



ST AGNES
LONGSIGHT

Pastoral Care & Nurture: Bereavement

6. Talking about Death

I. A Conspiracy of Silence

Two significant events: BIRTH & DEATH – one celebrated, one hushed up

The word death is taboo – sometimes the word is not even used.

But we need to use the word in order to get behind the fears.

Our feelings about death can control our life.

Talking about death helps us to:

- live life more fully
- offer help to those who need it most

2. Three Ways we Speak about Death

A. Pictures

- concrete images (tombstone, coffin, hospital bed, flowers, a dead person)
- passageway images (suggesting movement of time: road, tunnel, doorway, ladder etc)
- theological images (symbols, angel, devil, cross, rainbow, question mark, black speck etc)

B. Code Words

- used by 75% of people – especially the media and card companies
- passed away, fell asleep, in repose, kicked the bucket
- appear helpful but can be very harmful (eg. 'Grandad fell asleep' or 'God took Daddy')
- may encourage the denial stage (Stages of Grief)

C. Straight English

dying, dead, death – easy to pronounce, easy to write – easy to say?

3. The Process of Dying

- dying is perhaps more frightening than death itself
- Christians feel they 'should not' fear it – but often they do
- questions about
 pain, control, dignity, control, isolation

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. (Isaiah 43)