

Becoming a bereavement friendly church

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Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Romans 12:15

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

James 1:27

At Oundle Baptist Church since 2018 we have been exploring how to become a Bereavement Friendly Church, indeed a bereavement friendly town if we can. We want to reach out, with the love of Jesus, to all those who face bereavement in our local community.

We know how to provide a great funeral, but have much to learn about helping one another prepare for the death of those we love, or even for our own death. Once the funeral is over life does not return to normal for those who are grieving, and we wanted to equip ourselves to be better able to walk alongside people as they navigate the months and years ahead. The pandemic has

resulted in so many more deaths and added layers of complication and difficulty for families at their most painful time.

Over this last year in our town and in our wider networks we have seen people face the death of loved ones, while unable to be at the bedside or graveside to say their farewells. In deep mourning families are not allowed to gather, friends cannot offer hugs, neighbours or colleagues may not share a cheering cuppa or a squeeze of the hand. A lasagne left on a doorstep, or pastoral support by phone or Zoom, is scant comfort and many have been struggling and isolated in their grief. Friends who want to support and show care often feel uncertain how to help.

We were partly prepared, and there is so much more to learn, but it's helpful that many training and support opportunities are now running online.

Why do we do it? We are called to love.

We want to welcome and care for people without judgement or conditions. For some people this is a faith journey. The trauma of bereavement can challenge or awaken faith. We are in a unique place to speak God's love through the care that we offer, to create a connection as we journey with people. The training, books and resources all help equip us with good practice and excellent tools to minister the love of Jesus.

It is our hope that we can continue to develop our bereavement ministry, to help make our church, our community and our town a place where people who have been bereaved feel safe, cared for, listened to and loved – where we can develop a vocabulary allowing discussion about death and bereavement.

Read in more depth about the journey that the team at Oundle has been on, and access the resources they found helpful, at: baptist.org.uk/oundle



Class of 2019 Certificate in Bereavement Ministry, Cliff College