

# Compassionate Companions Ministry

## **Parish Companion Guidelines**

presented by,

Lori Becker

Respect Life Coordinator



# Prayer



# A New Grief

A funeral and burial is a part of the grieving process that provides mourners an opportunity to outwardly express feelings and emotions about their loved one.

In addition to the ordinary grief mourners experience at a time of loss, the newly imposed requirements to modify or delay funerals due to the coronavirus crisis introduces a new trauma and increased pain to the grieving process.

# Expanded Grief Ministry

Compassionate Companions Ministry was created to assure the suffering of the love and compassion of the parish, that their feelings and pain are real and they are not alone.

The ministry will continue to evolve in order to serve the needs of the suffering which are changing rapidly during this challenging time.

# Ministry Roles

Parish Coordinator - someone with experience in grief support and pastoral care. This person serves as a liaison with the parish leaders and the companions. The coordinator will receive names and contact information of those who have suffered the loss of a loved one or anyone in need of support from the parish leader or staff and will assign a companion to this person(s). The coordinator will assist the companion with resources in their ministry.

Companion - has pastoral care training and/or experience that will allow them to walk (via phone, text and online video chats) with the assigned person(s) on their journey of grief. The companion will provide love, support and assurance that the person is not alone by creating a confidential, trusting relationship of a listening presence.

# Ministry Roles

Diocesan Coordinator - the ministry is coordinated through the Office of Respect Life along with collaboration of other offices and ministries throughout the diocese. The coordinator will assist the parish coordinator with training, resources and support. The diocesan coordinator will provide regular evaluations of the ministry and will process referrals from funeral homes, cemetery staff and community agencies to parishes for those in need of support.

# Parish Companion Guidelines

- Providing support during this time of restrictions and social distancing
- Referral from the Parish Coordinator
- Pray
- Empty Cup - let go of issues, fears, control, anxiety
- Prepare your heart to openly listening to others
- Staying focused - ask the Holy Spirit for guidance
- Length of the call - 20 minutes

# Listening Presence

- Phone Visits
  - Verbal Cues
  - Tone of voice
  - Silence
  - Listen for distractions
- Video Chats
  - Remove any distractions
  - Hold eye contact
  - Assess the person's surroundings
  - Watch body language (yours, too)



# Listening Presence

- Listen with compassion and competence
  - Encourage person to tell their story
  - Avoid statements of understanding
  - Don't attempt to fix or judge
- Clarify
  - Don't assume
  - Repeat back, paraphrase
- Allow person to talk 80% of the time
- Length of Visit

# A Trusting Relationship

Establishing a trusting relationship is based on mutuality and is vital in the ability to provide support.

- Mutuality – a relationship between two people that is based on mutual respect.
- Confidentiality – the promise to keep other person's information private.
- Respect – respectful of the person's time, beliefs and experiences.
- Non-judgmental – accept the person as a child of God.

# The Visit

- Visits
  - Introduce yourself
  - Ask if this is a convenient time
  - Use the script on the resources page as a guide
- Concluding the visit
  - Acknowledge the importance of the call
  - Schedule the next visit
  - Ask to pray
- Keeping records
  - Make notes of the visit
  - Ensure confidentiality by keeping notes in safe place
- Referrals
  - Notify coordinator of any concerns

# Evaluating the Visit

- Are we connecting?
- Is this making a difference?
- How can we walk this path together?
- Do you feel heard?
- Were you comfortable with our visit?
- Pray together
- Journaling
  - How was this visit?
  - What was stirred up in you?
  - Where was God present?
- Confidential note keeping
- Contact Coordinator with concerns, support

# Coordinator/Companion Check In

The Parish Coordinator will arrange to check in with each companion on a regular basis

- Opportunity to reflect and process visits
- Share any concerns
- Discuss available resources

# Technology Resources

Here are free technology resources to assist in connecting with those grieving when personal contact is not possible. Visit the links below to access these on your computer and/or cellphone (Android or I-Phone)  
Contact Stephanie Flynn at 989.797.6635 or [sflynn@dioceseofsaginaw.org](mailto:sflynn@dioceseofsaginaw.org) for technology assistance.

Facebook Messenger

[messenger.com](https://messenger.com)

Face-Time

[support.apple.com](https://support.apple.com)

Goto Meeting

[gotomeeting.com](https://gotomeeting.com)

Webex

[webex.com](https://webex.com)

Zoom

[zoom.us](https://zoom.us)

Microsoft Teams

[teams.microsoft.com](https://teams.microsoft.com)

Google Hangouts

[hangouts.google.com](https://hangouts.google.com)

Skype

[skype.com](https://skype.com)

WhatsApp

[Whatsapp.com](https://Whatsapp.com)

# Resources & Materials

Available Resources and Materials Link

[www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org)

Includes:

- Training Videos
- Script for visit examples
- Grief Materials
- Local Agency Contacts
- Catholic Teaching and Guidelines
- Technology Website Links
  
- And, more

# What's Next

- View the next videos
  - Funeral – Order of Christian Burial
  - Ars Moriendi (The Art of Dying)
- Attend team meeting via virtual or conference call
  - Discuss questions or concerns
  - Establish team ground rules
- Visit the Resource Listing Page
- Pray
  - For your ministry
  - For those you will minister to
  - For all who have died
  - For Compassionate Companions Ministry