

An Invitation for You or Someone You Know and Care About: Blue Christmas Service

Friday, Dec. 20, 2019 at 7 pm St. Andrew Church

Be with us to hear and share prayers, scripture readings and hymns that help us to know that God's presence is for those who mourn, and God's word comes to give light to our darkness. Everyone is welcome.

Christmas is a time for memories and remembering. For some, the memories are of their loved ones who have died, and the pain of their loss is real. For others the memories are of happier times than we know now, as the anguish of broken relationships or relocation or poor health cloud this season. We need to remember, and we need a safe space and place to acknowledge our sadness and concern; and we need to know we are not alone.

For these and other reasons we need a special time to be together to receive the words of hope that speak to us in the midst of sorrow.

A small reception will follow the service.

For more information contact Deacon Jim Lee 694-4443, [deacnlee@ mtaonline.net](mailto:deacnlee@mtaonline.net)

Living with Loss During the Holidays*

1. **KEEP THINGS SIMPLE**--Remember that suffering loss drains your energy. You don't have to be superhuman. Pick out and do only the simple things you really enjoy.
2. **GET PLENTY OF REST** --Under the best of circumstances the holidays are physically, emotionally and spiritually draining. Be selfish! Remember Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself". If we are exhausted, it's very difficult to love others.
3. **REMEMBER THAT IT'S OKAY TO CRY:** The holiday music, sights and smells can trigger precious memories. Know that it's okay to have those experiences; it's okay to cry. You're not going crazy. It is a normal part of your grief. Remember that even Jesus himself shed tears.
4. **FIND A SUPPORTING FRIEND:** You don't have to be alone in your loss. Let a trusted friend or confidant know that you need extra support and love during this time. It helps relieve some of the pressure you may feel, gives you perspective, and it keeps you in touch with others.
5. **DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SOMEONE ELSE:** These acts of love and kindness helped us as we reached out to others, especially those without resources or who lived alone or who are suffering loss themselves. Often it provides relieve from the sadness and depression.

6. OFFER A GIFT IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE: Make a donation to your loved one's church or favorite charity. Financial gifts such as stocks, bonds even trusts can be set up. Scholarships for students exploring areas of your loved ones interest are always a good choice.

7. ATTEND THE "BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE". This is a special worship service, which acknowledges that the holidays may not be happy times for everyone. It offers a comforting and safe place to express ones grief. It includes the lighting of memory candles and the sharing of stories by people dealing with loss. Folks who are grieving, depressed and sad have appreciated such a service. **At St. Andrew, we will offer a Blue Christmas Service at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20, 2019.**

8. BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF: Treat yourself with compassion. Yes, you will probably feel pain. But, there are things you can do to make the best of this dreaded time. So be kind and gentle with yourself. Do only what you have the energy and desire to do.

9. TAKE CHARGE WHERE YOU CAN: Loss produces inescapable changes in our lives that rob us of a power we may have taken for granted in the past. Evaluate your traditions. Ponder which ones you might be able to drop. Identify those, which are so important that you must continue. Allow yourself the freedom to adapt to fit this year's circumstances.

10. PRACTICE THE DISCIPLINES OF YOUR FAITH: When we suffer loss, we sometimes become angry with God, and so we set aside disciplines such as worship, prayer, scripture study. Yet this is a perfect time to realize the strength that can be found in these practices. Honest, even angry prayers have helped many come to terms with their loss. Just read the Psalms for an example. Remember that the God revealed to us through Jesus Christ, knows what loss is all about and offers us a shoulder to cry on. Know too that God is compassionate enough to hear our cursing in the night.

Generally speaking, this is usually not the best time to make drastic changes, like starting life over in a new town, or celebrating the holidays in a faraway place among people who do not appreciate what has happened to you. But some changes can be healthy and even important to make. It might make sense to change your holiday meal routine, by dining out at a restaurant rather than at home, or by having the main meal in another's home, or by planning a new menu.

Changes might be made in how holiday decorations are done. Or how gifts are given out, or when, or where. Consider designing new rituals, ones that will include opportunities to remember the past while acknowledging that the present has changed.

Your holidays can still be a significant time for you as you live through the experience of loss.

They will be different. There is no doubt about that. However, they can still be meaningful. They may hurt, but they also hold within them a solid hope and eternal promise. Through Jesus Christ we have learned that God is with us in all the changing circumstances of life. And with Christ we can come to believe in and remember his words: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

*Based on an article by Jeanne Murray and Pamela June Webb. <http://www.ecunet.org>