

HOPE NOTES

January 2011

The New Year and Symbols of Hope

By: J. Chris Adams D. Min.

Symbols of hope are all around us, and symbols of hope can be very meaningful to those who are grieving the loss of someone they love. The colors of grief are often black and white with only shades of gray, and these unexpected symbols come and splash bright colors of hope on the canvas of our sorrow.

A symbol of hope could be something as simple as experiencing a glorious sunrise that reminds us that today is real and alive with beauty newness and promise. It could be the freshly fallen snow that hides the gray and dreariness of winter and speaks of that which is bright and pure.

A symbol of hope may be found in the song of a Mocking Bird that change without notice, or the splashing of a Wren in the newly formed puddle from the morning shower of rain. It might be the joyful playing of the Blue Bird as he reminds us of the beauty of life even during the bleakness of a cold winter day.

It was Emily Dickinson that wrote:

*"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all"*

It might be the perennial pushing of the daffodils through the cold ground that shouts to all that see "spring is on the way." Or the soft blossom of the cherry tree that reminds us that winter will not last forever.

Whether it is flowering hope or feathered hope, these symbols of life and change are sewn into the fabric of our world. They encourage us and comfort us in the midst of our pain. My wish for you is that a symbol of hope will "perch in your soul" and sing you a song without words that reminds you of the life that is within you and the life that is around you during this hard season of your life.

J. Chris Adams, Spiritual and Bereavement Services Manager, Hospice Division of Gentiva

We're Moving

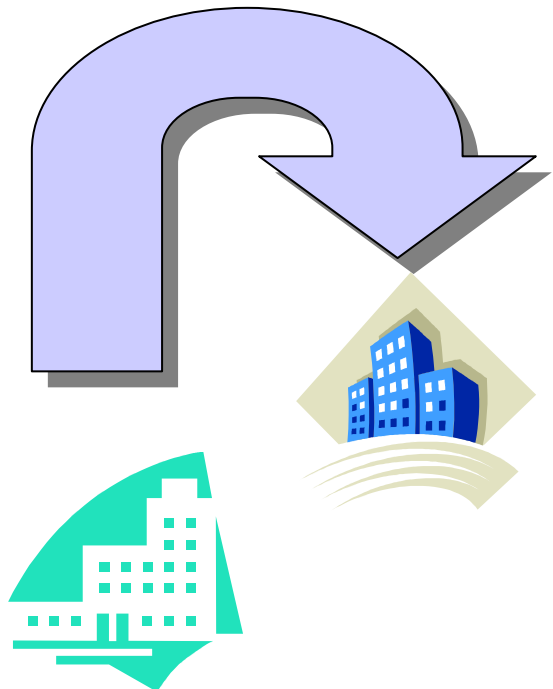
Hospice of Charleston is moving from their Leeds Ave. office.

Effective 12-15-10

Our New Address is;

*Rivergate Center, Suite 200
4975 LaCross Road
North. Charleston, SC*

**You can still reach us at:
529-3100**



BEREAVEMENT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

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Huntsville- Dan Anderson 256.519.8808

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256.764.0873

Montgomery- Nelson Cash 334.271.1293

Opp- Roger Stone/ Lee Joyner/ Doug Knight 334.493.0725

Birmingham -Jim Elrod/ Wendell Dodd
205.682-9441

Dothan- Eddie Biss/Charles Goldsmith/
Paul Cowley /Michael Dease
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

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Mobile- Dave Tarvin
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Crestview- Jim Vail 850.689.0300

Fort Walton- Frank Dole 850.862.1069

Marianna- Gino Mayo/ Ernie Gray
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Panama City- Mike Young Craig Brannon
Jason Adams / 850.769.0055

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Tupelo - Ryan French 662.844.9725

Jackson - Bill Chatham 601.362.7801

Boonville -Roger Wood Brian Rainey
662.844.7372

Starkville- Marquette Rodgers Lynn
Ronaldi

A Simple Idea To Assist Children Expressing Loss

Most Children love bright colored helium balloons. That is why this month's idea for helping grieving children may be just the thing you need to help a child. This is a great activity for a child and parent or even the entire family to participate in. Go to your local grocery store or florist and purchase the appropriate number of bright, helium balloons that you will need. We suggest one balloon per participant.

Each participant should take a Sharpie Marker and write a message on the outside of the balloon to the loved one that was lost. Of course for smaller children an adult will need to write their message, but give the child an opportunity to draw something on the balloon. Then give each participant the opportunity to share what they wrote if they so choose. After the time of sharing each participant should release their balloon. It might be beneficial for the child to watch the balloon float upward until it completely disappears.

This activity provides an opportunity for children (and adults) to express themselves in a safe environment and release some feelings that otherwise they might have a difficult time sharing.

Grief Really Is a Process

By: J. Chris Adams DMin.

Eric Neely records in his book "When Grief Comes", the journey of his own grief after the death of his adult son. He writes: "With Eric's death came a time to walk a lonesome valley. I had been through valleys of grief before, but this one was deeper, longer, and darker than any other. It is a lonesome valley. As the Southern spiritual phrases it: You got to walk that lonesome valley. You got to walk it by yourself. Nobody else can walk it for you. You got to walk it by yourself."

Wayne Oates in his classic book "Anxiety in Christian Experience" outlines in one of the chapters the anxiety of grief as a six step process. Although every loss creates a valley that must be walked alone, it is comforting to know that others have traversed the valley and made it to the other side. The process as outlined by Dr. Oates is as follows:

1. **Initial Shock.** Words like blindsided, slapped in the face, doused in ice water, run over by a train seems to describe this experience.
2. **Numbness.** This has been called God's anesthesia that allows us to take the pain in small doses.
3. **Struggle between fantasy and reality.** The fantasy that they are still with us and the reality that they are gone.
4. **Flood of grief.** Just when you think you are beyond the worst sorrow; a sight, sound or smell opens the flood gate again.
5. **Stabbing memories.** We come across a photo or old letter and we are suddenly face to face with the pain...a bitter sweet moment.
6. **Recovery** This does not mean life goes on as if we never experienced loss...it is at this stage that we come to terms with our "new normal" and begin to move forward.

It is true that we walk this lonesome valley for our selves, but we can walk in the footsteps of others that traveled before and made it across to the other side...wounded yet safe.

J. Chris Adams, Manager of Spiritual and Bereavement Services. Regional Support Partner for the Hospice Division of Gentiva

Get your kids talking... Karen Peeples- MS IMH-5034 Bereavement Camp Program Manager, Gentiva

As adults, sometimes it is difficult to put your feelings into words...well the same is true for children. It is commonplace for many parents or guardians to feel helpless or anxious when it comes to children who are experiencing grief. You can help your child express their feelings about a recent death or loss with this simple exercise....

Have your child finish the following sentences....

The saddest thing is

If I had one more chance to talk to the person who has died, I would say

My best memory is

If I could change anything, I would change

I wish

While you may not be able to "fix" your child's grief, these sentences will encourage conversation and communication.

Treat this exercise with your kids...it can be great for the adults in your life too.

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The Winter of Our Souls

The sky is gray and the tears of clouds fall more frequently this time of year. Trees stripped of their adorning leaves stand bleak and thin, bending to the cold winds of this day. Waves of shivering foam pound empty beaches while the sun teases us with moments of appearing and then tucks back beneath a quilt of gray. This season is weary for many and the starkness sometimes overbearing. We press against the blowing chill and long for the days of warmth and comfort. We long for times we remember in our heart which have wilted from our presence. We sit within the walls of ourselves wrapped in a comforter of memories wondering if we will ever see the beauty of this life again.

There will be a dawning, maybe not tomorrow or the next day, but there will be an awakening. It will come with a parting of the clouds and a small beacon of warmth will touch your shoulder. It will appear with buds of hope that grace the limbs that wave for you to come see. It will rest on ears with the sounds of life chirping with new breath. Although the season will come of its own, your work will create a fresher hope and a brighter tomorrow.



Should we cultivate the soil of our heart and fertilize bulbs of hope that lay beneath this bareness, We will eventually see the new beginnings that lie before us. Our world will never look the same but it will always offer newness should we choose to look for its arrival.

Greg V. Mason
Chaplain/Bereavement Coor.
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