

LIFE DURING A PANDEMIC

Here we are in the beginning of fall, the leaves are changing, cooler temperatures and more darkness. With this new season, we are still living in a pandemic and people are asking the question when will my life go back to normal? I hear over and over what is really normal? So many people are saying I have never spent so much time with family, my husband and kids than now. We have had meals together, game nights, movie nights etc. What feelings are your children experiencing in all of this turmoil and death that is talked about day after day? Where do they find their comfort and the person to pour out their fears and concerns? Then the question becomes what will our lives be like as things begin to somewhat go back to normal? Families have to make decisions about what is important and what will go back as before; no dinners together, no game nights, no more movie nights. That decision comes from each and every one of you.

We are by no means over this pandemic. We have a long way to go. Yes, we are living amidst so much pain and frustration with peoples' anxiety and grief heightened. People continue to say why is this happening to me, my family, why can I not see my loved one who is in a facility? My loved one died and I did not get to see him or her, hold their hand, sit next to them and be there during those last weeks, months of his or her life. "I kissed him good bye and told him I loved him when the ambulance took him to the hospital and the next time I saw him was the funeral home." I miss him so very much and there is so much I want to say to him. My

heart hurts, my anger is so deep. Calling hours and funerals are also so different. I need a hug, where is it? I see people paying their respects from a distance and family members wanting so badly to reach out for a hug. I recently was with a family that I knew the deceased well and the daughter comes up and hugs me. So difficult to say no because of my ministry. Because of the large funerals I have officiated at even though people have worn masks, I have been unable to attend family functions because I have a niece due to deliver in five weeks.

I have been meeting with a young lady whose mom died and immediately after her death four family members ended up in the hospital with Covid19 and mom's funeral was put on hold for several weeks. She is not only trying to deal with her mom's death but also the after effects of Covid19 which have hit her very hard. She, like many physicians and nurses, say day after day I can't fix my own family and how the pain is within them as they treat their patients with compassion, gentleness and love.

Funeral directors, counselors and grief support specialists become the people on the next step of the journey for those whose loved one has died. They see people differently than before but still walk with them with gentleness, compassion and love in their hearts. Some of the deceased family's decisions have to be put on hold. A celebration of life and luncheon will be held at a later date. Then the grief starts all over again as if the person just died. My heart feels like day one, the tears are nonstop. The pain is unreal but I know I do not walk this journey alone. My loved one is my life so I need to talk about that person and share memories with

someone who will listen to my story as often as I need to tell it. Each of us during this pandemic needs to embrace, incorporate and be good with what we need to do. For some, Covid19 touches in a very personal way; for others their healing touch is what is important and for some, it may be a listening ear and heart that journeys with families during this most difficult time. Those many family members who are grieving the loss of a child, a spouse, a parent, a sibling, other family members or a friend are not only grieving because their loved one died from Covid19 but for so many other reasons. I have found, more than ever, peoples' grief is heightened and more complicated. So today, each of us needs to be the listening ear to a friend, family member or community member or maybe someone we don't know who has come into our lives. What is my response or my gift to another during these trying times?

By: Sister Pat Fesler, HM
Pastoral Assistant
Zion Lutheran
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