

Sharing in Sorrow – Sharing in Joy

-- by Rev. Mark Delcuze, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Ridgefield, CT

As a dear friend often reminds me, “sharing a joy doubles it and sharing a sorrow tears it in half”. The joy part is immediately obvious. Just think of the last time you heard: “I got accepted!” or “It’s a girl!” or “We’re going to be married!” or “We got the contract!”. When someone expresses a joy, others can share that moment. It’s infectious, in a good way.

Sharing sorrow or pain is often far more difficult. There is a tendency to want to hold things together, to keep emotions bottled up, to make it look as if everything is all right. Yet I have found in my own life that speaking the sorrow to another human being lessens the load. While the listener may initially accept part of the burden, what really happens is, that I discover a moment of respite. What is required is a safe space and a listening ear.

For the past two years, Suzanne Perlman has been sharing the burdens of heavy hearts and life pain with members of this parish. Through the work of the Parishioners Fund, Suzanne is able to open her listening ear to those who are in grief, personal distress or times of transition. Sometimes the meetings are only for short term. Other times, Suzanne refers parishioners to other counselors in the area for long term care. All of the cost of this work is picked up by the Parishioner’s Fund and none of the participants’ names are known to the Committee.

For the Staff, Suzanne is an astonishing resource of knowledge and empathy. She has helped Libby and Emily lead a parenting class and works with the Stephen Ministers from time to time on matters of grief and self-care. Her long experience in employee assistance programs is invaluable to me as I try to help members of the congregation deal with job changes and other displacements.

Suzanne’s office is in Wilton. This has been an asset to those who seek a confidential setting. She is also able to schedule meetings at the Church for those who prefer it. She can be contacted directly by any member of the congregation. It’s best to call her in Wilton 203-834-2497. You can also work through one of the clergy to set up a meeting. Share a joy and double it. Share a sorrow and tear it in half. Thanks Suzanne, for two great years of caring service. May God give us many more years together!

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(written in 2008)