



## Starting a Bereavement for Spousal Loss Ministry

1. Following Biblical Examples of Caring Church Members in Mark 2:1-5.
  - A. Faithfulness of friends
  - B. There was a plan.
  - C. Tools/resources were available
  - D. The presence of Jesus was sought
  - E. Time and expense were involved
2. The baseline component behind the actions taken in Mark 2:1-5 was the faith of the person's friends. (Mark 2:5).
3. Before beginning a compassionate ministry of any kind, consider doing a comprehensive overview of a caring church prepared for ministry.

(Helpful Resource: [Biblical Basis for Inclusion](#))

- A. *Understand the basics* of biblical inclusion
  - Everyone is unique with individual differences and needs.
  - Everyone is created in the image of God and has an inherent dignity
  - Everyone is needed in the body of Christ for it to be whole each person is valued for whom they are
- B. Assess the *needs* of leaders, members, and physical structures of *your church*
  - General Accessibility (See the Adventist Possibility Ministries Assessment Form) Review the following categories for accessibility:
    - Physical structures,
    - Entries to buildings
    - Parking lot
    - Lighting
    - Audio

- Restrooms
  - Seating/wheelchair spaces
  - Ease of Participation
  - Church hardware – doorknobs, switches
  - Friendly and accommodating greeters
  - Directional signs
  - Platform accessible for participation by all
- Education – What training may be needed for a collaborative team approach by those bereaving the loss of a loved one?
  - Encouragement – A mindset is needed for understanding, support, and possibility thinking
  - Accommodation – What can be done to provide for meaningful participation by all?
  - Allocation of Resources – What kind of resources are needed and how much?
  - Leadership – How are leaders prepared and by whom? Listening to the person’s story in this ministry is as important as doing. An emphasis must be given to the whole person: physically, emotionally, culturally, socially while treating the person respectfully.
  - Recognition that loneliness and isolation can intensify the loss.

C. *Assess the readiness* for your church to be open to providing opportunities for those experiencing a loss to

- To establish their own identity.
- Participate in the activities of the church as they are able.
- To know how to express their desire to participate or not to participate in church activities.
- To know of the church’s desire to assist them and, when the time is appropriate, for them to minister to and with others.

4. Getting Started – Characteristics of a Compassionate Church

[\(What We Mean When We Say Our New Church Is Special Needs Friendly\)](#)

A. The Way the Church Relates

“I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and

disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character.”  
(Testimonies to the Church, p.511)

- B. A Church That Knows It Needs All People.
  - “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.” (1 Cor. 12:7, NLT)
  - “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV)
  
- C. A Church That Believes, “All Are Gifted, Needed, and Treasured”

“In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in “the beauty of the Lord our God.” Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life.”

*Education, p.80*
  
- 5. Create a Ministry Team.  
[\(Creating a Ministry Team\)](#)
  - A. Get the support of the pastor and church board for this ongoing ministry.
  - B. Recruit an Adventist Possibility Ministries leader who can develop a team and who will become a voting member of the church board. If possible, this person should be someone who is directly benefited by APM ministries (i.e. lost a spouse, Deaf, blind, etc.)
  - C. Interview local members who have lost a spouse to see how the church can be helpful. Be sure to problem-solve together.
  - D. Find personnel and other needed resources within and outside your local church
  
- 6. Ask key church leaders to complete Part 1 of the Accessibility and Belonging Questionnaire which addresses attitudes and values.

7. Those who have developed an active ministry for the widowed have found it important to have a small planning committee established in the local church. When there are multiple churches in an area, there are advantages when they join together to promote special events

The following are examples that some communities have found to be helpful.