



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#245 - September 2025

## A Best Practice: A Time to Remember

During the month of November, many parishes plan opportunities for those who are grieving – because of the November 2nd feast of All Souls and the upcoming holidays since they can be very difficult for those who are grieving.

This simple – but moving and supportive – event has been planned each year by Kathie Carpentri of St. Mary Parish in Wayne, MI.

## The Gathering

Adults who have experienced the death of a loved one (whether recently or a long time ago) are invited to an afternoon of prayer, meditation, imagery prayer, song and sharing from their hearts, in a safe and loving atmosphere.

This TIME TO REMEMBER was an idea that Kathie had because of her own experiences and the experiences of many parishioners. Kathie designed the gathering; then presented it to the parish pastoral council for approval.



*Photo by Susana Cipriano on Pixabay*

## The Timing

The gathering can be scheduled for afternoon and/or evening to make it available to everyone.

Kathie is also contemplating the possibility of doing a second one each year - in the middle of the year (grief doesn't happen on our calendar schedule).

## Invitations

Articles were featured in the parish bulletin, as well as inviting conversations with people Kathie knew who had had a death in the family. For future planning, it is hoped that personal invitations can be sent to people in the parish who have lost loved ones during the past years.

## The Design of “A Time to Remember”

- Opening prayer
- Guidelines for the Gathering



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### Guidelines for the Gathering

- \* Everyone will have the opportunity to speak and tell his or her story. However, no one will be compelled to do so. You have the right to "pass!"
- \* Everything spoken within the group is confidential. Everything said within the group stays within the group; it does not leave the room.
- \* Listening is a priority. Everyone gives the person speaking the gift of listening.
- \* We will not judge/make comments; we are here to share and listen. Crying is good!!!
- \* Each person's story is unique and important; each person's pain is real and valid.

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- **Introductions** included mentioning the person being remembered and a memory of them.
- **Sharing of some methods of living with grief**, especially at the holidays (see below)
- **Reflection questions:** These were given to the participants on a handout so they could reflectively write. They were then invited to share whatever they chose to.

- Has there been a time when you've experienced or yearned to experience the presence of God?
- Where is God for you right now?
- Reflect on a quality of your relationship with the person you are remembering.

- **Music:** Scars in Heaven  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCc7TCmKcwQ>)

Other songs to use:

- To Where You Are  
([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kDzC4k5-A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kDzC4k5-A))
- Seven Minutes In Heaven  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dv1xoA4I87Y>)
- I Can Only Imagine  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU0MwNpRq6M>)
- Dancing With The Angels  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDZMgFax5vA>)
- Beyond the Moon and Stars  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2R7uMU8gHU>)

- **Imagery prayer:** The participants were invited to visualize a gift from themselves to their loved one in heaven. They wrapped it and then imagined themselves giving it to their loved one.



- **Ritual**



Paper hearts were passed out. The participants wrote the name of their loved one on the front and a memory or phrase that meant something to them on the back. These hearts were then hung on a Christmas tree that was placed in the hallway in church.

Accompanying the tree in church were blank paper hearts with directions which invited parishioners to use the hearts to write their loved one's name and a memory and place them on the tree.

When the Christmas season is concluded, the hearts are burned and buried (rather than just haphazardly discarded).

- **Closing Poem or Prayer**
- **Closing Song:** Kathie closes the gathering with "The Little Drummer Boy," – a song that might not seem as though it's connected with "A Time to Remember," but it's a song of hope.



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## Living with Grief

- \* Avoid judgment. Don't compare your grief to others'. There's no timeline or "right" way to mourn.
- \* Don't pretend the holidays feel the same. Simply saying "This year is different" gives you room to feel honestly.
- \* You don't have to do everything. Say no to events or traditions that feel too heavy this year. Give yourself permission to scale back.
- \* Modify or skip traditions. You're not betraying anyone by doing things differently. Grief often calls for gentle change.
- \* Start a new tradition. Write a letter to the person you're missing. Cook their favorite meal. Make a donation in their name.



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*  
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis*  
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:  
[https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons\\_of\\_aff\\_-\\_journal\\_special\\_issue.pdf](https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf)

## Other GEMS issues you might be interested in:

- [Don't Be Caught Dead, Plan Ahead](#)
- [Hospice Nurses and Heaven](#)
- [Spiritual Autobiography](#)
- [Grieving and Remembering](#)
- [Healing Memorials](#)
- [A Blessing for Widows](#)
- [Remembering our Deceased Loved Ones](#)