

***The Bereavement Ministry Program:
A Comprehensive Guide for Churches***

Jan C. Nelson and David A. Aaker,
Notre Dame, Indiana: Ava Maria Press, 2009,
306 pages, \$49.95, paper with notebook binder.

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Given the many demands placed upon pastors, and the hectic pace of life in which we all live and die, *The Bereavement Ministry Program: A Comprehensive Guide for Churches* is an invaluable resource. It is an excellent resource for pastors and congregations who are concerned with providing a holistic ministry of care and counsel to people experiencing grief. Described as a ministry “toolbox”, the authors have developed this pastoral resource to support, encourage and empower ministry by providing bereavement articles, perspectives, resources, reproducible handouts and a useful DVD to help those who grieving. Building upon their years of studies and experiences with persons and issues of dying, grief, wellness, and the ministry of health and parish nursing, the authors have presented a kaleidoscope of resources to assist

local congregations and church committee, in addition to pastors, to respond appropriately and spiritually to those who deal often with grief, death and dying.

The authors begin by discussing the lack of bereavement support and understanding especially after a critical death such as suicide, murder and the death of a child and how this lack can contribute to suicide, alcoholism, divorce, isolation and other unhealthy coping mechanism. They acknowledge our society's increasing fear and dissociation with the process of dying, and how this tends to increase the need for bereavement care from the churches. They also explain how urgent and important the ministry of the pastor is during the times of the wake and funeral, "in the de-ritualizing of death" (ix). With these concerns in mind, this resource is written not only for the pastor but also for lay leaders who wish to offer a bereavement program in their local congregations is structured and described in four main parts.

Part I entitled, "Getting Started" focuses on approached, organization and implementation. Part II, "Basic Resources" is particularly important because it reminds us of the developmental needs of people at particular ages and stages, it includes topic of relevance to 'grieving adults, grieving children, and grieving teenagers'. Part III "Supplemental Resources" contains resources for holidays, special days, and special circumstances, and it includes materials helpful, for instance during the death of a pet, and encourages healthful and healing resources in general, such as journaling, rituals for saying good-bye, and ways to cope with emotions and manage stress. The final section, Part IV, "Resources for Bereavement Ministers" contains additional helpful materials, and the appendices provides useful forms for setting up a bereavement

programs and detailed information on how to start a bereavement support group. Indeed, there is a great need for this book, particularly for those involved in the practice of Christian ministry related to death and dying.