

Holy Spirit Parish Christian Service Commission

Notes from Bereavement Ministry Planning Meeting

Tuesday, January 30, 2018, 6:00 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul

Present: Maureen Balyeat, Rosann Johnson, Pam Seidletz, Kathy Nyman-Wendt, Juanita McGregor, Karen Corda, and Chris Christiaens

Pastoral Council Representatives:

Staff: Cindy Eultgen

We opened with prayer then went around the group giving our name and our thoughts about this burgeoning ministry.

Discussion:

Everyone agreed this ministry has been wanting for several years now. Many are glad that we are doing something, yet we still need more planning and organizing. From the experience in the group several have experienced grief from the loss of a child and suicide. We need to remember that there are many experiences and needs beyond the loss of a spouse.

We did a quick review of local resources:

- Hospice has a couple of different 8 week courses. Pam will bring her course binders next time.
- Compassionate Friends is active in Fort Benton www.compassionatefriends.org
- Camp Francis – for children

Some folks had read the packet of pages that were distributed at the end of the last meeting, called Part 2 “Setting up a Bereavement Ministry Team” from the Diocese of Boston, and noted their appreciation of the suggestions:

- It is important that the pastor is involved
 - Cindy had talked with Fr. Doug earlier and noted that he:
 - Is completely behind this ministry.
 - Wants to have the ability to connect with the family after the funeral.
 - Wants to say “I’d like to have someone come and visit you.” to those that approach him.
 - Wants those who are grieving to have contact with the parish, so we don’t abandon anyone.
- It is important that the ministers are identified, verified, and credibly supported by the pastor
 - Fr. Doug is completely behind this as stated above
 - Diocesan Safe Environment practices will be utilized
 - For lack of a better word, the word ‘trained’ will be used throughout until clarified

Copies of the notes from last meeting (as well as a list of potential things that we need to do) were distributed. Cindy talked about what she found out from both St. Pius X and St. Bernard in Billings, (parishes similar in size to Holy Spirit) here are the resources they use:

- The Bereavement Ministry Program by Jan Nelson & David Aaker, (Ave Maria Press 1998) \$49.95, 288 pages, 3 ring binder with CD-ROM copy-able and printable 'letters and notes' to send out to the grieving at different points through the year.
- Center for Loss & Life Transition, Fort Collins, CO – training program by Allen D. Wolfert www.centerforloss.com
- Books from Ave Maria Press
 - May I Walk You Home by Joyce Hutchenson & Joyce Rupp (short stories & prayers)
 - Gentle Keeping: Prayers & Services for Remembering Departed Loved Ones Throughout the Year by Mauryeen O'Brien, O.P.
- Care Notes
- Meal Ministry beyond the funeral lunch
- Ministry that happens prior to loss
 - Hospital visits, prayer shawls, communion to the homebound, prayer chain

Ideas about our needs at Holy Spirit:

- We can make deeper connections with what we are already doing (see last item above)
- Invite someone with experience to share knowledge: Hospice (Audrey Sabol, Theresa Hopkins, or Kelly Keilman Trunkle) or Steve Schneider. Cindy will invite Theresa for the next meeting
- We see the essential need for two kinds of service at this time:
 - One on One contact
 - Definitely contact within 6 weeks after the funeral
 - Discussion, above as mentioned above, with Fr. Doug, or any other person who knows someone that needs to talk with someone (we need a way to connect them with someone) who 'has been trained'.
 - The grieving persons connection with one and only one person can be draining and too much to take on. Additional 'trained' people or ones with 'related experience' are needed to support the grieving person too.
 - Contact can take place in numerous ways
 - Coffee, meet in the parking lot of church to walk in together....
 - Group gatherings/Support Group
 - One during the day and one in the evening (7 pm)
 - We might need a couple of people to be in charge of the meeting
 - To support one another
 - To open & lock up, lights on
 - Facilitate, help each other, stay on track with time, etc .
 - The RCIA room would be conducive for meetings chairs are already prepared in a cozy environment

- Times need to be posted and consistent
 - Have small pamphlets, books, materials, etc for people to pick up and take home
 - Many of us have experience on facilitating meetings, we need insight/advice
 - (some information was in the packet on 'Setting up a Bereavement Ministry Team')
 - Training and support
- Where do we start?
 - We have a wealth of people, resources, and information in the parish
 - Needs can be extended and promoted via Fr. Doug, announcements, flier, and bulletin
 - We need to ask, is this Catholic only?
 - Any loss, whether recent or far in the past are all welcome
- As we grow
 - We can see, that as things grow, a large support group might need to branch into smaller, specialized groups to meet their needs (suicide, child, spouse, parent)
 - Groups can be too big, once they reach a certain size, functionality decreases
- We recognize that pain & loss are different and each person grieves differently
- We see:
 - People in need and they need to hear that it is ok, there are folks who can walk with you
- With Mary Dupuis, and the Remembrance Service Committee, we can plan ceremonies through the year such as
 - Near Mother's Day –naming of miscarriages and abortions
 - Rituals for folks who need closure with a gap and missing area – loss of child and no funeral/burial etc.
 - The remembrance service this year was very meaningful
 - Could we look at doing it at on the Masses on that one weekend?
 - The Mass that one attends is his/her community and support group

The next meeting we will invite someone like Theresa Hopkins to talk with us, and give us guidance about facilitating a meeting. Cindy will talk to Theresa.

Rosanne brought a friend and encouraged everyone to do so as we come to the next meeting.

We closed the meeting in prayer.

Our next meeting: is Tuesday, February 20 at 6 pm at Sts. Peter & Paul in the RCIA room.