

Interment of Ashes at King Edward Memorial Hospital Memorial Garden

PASTORAL CARE



Introduction

This service, by its very nature, confronts and rekindles deep feelings of grief. On one hand this gathering today involves a very simple task, that of final separation from those whom you have known for such a short time. On the other hand this is a very significant moment as it provides both a focus and an expression for your grief.

Historically opportunities such as this didn't exist and it may be that some of you present today may have experienced similar losses that went unacknowledged. We hope this ritual may also become a healing of memories for you.

In this gathering there will be many different reasons for the loss of your pregnancy or baby. Whatever your circumstance this ritual is offered unconditionally. Whether your baby lived one day or one thousand days he or she will still hold a special place in your heart as a member of your family.

Part of the focus of this service is (after obtaining prior consent) to read out the names of all babies whose ashes are included in the interment, plus any who have requested a special remembrance. These names are then recorded in the Memorial Garden Register.

This service is provided by the Pastoral Care Team. It is primarily Christian in orientation but recognises that this gathering is diverse in both belief and culture.

It is our hope that this short time together will become a significant event in the journey of healing memories.

The opening

“We have come here today as a community gathering to recall what our babies mean to us.

In spite of loss, grief and despair we have gathered to reflect on the reality of living, the miracle of birth and the mystery of death.

In faith, hope and love we will remember our babies as we inter their ashes in the ground.

We give thanks for every experience and every remembrance of our babies at this time of separation and loss.”

Readings for reflection

A reading from the Old Testament, Lamentations, chapter three.

This is part of a series of ancient Hebrew poems of mourning, probably written about 580BC for public mourning. The writer asks the question, “how could God let this happen?” and ends by reaffirming that God is still God and present even at life’s lowest points.

“My soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what happiness is:
So I say, “gone is my glory,
And all that I had hoped for from the Lord”.
My soul continually thinks of it,
And is bowed down within me.
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

A reading from the New Testament

The Gospel of John chapter 14:v1-6

“Do not let your hearts be troubled
Trust in God and trust in me.
There are many rooms in my Father’s house,
If there were not I should have told you.
I am going now to prepare a place for you;
And after I have gone and prepared a place for you
I shall return and take you with me;
So that where I am you may be also.”

A reading from a contemporary spiritual writer, Kahlil Gibran.

In his book “The Prophet” Gibran speaks of time as being both measureless and immeasurable. His theme is about integrating life’s experiences, past, present and future.

“You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable.
Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch
its flowing.
Yet the timeless in you is aware of life’s timelessness,
And knows that yesterday is but today’s memory and tomorrow is today’s
dream.
Who among you does not feel that his power to love is boundless?
And is not time even as love is undivided and spaceless?
But if in your thoughts you must measure time into seasons, let each
season encircle all the other seasons and let today embrace the past with
remembrance and the future with longing”.

The Prayers

For those who belong to a faith tradition this section has a spiritual focus. Those who do not may like to use these words as an expression of remembrance and hope.

“We pray for strength and peace for each other and ourselves gathered here. Sustain us in the times of unending tears, pain and struggle; the times of emptiness and longing, times of not being in control, of not being understood by family, friends and times of searching.”

Strengthen and sustain us.

“We give thanks for the anticipation and promise of life that we held for a short time, or for memories we have of our babies; for those who walk the journey of grief with us; for each time or remembering.”

Be with us as we remember.

“Fill us with hope in the times of letting go and reaching out to embrace each new day. As we recall the gifts our babies left us we thank you for the difference they have made in our lives.”

May they live in our memories forever.

Saying goodbye

The names of all whose ashes are to be interred and any special remembrances are read.

The interment

“Creator God,

In loving care your hand has created us,

And as the potter fashions the clay,

So you have formed us in your own image.

Together with one heart, one mind and in the one Spirit we commit these ashes to their final resting place, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. May our memory of this moment be a healing of our hearts and give us confidence to embrace the future.

Amen.”

[At the conclusion of the interment and the covering of the site, flowers may be placed].

Closing prayer

“May you find the peace of God to hold you and comfort you.

May God who walks beside you reach out and take your hand;

May you hear God’s voice and feel God’s warmth;

May God’s love ease your pain and give you comfort;

And may God lead you to a place of hope and peace.

Amen.”

The Pastoral Care team would like to acknowledge a number of Departments and their staff who contribute behind the scenes to this service. They include Genetic Services, Peri-natal Pathology, Psychological Medicine and Social Work.

A Prayer for Spring

“Like springtime, let me unfold
And grow, fresh and new,
From this cocoon of grief
That has been spun around me.

Help me to face the harsh reality of
Sunshine and renewed life,
As my bones still creak from
The winter of my grief.

Life has dared to go on around me
And as I recover from
The insult of life’s continuance
I readjust my focus to
Include recovery and growth
As a possibility in my future.

Give me strength to break out of
The cocoon of my grief.
But may I never forget it as
The place where I grew my wings
Becoming a new person
Because of my loss.”

“Bittersweet...Hellogoodbye”
Lamb, Sr. Marie
Charis Communications, Illinois
1988 p60. Janis Heil

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This information is available in
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