



Spirituality and Grief Newsletter

May 2009



I was a young, inexperienced member of the clergy when David died. I knew the pastoral care basics of how to support his parents, grandparents, and other adults in our faith community. But I didn't know what to do for his brother, Jack, because I knew very little about how children grieve or what resources were available to help. Thanks in part to the motivation from that experience, children's grief has become a focus of my work in spiritual and grief care. I also have the privilege of educating the community about Chameleon's Journey™ grief camp, a wonderful resource for grieving children and teens in our area. Chameleon's Journey is a special overnight camp for youth, ages 7 to 16, who have experienced the death of a family member or other significant person in their lives.

Our 10th annual Chameleon's Journey will be held October 17 and 18, 2009 at Camp Thunderbird in Lake Wylie, SC. Thanks to the generosity of concerned individuals, communities of faith, and other community organizations and foundations, the camp is offered free of charge. But we need your help. Can you take a moment and recall the names of any children between the ages of 7 and 16 who have lost loved ones and might be struggling with their emotions? If so, make sure they know about the opportunity for help and hope offered through Chameleon's Journey. For more information, links are provided in the article below, or you can call me directly at 704.335.4327 and I'll tell you all about it.

Thank you,

Larry Dawalt, M.Div.
Director of Spiritual & Grief Care Services
704.335.4327

Celebrating 10 Years of Help and Hope

Children and teens who are dealing with grief associated with the death of a family member or other significant person often feel sad, alone, and misunderstood. Their friends may not understand how to help. Even friends and family members with positive intentions often do not know how to provide the special care and support needed. That's why the opportunity to share feelings and experiences of loss in a safe and caring environment is important. It is also important to receive care from a staff member who has a deep understanding of the grief process and who has experience working with children suffering the loss of a loved one.

Chameleon's Journey grief camp includes a well-planned program of educational, artistic, creative, and physical activities that give campers the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings of grief and to share their stories in a caring, confidential, and protected environment. Campers come away from the camp with a better understanding of what they are feeling and knowledge of the steps they need to take to heal. They also develop new relationships with other campers who help them to know they are not alone.

Each morning of the camp weekend, parents and guardians are encouraged to attend a two-hour workshop. These two workshops address adult grief and also suggest ways adults can help their grieving children. Although parents and guardians do not stay overnight at the camp, their attendance at these workshops only serves to enhance the experience for the children in their charge. By the end of the weekend, these caregivers will have an increased awareness of how their children feel and will be able to connect with them on a more meaningful level.

Summer Grief Series

Please join us for our summer grief series, Life after Death: Navigating New Roles and Responsibilities. This series will focus on coping with the difficult changes that occur after a loved one has passed. Please call Gerri Cummings at 704.335.4334 to register or for more information.

Levine & Dickson Hospice House

Monday, June 22
12pm
11900 Vanstory Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078

Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County

Monday, June 29
12pm and 6:30pm
107 North Cedar Street, Suite 203
Lincolnton, NC 28092

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - Uptown

Tuesday, July 21
6pm
1420 East 7th Street
Charlotte, NC 28204

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - South

Thursday, July 23
6pm
7845 Little Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28226

Grief: The Reluctant Journey

Our series, Grief: The Reluctant Journey, has been extremely helpful to those who are struggling with a significant loss in their lives. Many of us do not want to accept the pain and grief that accompanies such a loss; in fact, many will begin to withdraw rather than cope with the overwhelming despair. This series is designed to help members of our community who are suffering from losing a loved one. It is geared toward helping us understand our own personal grief while teaching us to regain a sense of normalcy in our lives. Please consider recommending this session to members of your congregation who need this kind of support.

A pre-group interview is required with one of our grief counselors prior to registration for this support group. Please call Gerri Cummings at 704.335.4334 to arrange an appointment.

Levine & Dickson Hospice House

Tuesdays, September 8 - October 27
12:30pm - 2pm
11900 Vanstory Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - Uptown

Tuesdays, September 15 - November 3
2pm - 3:30pm
1420 East 7th Street
Charlotte, NC 28204

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - South

Tuesdays, September 15 - November 3
6pm - 7:30pm
7845 Little Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28226

Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County

Thursdays, September 17 - November 5
12pm - 1:30pm
107 North Cedar Street, Suite 203
Lincolnton, NC 28092

You can read the article, *Grief: The Reluctant Journey*, that inspired this support group series in the resource library on our website.

End-of-Life Care Education

Do you have a group in your community of faith that could benefit from more information about end-of-life care? Our community educators regularly provide information about the basics of hospice and palliative care, end of life care decisions, spiritual needs of the dying patient, and grief and loss. If you are interested in scheduling a presentation for your congregation, please call 704.375.0100 or email Marilyn Morenz or Paula Byrd.