

# HOPE NOTES

February 2010

## Helping Ourselves By Helping Others

By: J. Chris Adams D. Min.

Most people do not go through loss alone; we find ourselves in the situation of being both the “helped” and the “helper”. Learning to support while being supported is not an easy position; nevertheless, it is where many people facing loss find themselves.

Trouble, loss and death are all intruders that break into our lives both unrepentantly and uninvited. When these triplets of tribulations invade—they touch all in their path. You find yourself a member of the group called the “bereaved”

Our English word bereaved has its origin in the Old English word “reave”. You can almost feel the word r-e-a-v-e. Reave means to break or plunder, it has the idea of tearing apart or to deprive one of something. Death invades your life and it robs, plunders and takes away.

How can we as the “bereaved” help others within our circle of influence while facing grief ourselves. We can accomplish this by giving the “gifts” that

we have. There are three gifts that we can give to others who are grieving that will also be a blessing to us. The gifts are: competence, presence and sensitivity. Each of these gifts have the potential of providing hope to you as the givers and to those who receive.

Competence is what we know coupled with our life experience. Yet, for competence to be helpful it must be balanced with restraint. Everything one knows does not need to be verbalized. The gift of competence knows when to say nothing. Competence knows how to sit in silence and simply listen.

The gift of presence must always be balanced with humility. When one’s life is marked by loss, uncertainty and fear— someone who is humbly present is a wonderful gift. **(continued pg 2)**

**J. Chris Adams D. Min.** Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager, Gentiva Hospice Division

## “Hope In Healing” Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month  
10:30am-11:30am

Hospice of Charleston,

3870 Leeds Ave. Suite 101 N. Charleston,  
29405

Please contact Frank Butler at 843.529.3100 or  
[frank.butler@gentiva.com](mailto:frank.butler@gentiva.com)  
for information



## Hospice of Charleston Annual Spring Memorial Service

Will be held in March 2010  
Date, Time and Place to be announced in our  
March Hope Notes or call,  
Greg Mason at  
843.529.3100

## BEREAVEMENT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

### Alabama

**Huntsville-** Dan Anderson  
256.519.8808

**Florence-** Andy Hughes  
Steve Reed 256.764.0873

**Montgomery-** John Sparks  
334.271.1293

**Opp-** Roger Stone/ Lee Joyner  
334.493.0725

**Birmingham** -Jim Elrod/  
Wendell Dodd 205.682-9441

**Dothan-** Eddie Biss/Charles  
Goldsmith/ Paul Cowley /Bill  
Frank/ Tallmadge Butler  
334.792.1100

**Jasper-** Bill Daniel  
205.384.3882

**Eufaula-** Tim Stevenson  
334.616.0061

**Cullman-** Fred Wilks  
256.737.7234

**Oxford-** Winfred Logan  
256.831.2964

**Gadsden-**Richard Bradford  
256.442.3208

**Mobile-** Dave Tarvin  
Candler Cain  
251.340.6387

### Florida

**Crestview-** Jim Vail  
850.689.0300

**Fort Walton-** Frank Dole  
850.862.1069

**Marianna-** Gino Mayo  
850.526.3577

**Panama City-** Mike Young  
Craig Brannon /Michael Dease  
850.769.0055

**Pensacola-** Bill Eddins/ Shane  
Tucker 850.474.7288

### Georgia

**Marietta/Rome-** Don Reed  
Johnnie Porter 770.951.6251

**Stockbridge-** Oliver Cam-  
eron/770.389.5760

**Bainbridge-** Andy Glover  
229.246.6330

**Newnan-** Asa Mangham  
770.502.1104

**Riverdale-** Ken Rose  
770.907.2410

**Lawrenceville-** Jamie Kauff-  
man  
770.822-6377

### South Carolina

**Greenville-** Dave Garner  
864.329.0588

**Columbia-** Edison Cheeks  
803.213.9986

**Charleston-**  
Greg Mason  
Alan Poe/Frank Butler  
843.529.3100

### Tennessee

**Cookeville** -Barry Boggs  
931.528.5133

### Mississippi

**Tupelo** - Ryan French / Mar-  
quette Rodgers 662.844.9725

**Jackson** - 601.362.7801

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Knowing when to draw near and when to give space is a rare knowledge. It takes humility to know when to come close and when to stay at a distance. Margin is the space that allows clarity to come into the situation and circumstance of loss.

The gift of sensitivity is best given along side wisdom. Grief is like a pit– the one who grieves has fallen into this pit. How do you help someone out of a pit? You lower them a rope. One must be careful when pulling another out of a pit– the rope can burn, scrape and cause more injury. Sensitivity always pads the rope so that more injury does not take place. Sensitivity is a rare and wonderful gift.

As we extend these gifts to others; we teach, learn, and discover that the gifts that we have given are now being given back to us. Competence– Presence and Sensitivity go a long way on this journey called Grief.

J. Chris Adams D. Min. Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager, Gentiva Hospice Division

## Writing a Condolence Note to a Grieving Child or Adolescent

By Helen Fitzgerald, CT  
Training Director, American Hospice Foundation

Writing a condolence note to an adult is challenging enough, but how about writing one to a child or a teenager? Traditionally, condolence notes have been seen as expressions of sympathy toward adults, with an occasional reference to “the children.” Yet, a child suffering the loss of a parent or sibling is likely to be in great need of personal attention. An adult who recognizes this can make a lasting impression by writing a personal note to that child.

### GETTING STARTED

#### Starting is usually the hardest part:

It is like an artist facing a blank canvas. Once that first brush stroke of paint has been applied, the picture begins to take shape. The following phrases may be helpful to you in getting started:

- **"I'm so sorry to hear that your father has died"** may be all you need to start your message.
- **"You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers"** will work if it's true.
- **"I will miss your mother; she touched my life in so many ways"** is a good opening for writing about ways that she touched your life.
- **"There are times like this that I really don't know what to say."** Since this is probably quite accurate, it won't hurt saying so, but go on trying anyway.
- **"He was such a creative (or funny, or generous) person, and I am so sorry he died."** This works whether it is a parent, sibling or friend who died. Addressing the qualities of the person who died will enable you to reveal indirectly how highly you valued that person.

#### Telling stories:

No matter how you start, tell some stories of what you and the deceased did together. This is especially important for children and adolescents. Those in mourning want to hear stories about their loved ones, especially if it is a parent. They want to see the deceased through the eyes of other adults. After all, this is their heritage; this is who they are. Try to think of things that the child or adolescent will want to know about the relative who died.

#### Endings are important as well:

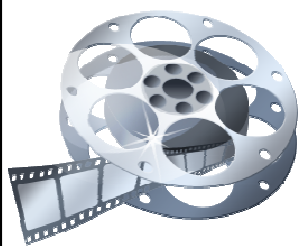
Here are a few suggestions for ending your condolence note:

- **"My love and support will always be here for you."**
- **"I know you have a little league game on Saturday. If you would like, I will take you. Talk this over with your mother and I will call tomorrow to see what you have decided."**
- **"I will keep you in my prayers."**

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## YOUR GRIEF STORY

There is an old movie entitled “Groundhog Day” in which the main character awakens each morning to the same day and events over and over again. He eventually learns that he has the power within himself to improve the same day through positive steps of his own. Through a series of trials and errors, he wakes each day determined to correct the mistakes he made the previous day. The movie ends when he eventually changes the events and becomes the person he wants to be and has the life he has longed to have.



In many ways, those who grieve are caught in a similar cycle. Each morning we are awakened, it is but seconds before we are reminded of the death of a loved one and the joy of the day is robbed from us. We ask and we wonder how long we will continue to wake to the same day, the same feelings, and the same outcome. Although this is a way of life for a brief period, we must eventually realize that the changes we seek will not come without our efforts. Grief is hard, but it is not a condition as much as it is work. We as the bereaved, must make a conscious effort each day to take one small step to work through our grief. Just as a child learns to walk through baby steps, so do the bereaved. We may feel that we just don't want to get out of bed and start a new day however, we also realize we don't want these days again and again. As you do the work of grief remember that improvements are gradual and may seem long in coming, but they can and will come. Life is not a movie and our difficulties cannot be corrected like they are in a two hour movie. However, when the credits roll on your grief story it will read, “Produced by, Love and Directed by, Me.”

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