

Working with worship

This month Sharon Ross Ensor shares a service to assist people grieving after a miscarriage.

A service after a miscarriage

I wrote this service for a couple in our congregation who had suffered three miscarriages in twelve months and were feeling distressed and heartbroken.

All of us present found it a helpful time (for very different reasons), particularly the couple, who I have called, rather clumsily here, A and B. For them it marked a new beginning and a feeling that they could now move on.

We held the service in our chapel. It was a small gathering. They invited their two closest friends (a couple) and B's sister.

I had as a focal point for the service a small table with a cross, a lit Christ candle and a bowl of water on it. Floating in the water were three white flowers representing the three lost babies.

We used floating candles later on in the service (one each).

Resources I drew from were:

Coping with miscarriage Kitch Cuthbert and Sandra Van Eden, Long Methuen 1987

The Pattern of our Days Iona Community, Scotland. Wild Goose Publications 1996.

Opening

We have come together because of our love and concern for A and B, to be with them as they grieve over the three miscarriages they have suffered in the last year. To remember with them those three tiny lives

that have now been given over to the tenderness of God's love.

In being with them we are not wanting to wish that they would stop grieving and get on with their lives, we know that all will be well, that this time will pass, but that at the moment the pain and grief for them is as real and as important as any other in their life journey.

So we're here to share with them their sorrow, their feelings of helplessness and despair, and to hear together the message of the gospel that God's love for us in never-ending and is greater than any other power which might threaten to overwhelm us.

And we come seeking those gifts of God, for A and B, and for ourselves, of healing and strength, of understanding and peace.

Let us pray:

The scripture says: "as one whom a mother comforts, I will comfort you, says the Lord."

We come today God giving thanks for the gift of life and of your love of us.

We come today in sorrow and grief, as we see the pain which is so very real for A and B, as we share their disappointment and despair that the promise of new life has been taken, that confidence is eroded and hopes and dreams for a new baby have been shattered.

We come today to lay our questions, our sadness and our

hope at the feet of Christ, who opened his arms to receive all who were wounded and distressed.

We come today to acknowledge the myriad of feelings we have, to seek your face, to know once again that in Christ sorrow, disappointment, despair, sadness and death need not overwhelm us, that in him we can find life and hope for the future. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 43:1-5

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

Reflection:

Brief thoughts on the symbols on the table...the cross and the candle...Christ's light and love being ever present, standing alongside us in our pain and grief, bringing healing.

The water representing the fragility of life, the thin line which exists between life and death particularly in a pregnancy. And also the symbol of water for the Hebrews which represented chaos and destruction....the times when we read of Jesus calming the storm, walking on the water...what that might mean for us in times when we feel our lives are in chaos and overwhelmed by the storm.

Candle lighting

Invite people to light a floating candle as a sign of their



care and concern for A and B, their commitment to give them support over this grieving time, their belief in the power of God's love to give them strength and courage to face the future, and healing etc.

As they light the candle they might like to say a few words to

A and B, of support, of prayer, of blessing for them, affirming the strengths they see in them etc .

(In the service the couple themselves also lit a candle each and talked about what the experience had been like for them and what they learned

from it.)

Allow plenty of time for this...and silent time as well.

We concluded the time by singing, unaccompanied, *Be Still and Know that I am God.*

Then we had a drink together which was an important thing to do!

**MINISTER
FIRST CHURCH, MARTINBOROUGH**

The members of the Parish of First Church Martinborough are seeking a full time Minister to succeed their present minister, Robin Lane, who is retiring.

The Parish seeks a person to be their Preacher and Worship leader, and Pastor to the wider congregation.

This person should have good academic qualifications, be committed to ongoing learning, be open and receptive to liberal, radical and cutting edge thinking and have a positive approach to secular issues.

If you wish to make an enquiry about the position please contact either:

Dorothy Bates, Nominator
29 Fox Street
Featherston
e-mail debates@xtra.co.nz

Jim Thomson, Secretary
125 New York Street
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