Covid-19 Shelter-in-Place
Guided Resource for Pastors/Spiritual Leaders
Covid-19 Grief Care for Families and for those who Live Alone
*At Home Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care*
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Burden: There is a growing number of deaths due to natural causes, accidents, and now Covid-19. Our congregants are in an isolated grief process. They cannot say “Good-bye”, visit dying loved ones, view bodies or hold a Service of Celebration for a lost loved one. Combined, this may create a far more traumatic grief process. Grief affects the mind, body and spirit. We, as clergy, may offer hope!

Given our sacred calling as clergy and coupled with our education, we have the opportunity to help these grief-stricken congregants to experience some hope and potential healing through insights from the disciplines of neurobiology and Neurotheology. Research has shown that through neuroplasticity, new neurons and synapse pathways may be created over time. We, as clergy, may aid in that healing process by offering *At-Home Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care*. For example, brain imaging, or neuroimaging reveals changes in the human brain when the subject is either meditating or praying.

The Limbic System of the brain is associated with emotions and memories. When congregants worship, changes occur in the Limbic System. I am suggesting that if we provide a liturgy of grief and soul care, we may help those in grief to find some hope and healing. A liturgy that invites mind, body and spiritual insights and rituals may help the grieving person to be more focused, thus allowing for some hope and healing to occur. When we invite a grieving person to a thinking, feeling and sensing liturgy and ritual, we may help him/her to find more hope, peace and a deeper faith in God, thus easing the level of grief and potential hopelessness, and isolation.

**Rationale:** It is imperative for those who have lost a loved one during our *Shelter-in-Place* culture that provision be made through all local Houses of Worship to provide an *At Home Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care*. Emotions are God-given ways to experience life. Emotions of trauma through the loss of a loved one, be it age-related, accidental death or Covid-19 deaths, need a way to be expressed. Loved ones are not able to hold services nor view the body of a departed loved one, therefore, leaving people, family and even friends trapped in unresolved grief without any options to both honor the lost one and to find a way to mourn that loss. The
inability to find a spiritual way to mourn may leave many with a sense of traumatic loss and unresolved feelings of deep distress, potential loss of faith and hope and lack of trust in God.

I am offering an At-Home Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care. The goals for the liturgy are:

One: Connect the grieving one with his/her local church pastor/spiritual leader. It is vital that the grieving one or ones feel relationally connected;

Two: Acknowledge the emotions of loss and potential traumatic grief, that all feelings are appropriate, even rage and anger at God;

Three: Guidance in ways to grieve, that there is no “one” way to grieve, just invite expressions of grief;

Four: Provide a guided liturgy whereby feelings of loss may be expressed;

Five: Provide a list of optional rituals to further invite thinking, feeling and sensing ways of emotional expression;

Rationale for Rituals: Religious rituals invite the person into a mind, body and spirit activity; the entire person is present in a moment of time as rituals are activated. Religious rituals help to bring the Sacred into ritualized actions, to draw congregants into a closer sense of the Divine. Sacred rituals also help in mindfulness, that of being fully present to the sacred moments in time.

*Please see attached model for optional rituals that may be used.

Six: Interview a grieving person. It is critical to ask open-ended questions such as:

What may we do for you right now?

What would help the most?

What might be hard for you right now?

What would you suggest we ask of others going through such a loss?

Do you know of anyone who has suffered abuse and needs grief care?

Rationale: For the interviewing process is that the pastor/spiritual leader will gain vital information about the grieving person’s personal feelings that, otherwise, may not be revealed.

Pastors/spiritual leaders should be aware that the grieving one may live in a dysfunctional family system. There may have been abuse, battering, addiction issues, or whatever, the grieving one may feel a sense of relief that this person has died. These events may create a traumatic grieving process whereby the one in grief may become suicidal or overwhelmed with feelings of hate and loss of justice and healing. Pastors and spiritual leaders will need to discern just where these potential life situations may exist. If this situation is present, arrange for an online counseling session with a certified pastoral counselor until the Shelter-in-Place orders have been lifted.
Invite the grieving one/ones to pray a prayer of lament, one that encourages the grieving person to express all feelings, even rage at God for having lost the opportunity to find healing/justice before the abuser died. *Please see sample prayer of lament on the enclosed Christian At-Home Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care.

Offer prayers and spiritual readings in the At Home Guided Liturgy for Grief and Soul Care:

Pastors/spiritual leaders might want to plan a time for a special service to acknowledge all losses after quarantine has been lifted.