make tests and vaccines, and provide important, accurate and timely information. Notice opportunities to orient your attention to all the ways that people are caring for fellow human beings around the globe.

Wash your Hands — The 20 seconds recommended to "lather up" offer us an opportunity to slow down to experience gratitude for the gift of hot and cold running water, the miracle of soap, and the wonder of our hands themselves. Consider making a sacred ritual of washing your hands, welcoming the opportunity to meditate on these blessings.

Stay Connected — In this time of physical distancing, might this be an opportunity to connect by phone, text or email with family, friends, and neighbors to see how they're doing? How does it feel to reflect with gratitude on the relationships in our lives and let

people know we care about them? Keep in touch and offer connection in all the ways that you can.

Be Generous — Extend compassion to those whose lives are impacted most by this crisis. Recognize that people's health and livelihoods are in jeopardy and nervous systems are taxed. Try being more patient, kinder, take a deep breath before responding, offer smiles and gratitude freely. Give to organizations whose operations and fundraising efforts are being impacted but whose services will be needed more than ever. Support local businesses struggling as many of us stay home. Consider making a donation in someone's honor or buying gift certificates.

See the Privileges of the Ordinary — In the midst of a focus on how much is being lost, keep noticing all the blessings that remain. Allow yourself to appreciate and be in awe of what is available to you: phones, electricity, showers, the beauty and resilience of the natural world, all the parts of your body that work, the services and systems that serve your ability to function, and so much more.

Commit to that which Sustains You — Allow yourself to stay grounded in the things that preserve your integrity and reinforce the beliefs that help you have faith and hope in difficult times. Maintain or increase the rituals, traditions, reminders, and practices that help you to find calm in the midst of any storm. Read, write, or share poetry. Treat yourself and/or others to A Grateful Day.

When life becomes more trying and challenging, may each of us discover the gifts of gratefulness, and the promise of our love — for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live. •

Maoz Tzur (Stronghold)

Rock of ages, let our song
Praise Your saving power;
You, amid the raging foes,
Were our sheltering tower.
Furious they assailed us,
But Your arm availed us,
And Your word,
Broke their sword,
When our own strength failed us.



The Patience of Ordinary Things

It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience.

Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?

-PAT SCHNEIDER

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.
And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

— Lynn Ungar

From Which It All Began

Tell me, what
would you do today
if you knew your life
to be a celebration
of this world?
Would you stop
to gather sunlight
dropping soundlessly
upon pines
beyond your window pane?
Would you court
dreams too wide
for the container
of consciousness?
Would you linger
in the terrible beauty
of uncertainty
as if the fullness of the world
depended upon your presence?
Would you cast your hopes
upon possibilities that abide
only in departure?
Would you become the motion
of your song,
losing itself in overtones
of delight
or despair
and returning, finally,
to the stillness
from which it all began?

-Bernadette Miller