

# **Bangor University Chaplaincy Team**

## **Support from the Christian traditions following a Bereavement**

Death is the most painful parting which humans experience. The death of a loved one can occur at any time: it may be something for which people are prepared or it may be very sudden. Bereavement when at University can create acute short-term pressures and the need for support over a longer term. If you, or someone you know, has recently lost a friend or relative then this leaflet may be of use to you.

As Chaplains to the University we are aware that everyone reacts differently to death. Some people want space to be on their own. Others need to be with friends. Many will want to seek outside support. The University has a range of services which may help in a bereavement, among these members of the Chaplaincy Team. If you feel you need us, we are here to help. The Team is currently made up of Chaplains from the Christian tradition and the content of this leaflet is reflective of our experience and tradition, but we can put you in touch with a local leader from another faith community should you wish it. If you need a listening ear, advice on practical issues, someone to pray for you or with you, or anything with which you think we might be able to help then please get in contact.

- If you wish to contact a member of the University Chaplaincy Team please email [chaplaincy@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@bangor.ac.uk)
- If you wish to contact a member of the University Counselling Service please email [counselling@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@bangor.ac.uk)
- If you wish to speak with someone beyond the University, there is help available from Cruze Bereavement Support: [www.cruzenorthwalesarea.ik.com/](http://www.cruzenorthwalesarea.ik.com/)

The remainder of this leaflet offers some thoughts from the Christian tradition about the nature of death, about what might lie hereafter, some prayers and Bible verses which offer strength and comfort, and some information on funeral and memorial services. We hope it can help lift a little of the pain by assuring you that you do not face this situation alone. You are in our thoughts in your time of need.

## **Christianity and death**

Christians believe that the whole of our lives fall within the plan which God has for the world. We sometimes do not understand why things happen the way that they do, and it is right to struggle with God when we are hurting. We also believe that God's loving purposes extend past death and into eternity, that human lives are part of a bigger picture of which only he is fully aware.

Among the uncertainties which confront us in the death of a loved one are questions of whether there is any existence beyond death and, if so, where our loved ones might be now. Death by its very nature is a step into the unknown, such that several different Christian views of death have emerged. In short, however, all Christians hold that people are held in God's love beyond death and that our life continues in union with him. Ultimately, the Christian hope is that God will make a new world in which bodies and souls are renewed in perfection and forever. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so we believe he will raise all the saints on the last day.

## **Funeral and Memorial Services**

There are many ways in which people choose to mark death, either as individuals or in groups. The format chosen will depend on a number of factors including who is involved, and the beliefs of the deceased and their family.

It is usual for the family of a deceased person to organise a **funeral**. This will typically take place near where the person has died in conjunction with a funeral director and may draw on local clergy.

Sometimes **memorial services** are organised in addition to funerals, for example when a large number of friends live in a location other than where the funeral takes place. This might be the case, for example, in the case of a student death. Memorial services can be a lot more creative than funerals and capture much of the dead person's life and relationships.

Finally, many bereaved people at times of death find a space for other short and simple markers for example prayers in their house or some resources to use in private.

In all these areas the Chaplaincy Team can advise and help if you want us to.

## Ongoing connections

We will always be connected to our departed friends and relatives: they have changed our lives and shaped who we are. It is important to find ways of honouring this which are affirmative and not constricting. One way in which Christians believe people on earth echo what we think the dead are doing is through **worship**. Inspiring worship is an echo of what the saints do in heaven: praising God and praying to him.

## Words from the Bible about death

‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ says the Lord. ‘Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.’ *John 11.25, 26*

We brought nothing into the world, and we take nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

*1 Timothy 6.7; Job 1.21b*

## Some resources you might like to use for prayer and meditation

### A prayer from the Orthodox Tradition

With the Saints give rest, O Christ to the soul of Thy servant where there is no pain, nor sickness nor sorrow, nor sighing, but life everlasting.

Thou only art immortal who hast created and fashioned man, for out of the earth were we mortals made, and unto the earth shall we return again, as Thou didst command when Thou madest me saying, ‘Dust thou art and unto dust thou return’; whither also all we mortals wend our way, making our funeral lament this song ‘Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia’.

### A poem from the Anglican Tradition

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening  
into the house and gate of heaven,  
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,  
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;  
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;  
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;  
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity;  
in the habitations of thy glory and dominion,  
world without end.

O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.