**Outreach to those Bereaved within the Parish**

**Remembering our Dead During November 2020**

The Parish Council/Parish Bereavement Group/Parish Liturgy Group/ might consider how it can link to those bereaved. Possibilities include

* A condolence card with a message from the parish & advising about the Liturgy of Remembrance
* A letter from the parish (adapt from the model written by the DPC sub-group)
* A phone–call from the parish – especially appreciated by those living alone
* Drop in a candle (a small battery candle could replace the usual candle where there is a safety concern) with the name of the person who has died
* A candle + a spring bulb as a reminder that new life comes from death.
* A booklet prepared for the Liturgy of Remembrance

**Creating a Sacred Space within the Church:**

A sacred space created in a suitable place in the Church which can be left in place for the whole month of November is a visual reminder of those who have died. The Sacred Space could include the names of the deceased on a scroll, or a large card. Ideally the names would be visible to everyone. Where the numbers of those deceased are small it may be possible to produce a large card with both names and photos of those who died in the past year.

**A Remembrance Tree** – A bare tree is placed in the sacred place + a basket of ribbons alongside the basket. People are invited (through newsletter) to visit the church and tie a ribbon or cross on the tree, as a visual reminder of their loved one. (Any number of ribbons may be tied to the tree.)

An alternative to ribbons might be small crosses (such as those used in some churches for Palm Sunday).

**Stone Art –** Involve a group to paint decorative stones each with a name of a person in the parish who has died during the year. These are placed in the sacred space or form a cairn placed in front of the altar or in another suitable place. At the end of the month the painted stones are gifted to those bereaved during the year. People are invited through the newsletter to add their own painted stone if they wish.

**Remembrance Stones** – Or adapt the Jewish custom of leaving stones on the grave to mark a visit to remember a loved one. A container of stones is left in the sacred space. People may be invited to add their ‘prayer stone’ to the sacred space or to a *cairn* of stones.

**Candles –** Small candles with the names of the deceased are placed on or around the altar and lit during liturgies so that they are visible to those watching from home during November.These might be given to the bereaved family at the end of November.

**Creating a Visible Sign of Remembrance Outside the Church During November**

Many people will not visit the local church during November. A visible sign or symbol of remembrance outside the church, is a public witness to the Church’s season of remembering and serves as an invitation to prayer and to their own remembering for passers-by.

Some of the above ideas are adaptable to outside the church such as

* An Outside Remembrance Tree using ribbons or small crosses (as above)
* Individual painted stones with names of each parishioner who has died could be left on the wall of the church or other designated place or forming a cairn outside the church. People are invited to add a painted stone with the name of someone they are remembering. At end of November the painted stones are given to each family bereaved during the year (Others may be invited to take them home).

**Remembering those in our country bereaved by COVID**

* A remembrance tree might also be a focus for keeping memory of all those in our country who have died from COVID since March.
* Or the railings of the church or other suitable place could be used to tie ribbons or small crosses, each one representing someone who has died by COVID.

**Diocesan Initiatives During November**

**Diocesan Day of Remembrance**

* This day is to be held in the second half of November – this will include those bereaved across our country by COVID. Resources to follow on this.

**The People’s Blessing of Graves:**

* As the community celebration of the Blessing of Graves cannot take place due to COVID, people can be encouraged to bless their own family graves taking holy water from home or from the church. A prayer text has been prepared for this which is on a separate page. This prayer text could be put on the parish newsletter and parish website.

Recognising that there is much hidden grief in our country due to the impact of the Corona Virus, parishes could help by advertising the contact details for the Free Phone Bereavement Service offered by the Irish Hospice Foundation on parish notice boards and parish newsletters. See the Irish Hospice Foundation Website for details.

Articles in the parish newsletter and in the local press on coping with bereavement or supporting those who are bereaved would also be helpful.