

# Bereavement

## – an ongoing concern

### What we will cover:

1. Bereavement before the pandemic
2. Increased risks and pressures now
3. What we can do as a church



# 1. Bereavement before the pandemic

## Death denying society:

- ▣ Not thinking about death
- ▣ Expect death not to happen
- ▣ Little understanding
- ▣ Unhelpful responses
- ▣ Poor signposting
- ▣ Bereaved - isolated and confused
- ▣ Counsellors over subscribed



# 1. Bereavement before the pandemic

## Grief:

- ▣ Is a natural response
- ▣ Can impact anyone connected

## Bereavement:

- ▣ Highly stressful
- ▣ Affects all aspects of life



# 1. Bereavement before the pandemic

## The grief journey is:

- ▣ Long
- ▣ A roller-coaster
- ▣ Can be complicated
- ▣ Never really ends



# 1. Bereavement before the pandemic

## Grief:

- ▣ Is misunderstood/ people back away
- ▣ Can normally be navigated with community support
- ▣ Can be suppressed



## 2. Increased Pressures now

- ▣ All problems exacerbated
- ▣ Support curtailed
- ▣ Unable to see loved ones
- ▣ Unable to attend funerals
- ▣ Funeral choice limited



## 2. Increased Pressures now

- ▣ Limited referrals
- ▣ Presence of family & friends denied
- ▣ Routines disrupted
- ▣ Post death administration difficult
- ▣ High levels of existing stress



## 2. Increased Pressures now

- ▣ Many unexpected deaths
- ▣ Lack of preparation
- ▣ Premature death
- ▣ Stigma





## 2. Increased Pressures now

*“In normal circumstances protective factors include shared and chosen rituals, support from family and friends and inner and external resources. All of these are compromised by Covid-19 and its implications for society.”*

A Penny, National Bereavement Alliance

## 2. Increased Pressures now

Who is affected?

**Family & friends of:**

- ▣ 33,000 – 50,000 Covid-19 deaths
- ▣ 600,000 deaths per annum



## 2. Increased Pressures now

Who is affected?

**Those bereaved previously:**

- ▣ Exacerbation of grief
- ▣ Disruption of support
- ▣ Constant coverage of death
- ▣ Guilt/no room for their grief
- ▣ Unprocessed grief being triggered



## 2. Increased Pressures now

### Heightened feelings:

- ▣ Fear
- ▣ Loneliness
- ▣ Regret
- ▣ Guilt
- ▣ Anger
- ▣ Frustration
- ▣ Anxiety



## 2. Increased Pressures now

### Priority groups:

- ▣ Black and minority ethnic communities
- ▣ Children/young people
- ▣ Older people bereaved of spouse or child
- ▣ Residents and staff in care homes



## 2. Increased Pressures now

A tsunami of grief.....

**Three tiered support:**

1. Information
2. Understanding community support
3. Specialist interventions  
(National Bereavement Alliance)



# 3. What can the Church do?

## Understanding care....

### CONTACT, LISTEN and BLESS:

- ▣ Don't avoid
- ▣ Ask & Listen
- ▣ Encourage – reassure
- ▣ Phone & message
- ▣ Help practically - do kind things
- ▣ Signpost to support services ([AtaLoss.org](http://AtaLoss.org))
- ▣ Keep it up



# 3. What can the Church do?

## The Bereavement Journey Course





# 3. What can the Church do?

- ▣ Become a 'Bereavement Friendly' church
  - ▣ Train:
    - Bereavement Care Awareness (Care for the Family)
    - Bereavement Ministry Course ([AtaLoss.org](http://AtaLoss.org)/Cliff College)
    - ListeningPeople - for supporting children and youth ([AtaLoss.org](http://AtaLoss.org))
- Shortened online courses planned for June & July

### 3. What can the Church do?

- ▣ Prepare for 'good deaths' (eg Grave Talk)
- ▣ Plan to offer memorial services
- ▣ Set up a bereavement pastoral team
- ▣ Offer self-help groups (eg The Bereavement Journey)

See [lossandhope.org](http://lossandhope.org) soon...