

“WE ARE NOT ALONE”

Sheena Dykes and Dawn Hazell highlight a resource to help people to understand and share experiences of grief in the midst of Covid-19



Are people in your church struggling and looking for resources to help them through the pain of this pandemic?

Many of us have lost jobs, financial security, health and community connections, as well

as the opportunity to gather in worship and to celebrate milestones like graduations, weddings, births, and anniversaries. In addition, we are reminded daily of the lives lost to the virus. These losses raise larger questions for us as Christians. How do we understand and process grief as people of faith? How can we support vulnerable and grieving members of our community while practising

physical distancing? Where can we find hope and joy in this season?

Faith, Grief, and Covid-19: A Conversation is a resource created by Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries to help people to understand and share experiences of grief in the midst of Covid-19.

As a church we recognised many people were asking the above questions and this resource gave an opportunity to draw people together to share their experiences in a supportive environment. Over four sessions, participants gathered virtually to watch a short series of films featuring insights from a panel of experts, and were then invited to engage in discussion, reflection and prayer.

Being able to identify the discomfort that the pandemic has caused us as a form of grief, and realising we were not alone in experiencing it, were both hugely helpful. The film presenters

talked about the different types of grief with honesty, insight and empathy. We were able to understand that we were experiencing layers of loss, and that the ‘standard’ models of the bereavement process could not necessarily be applied in the present situation. We learned that lament is important, and that it is OK to call out and tell God how we are feeling. Although society encourages us to suppress emotions, they can be the gateway to God and we often learn and grow most in the difficult times. Some found the last session particularly helpful as it covered how to respond to others who are grieving – knowing how best to support them and what to say – while not feeling the need to provide all the answers.

We ran the course twice and the feedback was positive. The sessions were informative and thought-provoking and had a good balance of film, discussion, prayer and reflections. There was much to learn with the key takeaway being that we were not alone and that in the middle of our anxious times, our faith in God gives us a shared hope.

Sheena Dykes and Dawn Hazell are members of Union Baptist Church in High Wycombe who co-led the *Faith, Grief, and Covid-19: A Conversation* course.

Visit sanctuarymentalhealth.org to access the course

