

We, at Saskatoon Stephen Ministry, understand how difficult this season may be for many people. We want you to know that we are here for you—to listen, to care and to walk with you through these dark days. We invite you to attend our Service of Remembrance of Healing—whether you have lost a loved one, lost your job, struggling with health issues or just facing life’s difficult challenges—this service is for you. You will find solace, peace and comfort in word, music and silence. Come and surround yourself with the love of community. Peace and blessings to all!

Saskatoon Stephen Ministry +

*An Invitation to ...  
A Service of Remembrance  
and Healing*



*You, your family and friends are invited  
to a*

*Candlelight Service  
of Remembrance and Healing  
on Thursday, December 16, 2021  
at 7:30 p.m.*

*at Redeemer Lutheran Church*

*Christmas without a loved one can be a difficult time for those left behind. Other losses, such as the loss of a relationship, employment, health or job can be the cause of loneliness in the midst of Christmas celebrations. Please join us in a service of prayer, scripture readings, communion and music knowing that God is present. We pray this service will help us find hope and comfort in knowing that we are not alone at this time.*

*Refreshments & fellowship will follow the service .*

*Saskatoon Lutheran Stephen Ministers are your hosts.*

# This Holiday Season, Offer the Gift of Remembering to Those Who Are Grieving

by Rev. Kenneth C. Haugk, Ph.D.

With the holidays quickly approaching, a season that's normally a time for celebration may have a more somber tone for some—particularly those who have lost loved ones in the past year or so. Someone who would have been there to share the [ ] meal, help hang the Christmas lights, or ring in the New Year is gone, with each event a reminder of their absence. The painful feelings that come as a result, especially when it seems everyone else is celebrating, can make the holidays a very difficult time.

In addition to all this, people often avoid those who are grieving, uncertain what to say or do. But there's a simple, powerful way anyone can offer care: giving the gift of remembering the grieving person's loved one with them.

## Say the Loved One's Name

The gift of remembering begins with being willing to say the loved one's name.

One of the most common misconceptions about grief is that talking about a person's loss or saying the name of the deceased will only cause more pain. But the reality is just the opposite—people *want* to talk about the loved one they've lost. During the research for my book *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*, people I spoke with expressed that sentiment almost universally. One shared, "Mentioning my wife's name after she died was so hard for some people. It was almost as if she never existed. But I want them to remember her."

That's why it's important to say the loved one's name. Doing so acknowledges the loss and communicates that you're safe to talk to, that you won't shy away or abandon them because of their grief. In other words, it lets the grieving person know that you're with them in their grief and invites them to talk about what they're going through.

You don't have to say a lot. Some brief, compassionate words are often enough—for example, "The holidays must be hard for you without [name]" or "I remember the time when [name] . . ."

So, don't be afraid to mention the name of the deceased loved one, because saying their name opens the door to the gift of remembering.

## Listening to and Sharing Memories

Once you've opened the door to remembering, be ready to listen to the grieving person's memories. Sharing memories is a way for them to express their love for the deceased, feel closer to their lost loved one, and experience comfort.

Although a grieving person can certainly reflect and remember on their own, there's something special about sharing memories with someone who will listen and care. Whether they're sharing happy memories, sad stories about the deceased's final days, funny anecdotes, or somber reflections, your being there to listen sends a clear message: *You are not alone.*

Each conversation is different. Some people may want to talk and talk, while others may be eager to hear *your* recollections about their loved one. It varies by individual, so follow the other person's lead. Stay focused on their needs, and you'll be on the right track to providing meaningful care.

## Embracing Every Emotion

One reason people often hesitate to bring up someone's loss is because they're worried about how the grieving person might respond. Memories of a loved one may bring strong emotions—anger, sadness, loneliness, regret—as well as the tears that often come with such feelings. It can be uncomfortable to encounter these strong feelings because we don't know what to say or do.

But here's a secret: Usually, the best response is simply to listen and embrace whatever emotions might come. You don't have to say exactly the right thing; in fact, trying to find the perfect words often leads to clichés, platitudes, or other unhelpful responses. In contrast, listening to, accepting, and validating a grieving person's emotions brings comfort.

Of course, it isn't always easy to listen as someone cries, expresses anger, or shares how lonely they feel. But when you set aside your discomfort and focus on being present with the other person, you'll be providing exactly the kind of care they need.



*"Mentioning my wife's name after she died was so hard for some people. It was almost as if she never existed. But I want them to remember her."*

## **Making the Holidays a Little Easier**

Grief has no expiration date. Whether it's been a year, two years, or longer since someone lost a loved one, consider offering the gift of remembering to them, too. No matter how long it's been, listening and reminiscing together is a wonderful way to bring comfort, deepen relationships, offer care, and bring Christ's healing love to those who are hurting during the holidays.

Doing that can make a difficult holiday season a little easier.