

“Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1st Timothy 6:12)

This past weekend we said goodbye to our friend and congregational family member, Richard Schultz. It was a lovely memorial service with special music offered by one of our youth, Jorja Shelbourn who was working with Dick before he died to learn some duets to share in worship. Both Donna and Karla also shared their gifts of music. Karen Torgersen, who has known Dick for over 40 years offered a short eulogy. We had a special surprise when Randy, Dick's middle child, came to Arizona to be a part of the special service for his dad.

Dick passed into the church Triumphant on May 23rd, 2022. Since then, we really have missed his presence. We were trying to wait to have his service until his whole family would be available, but they decided to share in a memorial later on this year in Minnesota. This is where we realized we really needed closure. One of Dick's favorite foods was waffles for breakfast. For our reception for the morning we decided to serve waffles with strawberries. Delicious! Special thank you to all who made that morning so special for all.

When a loved one dies, we often hold a service in their honor. This can be a funeral, memorial service, or celebration of life event. It's an important rite of passage that commemorates a person's life. It can also be an important part of the healing process. A **funeral** is a service when a body is present. A **memorial** is a time to memorialize the individual without the body present. A **celebration of life** is held anywhere where a family wants to memorialize a loved one... usually not in a church.

Within us, we have an innate need to honor, respect, and remember those who have died. Those we have loved. Funerals, as a ritual, don't exist simply to exist. They have purpose and intentionality and meaning.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, respected grief counselor, author, and educator, has done extensive research into the purposes of a funeral or memorial and why we, as people, need them. Dr. Wolfelt's 6 Purposes of a Service:

REALITY - When someone we love dies, our minds and hearts rebel against it at first. We don't want to accept that the person we loved is gone. **The first purpose of a funeral is to help us accept the reality of the death. In order to heal and grieve, we must first accept what has happened.** At a healing and meaningful funeral, mourners have the chance to confront reality and begin processing their grief. The funeral is not the end of the grief journey – it is the beginning. We must learn to come to grips with our new reality – one without our loved one.

RECALL - One of the key components of a service is remembering the one who has died. We see this happen in the eulogy, in the tribute video (if there is one), in the songs or readings chosen, as well as in the gathering of friends and family following the service. **By recalling and sharing about our relationship with a loved one, we help ourselves transition.** We begin the process of moving our relationship with the one who has died to one of memory rather than presence. We must go backward into our memories before we can move forward in our grief journeys.

SUPPORT - A third purpose of the service is to activate support. At a funeral, we gather with other people who knew our loved one. We can share our memories, give voice to our feelings, and find support in others. Friends and neighbors can offer their caring support during a trying time.

EXPRESSION- As human beings, we are wired to feel. When we feel deeply but actively suppress our emotions, those feelings can become unbearable and begin to fester. These services are meant to act as a safe place for us to get our thoughts and emotions out. By putting our thoughts and feelings into action, we begin the journey toward healing. You may need to talk, cry, or just sit quietly with a person who cares.

MEANING - When someone we love dies, many questions begin to surface. Did the person I love live a good life? Why did this person die? Why do any of us die? While there are no simple answers to these questions, a funeral gives us time and opportunity to ask them and begin to find our way to answers that give us peace. By searching for meaning and allowing ourselves to find peace, we find purpose in our continued living and can work toward reconciling ourselves to the loss we have suffered.

TRANSCENDANCE - The final purpose of a service is transcendence. This happens in two ways. First, the service helps us find a new self-identity. A service helps us publicly mark a change in status. For example, someone who has lost their spouse goes from someone who is married to someone who is single. A funeral allows everyone to publicly acknowledge this change and begin offering the mourner support in their new status. Second, these services often wake us up and make us think about our lives and how we want to spend our remaining days.

When we have services here at Spirit of Hope I encourage you to come to grieve, and come and offer your love and support for those who are mourning. Thank you for all your love in this church community!

Peace, be with you!

Pastor Tony