

4-8-2024

THEO -- P500 -- Intro to Pastoral Care and Counseling

Dr. Matthias Beier

Amy Linnemann

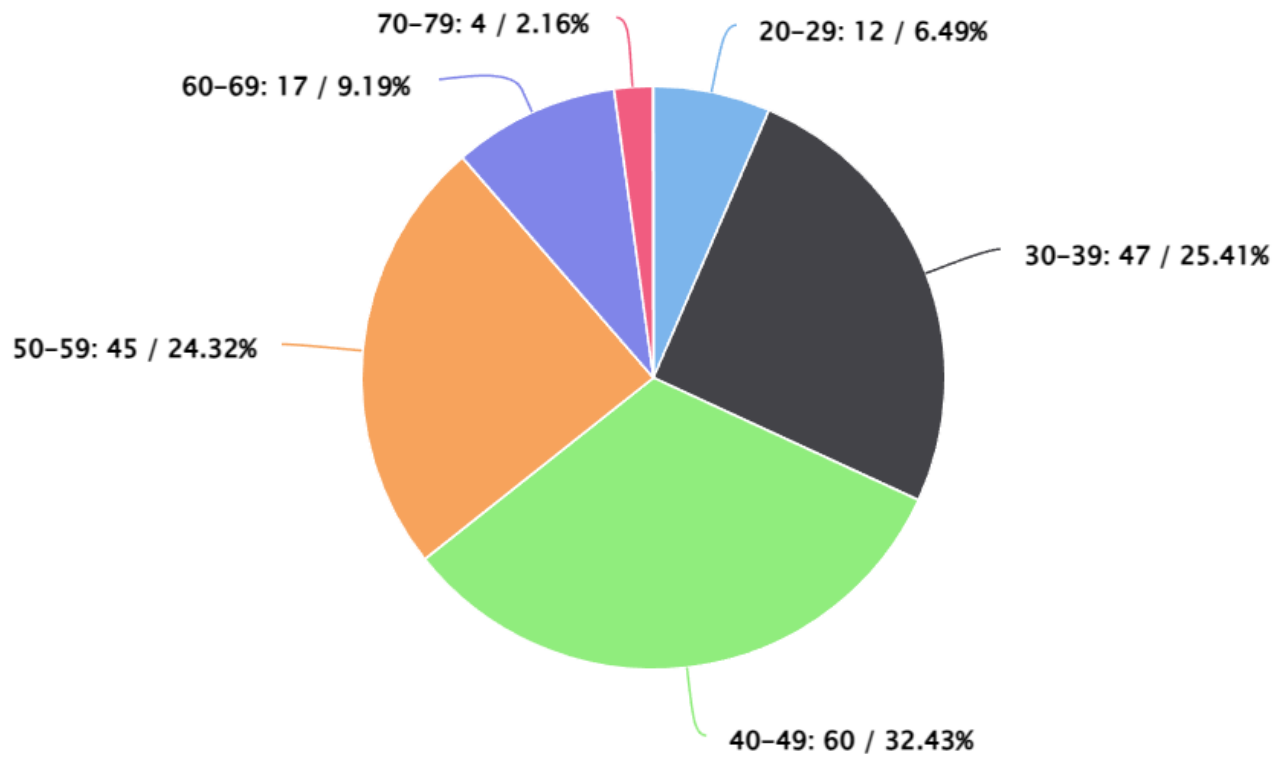
Widow Care Research

While most graduate projects send me straight to the library for an initial round of research, my first information-gathering step in creating a pastoral counseling tool was a trip to our local coffee shop for a conversation with my friend Amy Graves. In addition to mutual encouragement and the enjoyment of excellent espresso, Amy and I shared excitement over the possibility of filling a chasm in the local faith communities that leaves bereaved women without the essential resources of care and companionship -- a chasm that Amy has navigated as she has traveled through her own grief journey over these past four years. As a bereaved wife of a Christian pastor who also served in ministry alongside her husband, Amy anticipated a structure of practical and emotional care to support her grieving family through her husband's loss. While she certainly received support, the bulk of the care she has received has come from sources outside of her church community. The notable absence of congregational support and pastoral involvement after her husband's death challenged the very foundations of Amy's convictions about church, and her ongoing involvement in a broader community of widows led her to believe that she was not alone in her experience of socio-spiritual alienation. Amy's excitement about the generative potential of this project prompted us to widen the scope of our conversation to include other widows involved with church to better understand felt needs and best practices in widow care. What followed broke both of our hearts.

Initially, Amy extended our coffee shop conversation to involve an online widow's forum, where she asked a general question about church support during and after bereavement, a query that prompted an influx of thoughtful reflections on traumatic loss and tragic isolation. Because the outpouring of stories was so immediate and so moving, Amy contacted the director of a national widow support organization to find out if she was familiar with pastoral support resources for widow care. Given the ubiquitous directive toward widow care in prophetic scriptures and in church history, we both expected that her response would include capacious offerings. Instead, she joined the host of grieving women from the discussion boards in her own lament of the paucity of widow care in churches, inviting us to collect quantitative data by disbursing a survey through her connectional site. Because the time parameters and scholarly scope of this project don't sustain formal, original research, I created a cursory survey tool that covered some basic information that might help me to focus my own pastoral care suggestions toward the most pressing spiritual and practical needs experienced by widows connected to local congregations. Within just a few days, the survey garnered more than 180 responses. The following document contains the results of that survey along with the phenomenological data of narrative responses to general questions about church involvement and spiritual support during bereavement. Each query announced our intent to employ the responses in a scholarly report and in the development of a pastoral counseling tool, and all respondents were aware of their involvement in our research efforts.

Age of Widow at Time of Bereavement

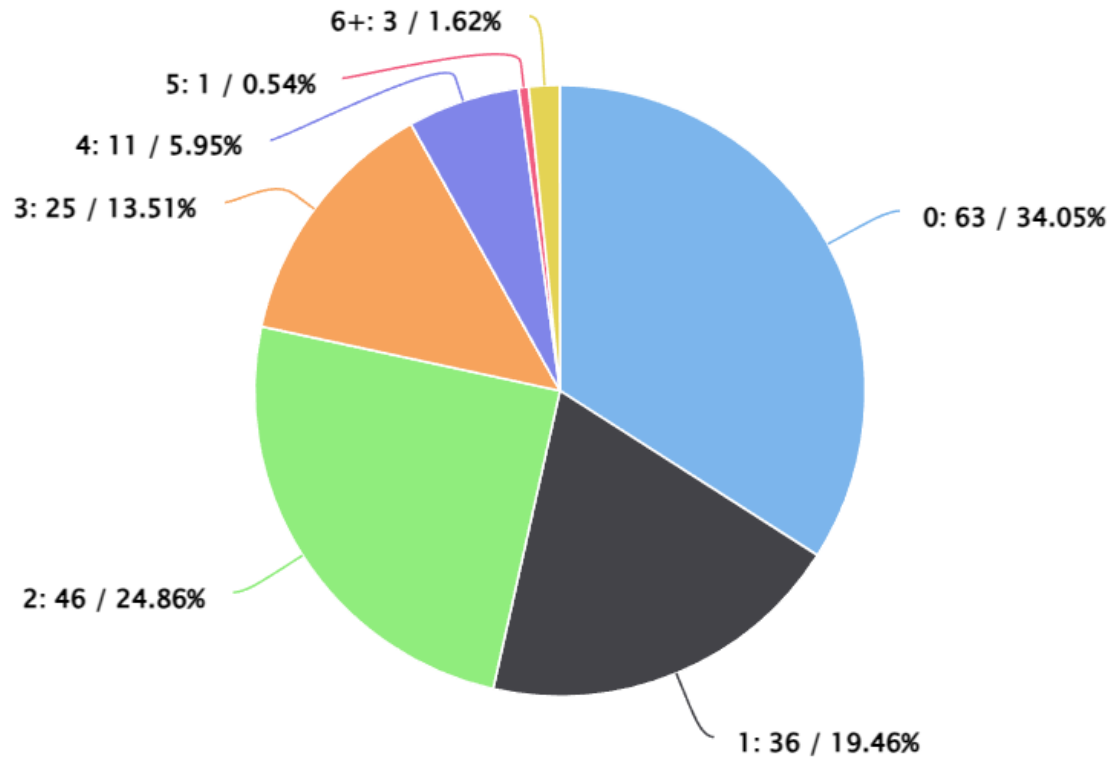
Answered 185, Response Total 185



Answer Choice	Selections ▼	% All Question Responses ▼	% All Survey Responses ▼
20-29	12	6.49%	6.49%
30-39	47	25.41%	25.41%
40-49	60	32.43%	32.43%
50-59	45	24.32%	24.32%
60-69	17	9.19%	9.19%
70-79	4	2.16%	2.16%
80+			

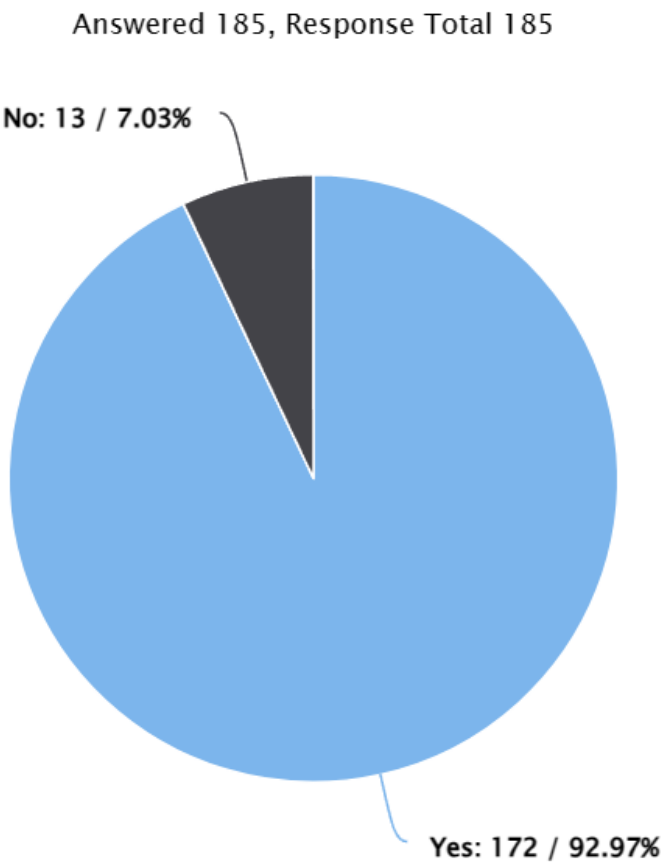
Number of Minor Children Living in the Home at the Time of Bereavement

Answered 185, Response Total 185



Answer Choice	Selections ▼	% All Question Responses ▼	% All Survey Responses ▼
0	63	34.05%	34.05%
1	36	19.46%	19.46%
2	46	24.86%	24.86%
3	25	13.51%	13.51%
4	11	5.95%	5.95%
5	1	0.54%	0.54%
6+	3	1.62%	1.62%

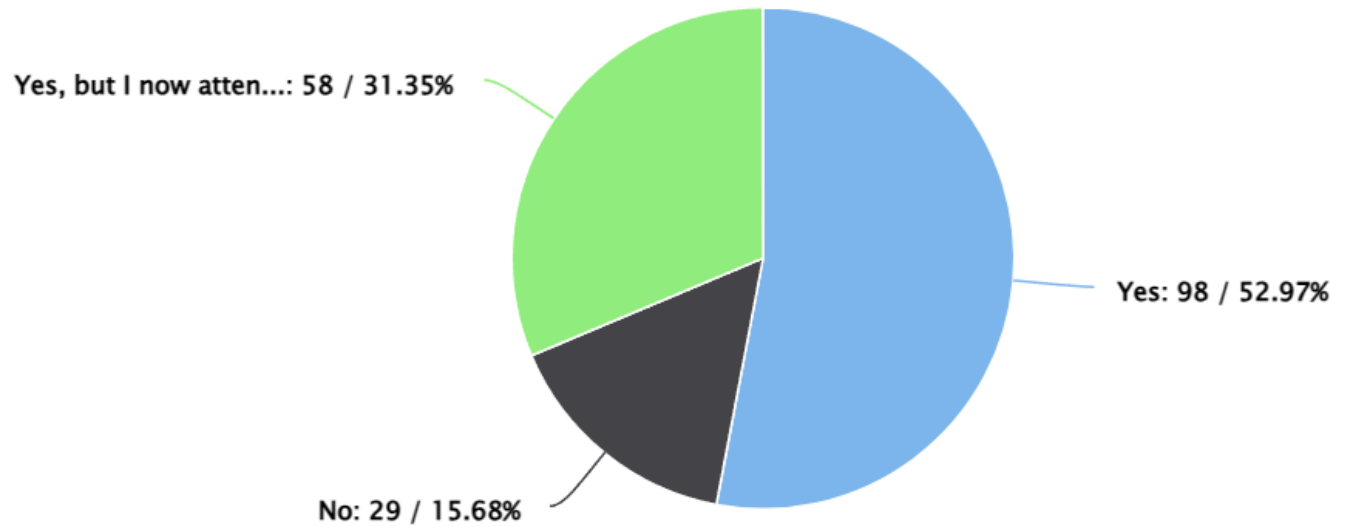
Did you attend church before your husband passed away?



Answer Choice	Selections ▾	% All Question Responses ▾	% All Survey Responses ▾
Yes	172	92.97%	92.97%
No	13	7.03%	7.03%

Do you attend church now?

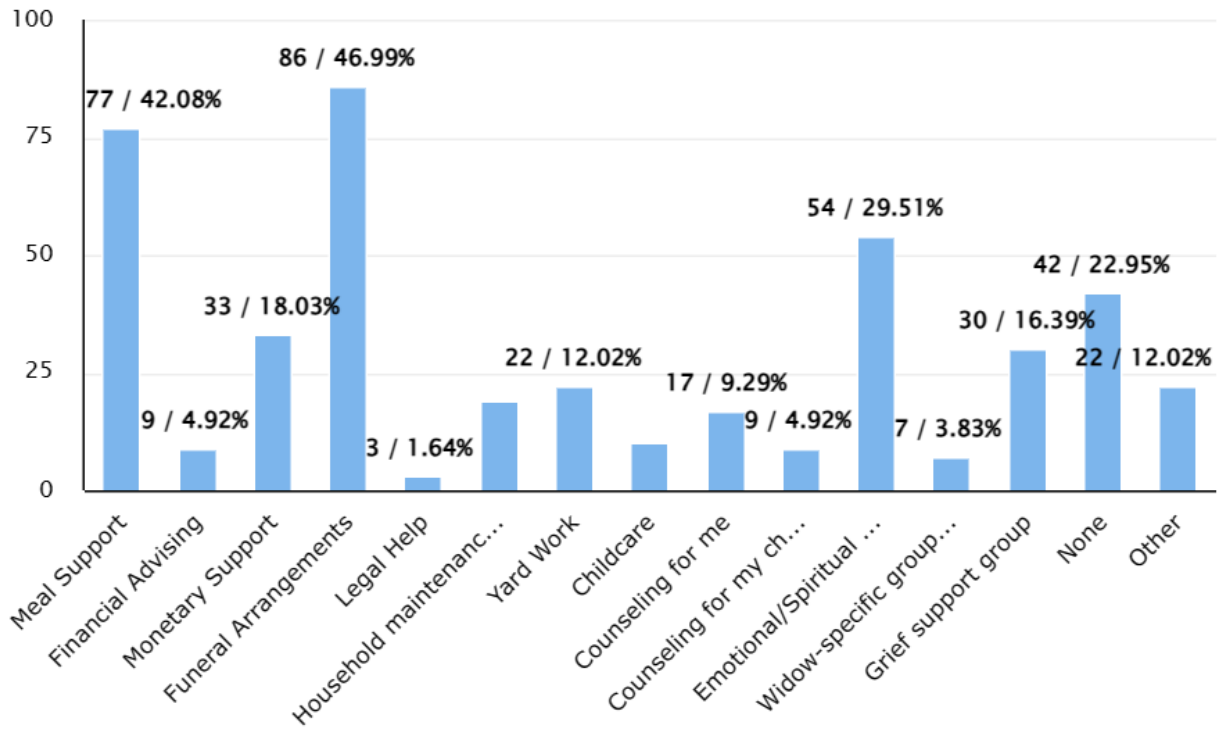
Answered 185, Response Total 185



Answer Choice	Selections ▾	% All Question Responses ▾	% All Survey Responses ▾
Yes	98	52.97%	52.97%
No	29	15.68%	15.68%
Yes, but I now attend a different church.	58	31.35%	31.35%

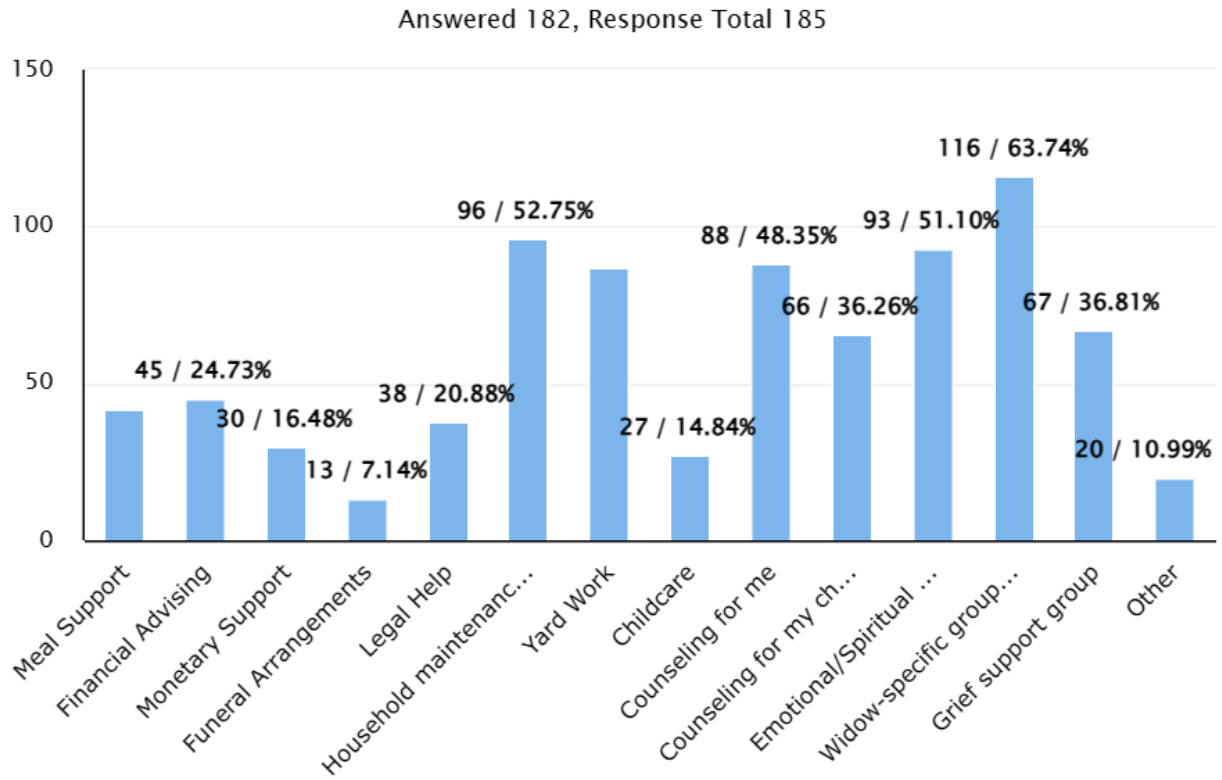
In what areas did your church offer support?

Answered 183, Response Total 185



Answer Choice	Selections ▼	% All Question Responses ▼	% All Survey Responses ▼
Meal Support	77	42.08%	41.62%
Financial Advising	9	4.92%	4.86%
Monetary Support	33	18.03%	17.84%
Funeral Arrangements	86	46.99%	46.49%
Legal Help	3	1.64%	1.62%
Household maintenance	19	10.38%	10.27%
Yard Work	22	12.02%	11.89%
Childcare	10	5.46%	5.41%
Counseling for me	17	9.29%	9.19%
Counseling for my children	9	4.92%	4.86%
Emotional/Spiritual support	54	29.51%	29.19%
Widow-specific group meetings	7	3.83%	3.78%
Grief support group	30	16.39%	16.22%
None	42	22.95%	22.70%
Other	22	12.02%	11.89%

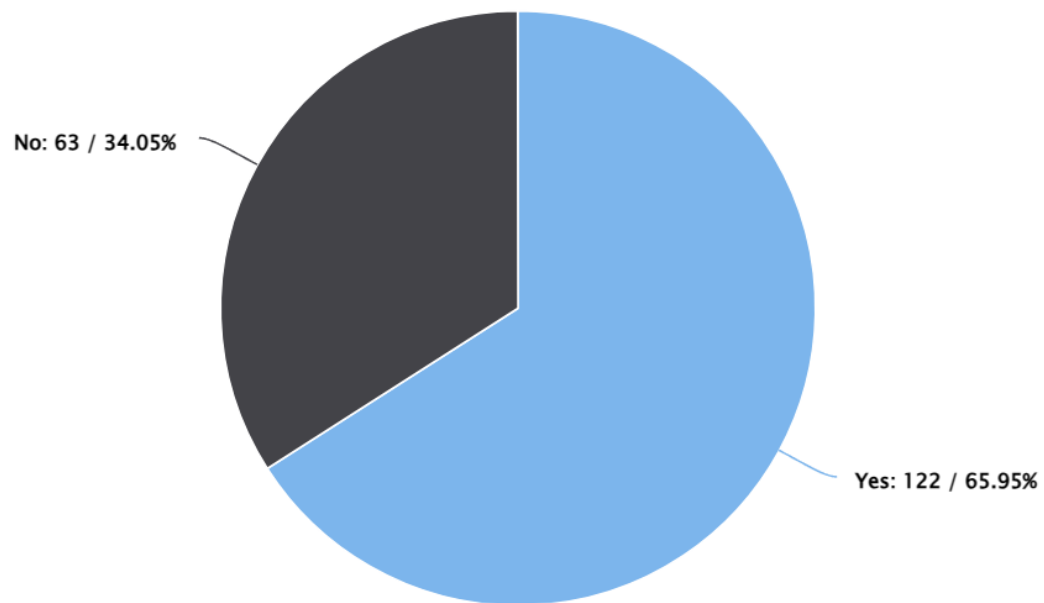
In what areas would you have appreciated additional support?



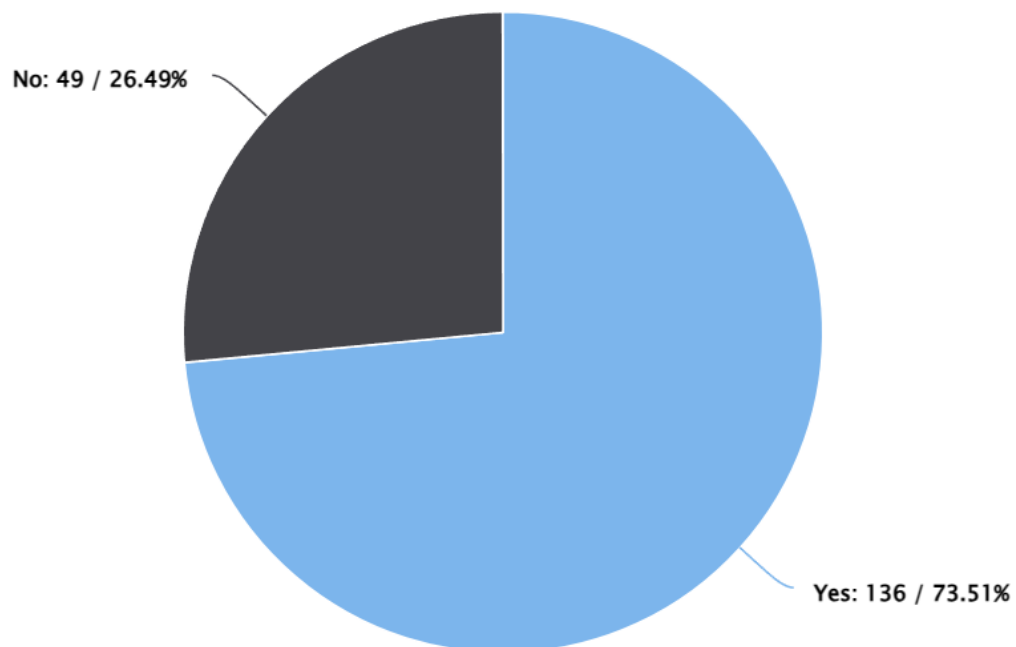
Answer Choice	Selections ▼	% All Question Responses ▼	% All Survey Responses ▼
Meal Support	42	23.08%	22.70%
Financial Advising	45	24.73%	24.32%
Monetary Support	30	16.48%	16.22%
Funeral Arrangements	13	7.14%	7.03%
Legal Help	38	20.88%	20.54%
Household maintenance	96	52.75%	51.89%
Yard Work	87	47.80%	47.03%
Childcare	27	14.84%	14.59%
Counseling for me	88	48.35%	47.57%
Counseling for my children	66	36.26%	35.68%
Emotional/Spiritual support	93	51.10%	50.27%
Widow-specific group meetings	116	63.74%	62.70%
Grief support group	67	36.81%	36.22%
Other	20	10.99%	10.81%

Were you employed outside the home at the time of your husband's passing?

Answered 185, Response Total 185

**Are you employed outside the home now?**

Answered 185, Response Total 185



How integral and connected did you feel to the life of the church before your husband's passing? (10=extremely connected; 0=not at all connected)

No.	Text Response	Count ▼	% All Question Responses ▼
1	10	32	17.30%
2	8	30	16.22%
3	7	24	12.97%
4	9	23	12.43%
5	5	19	10.27%
6	0	14	7.57%
7	6	13	7.03%
8	4	10	5.41%
9	3	9	4.86%
10	2	6	3.24%
11	1	5	2.70%

Count	171
Mean	6.97
Median	7
Mode	10
Standard Deviation	2.50

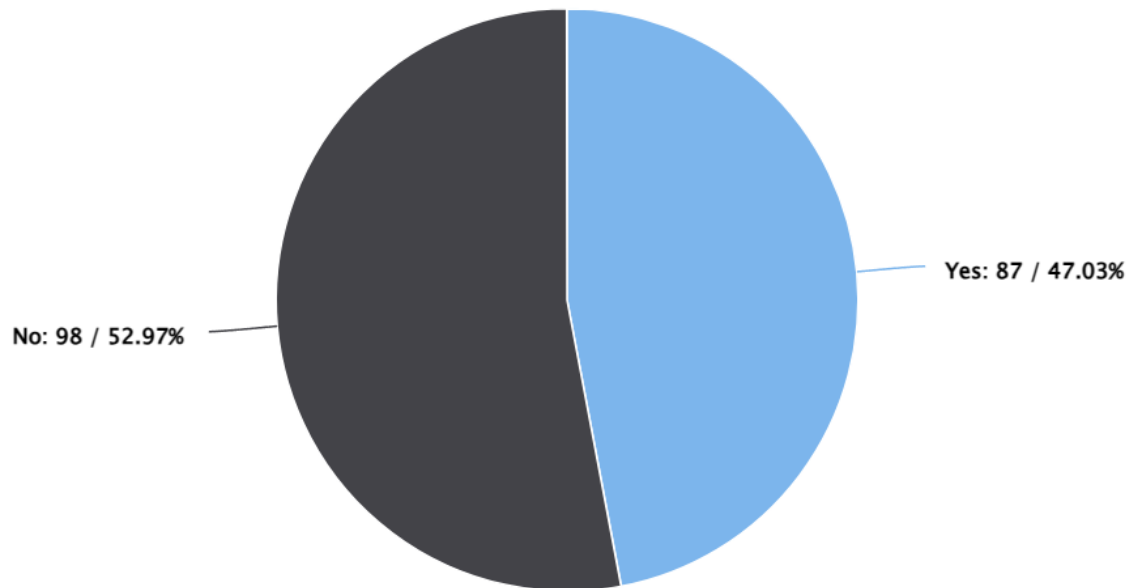
How integral and connected have you felt to the life of the church since your husband's passing? (10=extremely connected; 0=not at all connected)

No.	Text Response	Count ▼	% All Question Responses ▼
1	0	37	20.00%
2	5	22	11.89%
3	2	19	10.27%
4	8	19	10.27%
5	4	18	9.73%
6	1	17	9.19%
7	3	13	7.03%
8	9	13	7.03%
9	6	10	5.41%
10	10	9	4.86%
11	7	8	4.32%

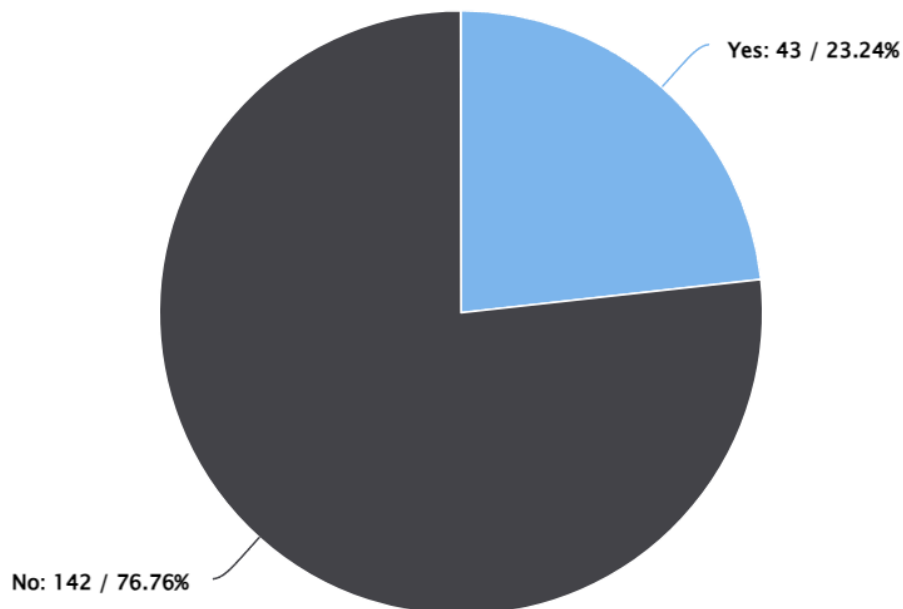
Count	148
Mean	5.07
Median	5
Mode	5
Standard Deviation	2.81

Were you or your husband involved in ministry before your husband's passing?

Answered 185, Response Total 185

**Have you been involved in church ministry since your husband's passing?**

Answered 185, Response Total 185



What surprised you most (good or bad) about your relationship to church since the time of your husband's death?

The lack of leadership to follow up and check on me. The lack of widows ministry to younger widows

How little church wants to engage and be with hurting people. There is a rush to make things better, and they definitely want to meet physical needs, but miss the mark emotionally supporting the hurting community.

Initially, I felt more connected and loved. In the months since, I have felt forgotten. My faith has never been stronger, but the church doesn't seem to have a place for me.

The first year, I felt so seen and supported, but then it feels as if everyone just forgot I lost my husband. Now I'm just back in the shadows.

How much at every level of the church we were forgotten. My daughter and I desperately needed support and people stopped reaching out. I even went to one of our pastors and asked for support and he said he would and then never reached out.

How lonely I could feel in a place I was so connected to people before.

I thought my church would show up more than they did.

The lack. They don't even know I exist unless I enter the church building on Sunday - but it's only a greeting at the beginning. Nothing more.

I completely quit going to church after he passed. A year later, I'm building a new & stronger relationship with God.

It just feels like I don't fit in the same way. I find it more difficult to say since I've been remarried as well that I have 4 years of marriage under my belt rather than 25.

It feels like I am a liability, and that I don't belong anywhere other than in kids ministry. It has made me withdraw from the church. The one time that I was asked to participate it was for a womens ministry event and I was asked to speak specifically about grief. I also tried to host a bible study at church and not a single person came even though it was advertised, the other group of younger women meeting at the same time had over 30 people. Not even a pastor came

to make sure I wasn't alone. I attend a fairly large church over 400 people a Sunday with 5 pastors for reference.

Yes

I am so very disappointed and hurt. I feel as if I don't have a place - I am not sure where I belong anymore in the church as a "younger" widow with children at home. I'm a mom, but no longer married. We are still a family but not the typical family - for family home groups. I attended Grief Share. Offered to help other widows (I've been widowed for 2.5 years) any way I could. I reached out to the youth pastor numerous times sharing my son was struggling with his dad's death... and really, just nothing. We haven't been back since Christmas. I just feel lost.

My husband was sick for 15 months. He had bile duct cancer. Not only did we not get meals or even calls to check on us when he was sick, but when he passed I couldn't even get someone from the church to perform his service. We had been active members for 6 years. It was very disappointing. I actually became angry at God for several years after his passing. Fortunately, a lady in passing explained to me I was upset with the people's actions not God. And all people are sinners.

How difficult it is to regain my role in light of my husband's absence.

Going back to church without him was one of the hardest things I had to do. I ended up in the ladies restroom in tears nearly every Sunday.

It's just hard period. It was hard to return by myself those first several Sundays afterward, but I had a few staff members / Pastors wife always let me know I could sit with them anytime needed.

Still - many people in general (church or not) do not know how to respond to you when they know you've experienced deep grief. They will either by pass you all together or opt for a quick hi and vanish.

It is difficult to attend church alone when most attendees are there with spouses or families. So much of the church environment is family-centered so if you're a widowed empty-nester it can produce feelings of not really fitting in the way you used to feel.

The majority of the widows are much older, so I do not really fit the profile of the other widows.

There was not an active widows or widowers group in our church at the time of my husband's death & it opened my eyes to the very soecial needs of a widow. We started a group within 2 years of his death.

It has felt lonely and a tad isolating. Our pastor has not come out of his way to provide spiritual support. Everyone is supposed to pray and be these good Christians for support but it has felt nothing like that.

My Pastor's lack of follow up has just not been there. A deacon or group of ladies would send a card, but I only received a text from him for the first 3 months after my husband's passing. Same for my son's youth pastor.

We are now attending church with family. They just understand and have offered great support.

Those people who I was friends with before my husband's passing did a great job reaching out immediately following his passing. As I reach the year mark, it's less often. I was also surprised to learn that our church doesn't have much for younger widows. Older ones have a class that meets on Sundays but their needs are quite different from mine.

After being part of church and serving in church my entire adult life, I don't fit anywhere. And I'm a church girl! Love the body of Christ and have always been very active in every church I e been part of. But being young widowed means I'm too old for singles (for churches that have them), too young for widows, and all of my friends are still married. The only solution to finding a place was serving as a Sunday School teacher. Now that I no longer serve, I no longer have a place that fits.

Unfortunately, my husband was a veteran with a lot of mental illness. So I was not able to be involved as much when I was caring for him. I try to be more involved now, and be more aware of what people might need.

How I needed to be seen by the church and I needed to feel the support of the church. I had to attend a place where I could go and feel the Holy Spirit. Passing through on a Sunday was no longer sufficient.

I desire to be a part of community but finding it has been difficult.

The number of people who are truly uncomfortable talking to me or about my late husband even if they did not know him.

No care or follow up

*How little is known how to care for us
 How family centric church is*

How hard it would be to fit in ... and also I am in need of brothers in Christ ... being female means the male pastors don't step in ... yet they lead the church

I go to a very large church. Although the main pastor was aware of our situation and initially reached out, no follow up was made.

The amount of gossip disguised as prayer! Very disappointing.

In the beginning I had amazing support. However, after a few months all support was gone and I was alone.

I now realize how ill equipped the body of Christ is to partner with the grieving amongst them. For the short term and long term.

That widows are everywhere and forgotten

They were amazing to pray for us when Brian was sick and to organize meals while he was hospitalized. One of our staff members made sure things around the house were fixed and the Sunday school class Brian taught a couple of years before he passed helped with our yard for 2 years. After that there has been no support.

So many families and couples I feel like the odd one out now. So I find it hard to fit in anywhere

How lonely and difficult it was. The church my late husband and I attended were a great support for my family and I for the first month after losing my husband. Afterwards, I was left out of a lot of the ministry things we did (we led marriage ministry) so once he passed there was no conversation on it, I just no longer was a part of it. I felt very isolated. We were very close to our church family so we would hear a lot of comments of how much my husband was missed, how much of a hard time everyone was having with his death, so often times if the kids and I were having a pretty good day in which the kids or I weren't feeling apart, we would constantly be reminded of the pain we felt, by our church family. That was hard for me and the kids.

Lack of support I feel/felt

No one in the church has reached out to me.

How much you feel forgotten. Like you are just supposed to forget about it and move on. No one has called. No one knows if I show up or not. No one cares about how my children are doing.

Felt like we didn't exist once my husband passed away. Then made to feel guilty when we had gone to hear a choir sing at a different church.

How many friends I've lost now that I'm a widow at age 51. It's a very lonely group for youngish widows.

Not feeling it anymore Too much grief, not enough new joy

That most churches do not have a robust ministry to widows of all ages and their children, even though that is what the Bible names as authentic religion.

Hmmm. I have had an anger at God that I took out on/at church because of my late husband's death. I am learning to get over it and lean in to God.

Church is not helpful at all. The widow needs to understand it's God that is the helper, no expectations of church. Human often lack the capacity to stop their busy life to help others. My husband dying was large evidence that a church is a social gathering, "creative production."

I felt the need to step back from any leadership areas during the time immediately after my husband's passing and this continued for several years. But for the last 2 years I've felt called to serve again.

Taht people left me alone.

I've been surprised at how difficult it has been to attend church... It is honestly one of the hardest things I've had to do after Eric died. I was actually the children's ministry Director at our church and had to resign six months prior to my husband's death. I now attend a different church because it's just too difficult and support just stopped.

I was flooded with calls and help at the passing of my husband, but most of those calls and support stopped a week after his burial. I felt so abandoned and alone.

My husband and I helped plant this church 11 years ago. We have since grown to be a very large church. We hosted small groups for probably 7 of those years, I worked in Children's Ministry part time, we served on ministry teams.

After he died, a pastor came to my house and told my brother in law to email him with every potential need he could think of moving forward. My brother in law emailed him and we never heard from him again. About 4 months after he died, I reached out to our lead pastor (who's wife I am close to), and told him while bawling my eyes out that it's been crickets from a pastoral/spiritual care standpoint since he died. He apologized and took the blame for it and we

met twice after that. Spring break came and he never reached out to make another appointment. That was 2 years ago. Not a single pastor has called or shown up at our door since he died to ask how we're doing, to pray with us, to help lead me spiritually. It has actually been devastating. I have only stayed because we don't have family here and the people in the church are our family. We have soul care groups for just about everything you could imagine but widows/widowers... nothing.

Not feeling stronger in my faith, not wanting to stay connected to the church family.

Some of the friends who were there for me when my husband was sick were not there for me after he died.

N/A

Don't get invited to things outside of church time now.

How going to church remained hard for so long (close to 4 years) and can still be hard. It can be emotionally taxing, even though I love the Lord and His church.

*1) I feel lonely in the sense that our church is mainly made up of young couples - everyone is coupled up and there is very little for single people, especially widows.
2) I have heard stories of people leaving their churches after a spouse's passing - I can't imagine doing this. Our church really did love us well through my husband's illness and it's home to myself and our kiddos*

How little support there was in practical ways

I really wish that in a large church there were community groups for specific needs (like widows).

My spouse passed during the pandemic...so it's hard to separate the changes.

It is very frustrating that they say every Sunday that they pray for widows and orphans like it is just something to say. Not once have they followed up and I attend church every Sunday now about how I am doing. They see me at church and just assume I have it all figured out.

I grew up heavily involved in church. However, I stopped going consistently after college and my husband and I rarely went. I started going with my kids after he passed. I think his passing brought me back to church.

I grew up at my church since I was 4 years old. My father was the pastor at one point, however, he was not the pastor at the time of my husband's passing. My husband had been in the military and I moved back home with our son because he had become abusive and we were not able to stay in our home. I feel like I got a lot of immediate support for the funeral, meals, and immediate help with my son while the services were going on, because he was 2 at the time. But afterwards, it seemed like people just didn't know what to say or how to "be" around me. If I brought up my husband, I would see facial expressions visibly change. People don't know how to respond or act.

I am sad to say that a ministry for widows and orphans, is non existent in any church I visit

I don't want to attend church anymore. But feel closer to the lord now.

*How the church avoids death and talking about it.
 Church people/friends walk away*

People don't know how to just 'be' with someone. Everyone wants to fix it and say something to make you happy. But they gloss over the pain and hard. Invalidate you.

People don't know how to offer emotional support, or sympathy

I feel less connected without my husband and his connection to church leadership.

People really try but they sometimes just dont know how to help.

The ebb and flow. How little help there really is for widows.

I do not like to go to Sunday school alone. Sometimes I don't go to certain activities because I don't want to go alone.

I felt very loved and supported by my pastor. And the community as a whole, specific to the church.

The community helped me a lot, and those are people I did go to church with.

Lack in being grief equipped to have conversations with myself but especially for my young son. I have never walked through this type of loss and felt like I had no answers for him let alone myself but needed more support from the church to feel supported in that.

Also had to look outside the church for a lot of my own resources specific to loss.

I think I've been pleasantly surprised by my church's response (not the church my husband and I attended together). They've supported me both personally as a widow and supported the widows I now serve

I attend a mega church and the amount of support I have received has blown me away. We have a very strong widows ministry and they have gone above and beyond to ensure that my boys and I are taken care of.

I see God in a more personal way now. Not that I did see him before the passing of my husband, it's different now.

My husband led the contemporary music service at the church. But after his death and the funeral was over, I felt very abandoned. They had been so present while he was alive fighting cancer but as soon as he died, it was like the battle was over I guess. I was very much alone and I didn't wanna go to church because it just reminded me so much of my husband. But no one really reached out I stayed away from church for a long time. I don't go to church, but I am involved in several ministries. It is taking years for me to recover from all of it.

The church has a hard time understanding lament and grief. Doubt has often been perceived as sin, when there is a difference of doubt... doubt looking for understanding (like the disciples) vs doubt that's trying to usurp authority (the Pharisees) It's like a clash to our very American fix everything ourselves kind of deal .

My church, even though not perfect, did so many things right. They have a heart centered on caring for widows and orphans so when I was unexpectedly widowed they showed up. My husband was unable to secure life insurance and God provided through the big C church!!

How quickly support fades away

I was saddened and surprised that my church (large church) didn't have a grief support group or good suggestions for community for me while I was going through his terminal cancer diagnosis and treatment and then also after he passed away

The support only lasted 6 months. After that it was up to me to ask for help.

It's so hard to ask for help even though I need it. I'm heavily involved in the church so people see us regularly. Even then it's rare that we get asked how they can help

I'm surprised, but grateful, that I wanted to return right away to attending services, my home group gatherings and volunteering.

Church is really good in the extremes, when it first happens, showing up to the house, giving gifts, flowers, meals, etc and they are good at once widow seems strong and "happy" again, but doesn't know how to operate well in the gray, in the between, with the silent battles.

The lack of people acknowledging his death. No one wants to talk about it. It makes me so sad.

The helped with the services of course. But once that was over I have not heard from one person since. Not one person has reached out. I have been so nervous about going back because I was always with my husband. So I have not gone back yet.

The lack of follow up or checking in on my boys and I. The church was quick to be there in the immediate days following, but I stopped attending due to the fact that my husband was the worship leader and it was just too hard for me to be there without him. Once I stopped attending the texts and reach outs stopped and I haven't heard from anyone in leadership at the church for over a year now. I attended this church since I was 14 years old; leadership watched me grow up and marry my husband and he worked for them for 15 years. It just blows my mind the lack of support/love I have felt from them and has truly hurt and changed my outlook on the church as a whole. I'm thankful for the friends I have not associated with this church who have continued to check in and reach out and keep in touch; tragedy will truly show you the ones who love you fully.

I found it to be incredibly lonely. One week you're attending with your husband, standing together, sitting together, making brunch plans with others, etc. Then suddenly you're barely making it out of the house with 3 little kids getting them dressed and fed and then you arrive and sit alone... looking at all the couples sitting together. At the same time, it was a desperately needed one hour of peace where the kids were in childcare and I could take a deep breath... and I cried in church every Sunday for years. Nothing dramatic just a rush of emotions during the music and the stillness.

My church has done a fantastic job coming alongside me since my husband's passing. Because of his cancer journey, we had to be very isolated for his health and therefore not involved in our church. Since his death, I've been connected to many people and cared for very well. It's nice to be known in the church. Our pastor does a fantastic job shepherding our church. Because he lost his dad as a young boy, he has a real heart for widows. He'll even personally text the widows in our church if there's something potentially triggering in his sermon. I am grateful to be under his teaching!

My relationship with the Lord is as strong as ever; possibly stronger. My relationship with a church, not so much. I am still searching for a church home where I feel safe and comfortable.

It was my husbands home church and I always felt more like a plus one. Once he died they loved me so hard and it became home ❤️

It is very hard to attend church in every aspect. Getting ready, driving, walking in, picking a seat, and then going home alone. Another part is not belonging anywhere. I feel married but I am not. I am single but I don't connect with singles groups. I can relate best with the married couples but yet I am not married. I am a young widow with no children and it is hard to connect with people. anywhere. It is also hard to see couples together, reminds me of all that I lost.

It's really easy to fall through the cracks.

I feel more connected now then before.

That not all churches know how to help or have the capacity to help. If the church sees the widow "doing well", they feel like their work is done. No one really stepped up to help with our child (son). He needs strong, Christian men in his life and all the men that said they would help and be there for him, didn't follow through. That's the biggest thing, they would offer their help but never follow through. It was just words.

I didn't realize how "couple focused" that church is until I was no longer part of a couple

It's difficult for me to answer this question because my husband passed literally 2 weeks before the world shut down for Covid. And then I moved 1200 miles away and started attending a new church that didn't really know me or my story.

They haven't really done anything

How hard it was to continue to show up without him. We taught an adult Sunday School class together. I tried to go back a couple of times but I just can't do that anymore. And it's no fault of the teachers who took over or those in the class. They're all our dear friends who loved my husband and loved me well after his passing. But my church family has been wonderful.

It was March 2020 so Covid was just starting and my church allowed me to have the funeral. I needed that closure so badly.

Everyone had the viewpoint, "ask for help now because people want to help you. After a year, they just won't want to anymore."

This was communicated by multiple people BUT I will say, I still receive help with things when I ask, I just always think about that comment before I ask people for help now.

I have found that I am stronger and surer in my beliefs and my reliance on Jesus Christ.

I no longer fit in with our married couples class and do not like to go to all church events alone. Still married church members and leaders do not and cannot understand my life now and how this traumatic experience has changed me. They expect me to be over it too.

Church became stressful and upsetting after my husband passed. I didn't want to attend the church where his funeral was held and any other church I am always greeted with condolences and talk about my husband instead of me just being welcomed in to church. I also have a horrible time trying to get my 1.5 year old ready and out the door and church times either interrupt a meal time or nap time for him. So he's always cranky and it just becomes another reminder that I'm doing this alone. I still have a relationship with God, but not so much with church.

The people I worked with in youth ministry did not reach back out after the funeral

My entire comprehension of Holy Spirit burst through my boundaries and my wonderful church that supported me through cancer, funeral, the first year told me I needed to find another place because I was too zealous for them and talking about healing. I was told if I stayed I would not be allowed to use my spiritual gifts there.

I am in a life giving Holy Spirit honoring church now and am involved in small ways as I get to know them.

No one reached out to me to check on me or offer any support

Not checking in with us periodically.

Trying to add more responsibility on the pretense that I have more time now.

The lack of care and concern for the needs of a widow.

Death of a spouse often causes one to question everything about themselves including their faith.

After all of the large donations to my church, no offer of any assistance was given nor was any request I made even acknowledged. Atrocious!

Seems like church is place for normal and healthy families. There is no space for someone hurting. I know other people need to enjoy life and celebrate. I felt widows are ignored

My answers will be limited considering I moved out of state very quickly after my husband passed so could no longer attend our recorded support from our church. I did attend a Griefshare workshop at the New church I attend but a widows specific group might be nice.

Unfortunately, pretty much nothing good, except that the young adult minister did reach out to our son to check on him a few times after his dad's passing.

Although a grief group reached out to me, it was little booklets sent quarterly with a type-written note. I didn't feel like it was heartfelt. One person did meet with me 2 or 3 times, but it was at my place of work, which was a bit awkward. I really surprised that the one person, who is in ministry at our church and who calls me a friend, that I thought would reach out to me and be with me throughout this grief journey or at least check in on me occasionally, didn't really reach out at all. I was actually rather shocked and disappointed by that. I really felt pretty much abandoned by our church, which shocked me since my husband and I had been members there 21 years before his passing and had both served regularly in some capacity for at least half to 2/3 of those 2 decades.

I was involved with a church for 2 years. They closed.

Church was his "thing". I was raised in the church, but not as much as he was. I still (11 years later) cannot sit through an entire service.

I attended the Grieving With Hope grief seminars and it was an excellent program. What surprised me the most was I connected with another widow and we connected. She had 6 become a good friend and we support each other.

Nobody reached out.

It was surprising how much the emotional support dropped off a few months after his passing...like we should all be over it and back to normal. It was also hard for me to be involved in the church for a good 6 months or so after his passing—it was too painful to be in that place without him and the looks of pity people gave my kids and me made it even worse.

Absence of support

After the funeral I was never asked how I was doing or if I needed anything. I never went back. It took me a few years but I have finally found the church for me

Not being included in couple get togethers with others from church.

I have not gone back to Sunday school but we are more involved in the other church activities like Bible studies and children's groups

It wasn't a surprise, but they really loved on me well during that time but it seemed like the Support fell away within 6 months and I still feel so lost. I couldn't view some more support for longer

I feel distant. No contact other than one call since he passed. I feel like every time I'm in mass for any occasion or sunday I cry. Makes it worse.

That they still check on me and still pray for me. They care and know that it is still tough on me (19 months). They would still take care of anything I asked of them.

Lack of connection with members.

How quickly people move on or expect you to move on .

The lack of grief support within our deacon and family life ministries. Our pastor performed superb pastoral care but others seemed to back away

Well it's one of the things that they talk about for true religion is caring for the widows and orphans. I had no one reach out or offer to help with anything even though his memorial service was held at the church, so they did know

I have extreme faith and spirituality, but I just don't feel that connection to my church anymore. I get very depressed when I attend.

I think what surprised me the most is most friends from church seemed like they just felt uncomfortable around me without my wife.

The inability to provide a community group that fit my new status as a single parent.

That there wasn't anything for me. Imagine not having a children ministry? Imagine not having a youth ministry? Imagine not having a couples Sunday School class? People wouldn't attend! Yet, that is exactly how it feels to be a younger widow.

I want the church to understand. Widows lose their health insurance, including therapy! The church should provide mental help therapy for at least a year.

In addition, unless you have children under 16 OR you are over 60 you do NOT get Social security. You don't get any financial help.

Not one person has offered to help with anything! I need help with my yard my house everything! I got rid of all our outside pets due to no time to work with them.

I feel connected, but do plan on doing some volunteering and bible study to get more involved. My church is fairly large and it's easy to not be involved

Comfort of prayer while we were in the hospital. It really works and you just have to ask

Lost my faith for a long time following his death and therefore my relationship with the church. I have gone to church since but it hasn't been the best.

The changes in the couples friendships we had. They've moved on, but health issues on her part have likely caused much of that. We used to have a standing Friday night couples dinner out then coffee at one of our houses while they played their guitars and instruments.

There was very little support for widows and virtually non for young widows.

The care and support of the church is one of the main things getting me through this.

Since Covid we had watched our church on Utube. Since my husband's passing I'm still watching via Utube. Slowly going back in person. Several people have reached out saying that they miss seeing us in church.

How no one reaches out.

For the first two years, going to church was very challenging. I almost felt like an outsider...especially since my husband had been in leadership roles. I had to find my own place in this community.

I felt like the drive to church became a spiritual battle. I often struggled all the way there and it would have been very easy to give up and stay home.

I knew the tears would flow during worship. Songs triggered so many emotions. (He had been the worship leader for years, so many songs I associated with him leading.) I didn't want to be pitied for my tears.

My husband taught our Bible class. I didn't want to be in a class alone, so I didn't go back to Bible classes. It has been really hard to integrate back into some sort of normalcy there. I recently started teaching the 2-year-old class, and that has helped a lot.

Church members have been very supportive but driving and walking into church by myself is soooo hard.

I think the lack of any support in general. The good is the my friends there. But the lack of any extra help for people is sad

The absence of my church family was a low blow

How much the church just expected me to go on

Just the lack of support or things offered to widows to help. After funeral everyone disappeared

At the time of my husband's diagnosis of cancer in the summer of 2020, my large church was naturally affected by COVID-related issues, but also the church had experienced some staffing changes. Some key personnel remained, but it became clear that as a staff and team of elders, they did not know how to walk with a family thru a terminal cancer diagnosis. Then, when my husband died, in 2022, the church helped a little with planning the funeral in terms of music, day/time, and who would speak at the funeral (although I had previously made final arrangements at the local funeral home).

I think the biggest surprise was how invisible I felt at my church -- where I had faithfully attended and served in many areas of ministry for 8-9 years, alongside my husband. Only once, on the day after Marc died, did any member of the staff or elder team come to my home to visit me and my children. I had perhaps a few phone calls from church staff during the first year after Marc died. When I began to be a regular attender at church after my husband died, I felt disconnected.

My close friends at church were attentive, but as a church body I felt there was nothing in place to "check in" on me or my kids. I was widowed, and then in the next 18 months both of my children have gone off to college -- so now I'm an empty nester, as well, and I have felt the need to change churches in order to find a new community of people who are perhaps in the same

age/stage of life that I am. I have chosen to attend a smaller church congregation and that has been refreshing.

I feel like they don't know what to do with me. I feel like they understand old widows but I'm just a tragedy to be gawked at. There's nothing for me and there's nowhere for me to serve in my church.

We attended inconsistently prior to his passing for years. We are believers but we just never connected. I have not attended since Covid (well once or twice) but it is so different now.

I've really lost touch and stopped going to church. I thought maybe going through that kind of loss would bring me deeper spirituality but it hasn't been like that for me. I almost feel guilty because my pastor and some parishioners really were kind and giving when my husband was sick and immediately after his passing, bringing meals and checking in.

Being thought of as "widow" and no longer as a "person". Prior to his death, I would never had thought that I was thought of only as a "wife"...it was like I didn't exist outside of my widowhood.

They have provided almost no support. They have a huge staff, yet no one checks in to ask how I'm doing, except the pastor texts me every 2-3 months. I never hear from anyone else. It's very hurtful. We were very involved in our church, and now, no one even hugs my neck or tells me they are praying for me when we come to church. I have decided to leave the church.

There were several widows in church but not a one reached out to me to offer support.

My husband was very sick with cancer off and on for several years. The church was very supportive. The pastors and Pastor Al staff checked in with me regularly to find out how my husband was doing and how the family was doing. After his passing no one checked anymore. I felt completely forgotten. I feel like a stranger when I walked to the church now. my husband and I served in the coffee shop and those greeters every week for nearly 15 years at least. we also assisted with kids, church and nursery often on throughout the years. My husband served on the board for several years. I assisted with the ladies ministry and my husband and I lead small groups/connection classes. As he became ill, we were unable to assist as much. The church showed so much love and was so supportive and now no one checks on me. Pretty much equally the same as non-Church people in my life. The church was more supportive during my husband's illness and the non-Church people people in our lives though. I still love my church family very much. They will always be there dear to my heart.

It has increased

I have found my own gifts and calling that support my church ministry. Before his death, my husband and I shared our ministry. He was the ordained pastor, and I was the ordained pastor/music minister. When he died, I felt that I not only lost him, but my ministry as well.

My own personal faith journey has been a struggle. Believing in God but being mad and struggling to trust him. Then that comes with the desire to want to attend and continue to go to church and serve where I have been called. But my congregation has been loving and kind, we are surrounded by a lot of love when we attend church and church gatherings which I am very grateful for.

Again, I was not attending BRCC at the time. But the rudeness and hatefulness of the members of the church I was attending at that time, were terrible. They said things about my husband's passing that was very hurtful. They felt free to make fun of the fact that I was now a widow and had no one to take up for me.

I have grown more to it but I do think it's mainly because my void and the need to feel like I belong to something since I was a wife and now that connection is gone, because being a mom has never stopped

Several different leaders/ pastors and deacons small group leaders didn't even know he passed away. And it surprised me that because there here so involved when he was sick and the month after he passed I thought it would have passed through all appropriate people.

Our minister didn't even visit George while he was fighting cancer and unable to go places. Only one Elder called him, and this was after his sister (who attended the same church) severely scolded the Elders for their lack of support. Then they wondered why I didn't want that minister taking part in the funeral services. I stopped attending that church soon after.

I do help with the widows group at Brookville Road Community Church. We meet once a month for fellowship and support.

#The need to "fix" our situation made it hard for others to see us sad and struggling. I think it made them uncomfortable. Within 3 months, all support from the church had disappeared.

The comment from leadership --I didn't fit the Biblical definition of a widow.

My Christian friends were amazing--remembering dates and milestones. The church is not 4 walls. Everything from cutting a tree down for Christmas and christmas lights on our house to sitting with me alone on the bleachers of a basketball game. Practical help that allowed me to keep living and to face things I would have avoided.

What else would you like ministry leaders to know about caring for widows?

Encouragement, hugs, and affirmations are huge. Don't ask what can be done, just do it and listen to the prompts of the holy spirit.

Widowhood can happen at any age or stage. This isn't a community of older women only. Be open to groups like Never Alone who are serving young widows with children in the home. Find these women and support them and their kids encouraging them to connect with others in the same space or walk alongside them as they create this space for others.

Don't forget us. Put a reminder on your calendar to text just to say we're on your mind or in your prayers that day.

It's not just the first months and year that we need support. It's the 2 or 3 years after when i'm so burned out that I needed someone to cut my grass. or I'd love to have a meal delivered, now, 2 years later when I'm in a huge grief wave. grief doesn't go away, and we still need support down the road.

We need daily check ins initially, we need people to be there and just do, people need to understand the dynamics of grief to really be able to understand the person grieving, younger widows need support too, not just older widows.

That we are still valuable and all I really wanted was to feel connection and community.

Support comes in a variety of ways. Even just sitting alone in church was so hard. Wish my church had been more involved.

Contact us. For the long haul. Offer help in specific ways. Don't stop asking after the first two weeks.

We need help. Don't ask, just do it.

Just show up. Organize a ministry team to show up for these widows and widowers. Request a task list that can be tackled. Don't text them. Show up or call. Offer to minister to their kids. Don't treat them like they are less than because they don't have a husband now. They still have gifts to be used by God and for his glory-even as a single mom and widow.

I am a woman that is searching to belong somewhere, so much of my identity was wrapped up in being a wife. A reach out here and there or invitations to events or opportunities to volunteer and connections to other widows with an in person introduction would be so helpful.

It's a needed ministry. Widows feel so alone and out of place in the church.

Please remember us after the first few weeks. The first year is hard. The second year is even harder! Occasional phone calls checking in. Even just a voicemail. Hugs or a handshake on Sunday. Remind us we are seen and remembered. Offer to pray for us. Or give our children a ride to youth group occasionally to give us a night off. Follow up with children. So so important! Step in and be available for sons who have lost their father and who need godly men in their life.

I didn't really need help immediately financially but because I was a stay at home mom I had a hard time finding work

We often find it hard to ask for help.

Ministry leaders should take a grief class so that they can better understand and communicate with widows (or others who lose a close family member). If you've never lost someone super close to you, you have no idea how to relate. As a widow, the gap has been very felt.

Make space for us and help us create a widow community that can support & heal together along the way. We never asked for this sudden & tragic loss. Don't treat us like we have a scarlet letter marked on our lives now. We are just trying to find our footing and figure out some way to navigate this rocky road that we never asked for.

Widows need to be reminded of how much God cares for them and their children. Being acknowledged for all that has changed or all a family has lost when a spouse dies would make a big difference. The church seems to "move on" from that acknowledgement as quickly as the general circle of friends and acquaintances do, but widows need more help when it's the hardest to ask for, such as home and car repairs or maintenance issues, in the later months and years after the shock of widowhood has lifted. Connecting new widows to other widows in the church body is also worthwhile-we suffer our loss with less feelings of isolation when we know we aren't alone and someone else has gone through it.

The isolation you feel as a younger widow when your all of your friends are married and your the only widow.

They need lots of extra love and check ins!!!

And hope is mandatory!

Faith is either going to get stronger or distanced. And whoever it may be/ just sometimes sitting and being present for the person. Actions also speak louder than words. So it can make a huge impact.

To continue to check in as needs change as time goes on.

I think it's important to keep reaching out. I also think having groups for women widowed in their late 40-early 50's even if it is a partnership with another group.

Sometimes churches make being single weird, especially in my 40s. I feel like I'm not always invited to certain things with married couples. I often find that people outside the church are more accepting of my singleness.

Say his name. Let him be as present as he still is. Remember her. See her. Let her be said. Know she probably cried through service but needed the break from her kids but weirdly feels guilty for leaving them in the nursery. Cheer on being single. Cheer on healing. Cheer on weird healing paths. Cheer on doing the work... spiritually, mentally and physically. Cheer on dating and give Godly advice that dating as a widow is different and harder pending where you are in healing. Know it never ever goes away. Remembering important dates - birthday and going home days matter even years later.

*The care I received from church lasted only in the first few months. I don't think I've been a part of a church that prioritizes widows - especially young ones. **I also know I'm not the greatest at asking for/accepting help.*

We do not know what we need. Show up anyways. We can't get what we want. Give anyways. Sometimes just being means more than doing - and other times there are tangible needs to be met.

Don't be Afraid to talk about our late husbands. Share stories, remind the grieving that they are seen right where they are and that they still belong.

Grief is not just a short window of time

We need wise men voices esp in areas we were not managing ourselves... the time I needed pastoring most was after he passed and alone with the kids ...

The men of the church need to step up to help with male support for male children. I feel like my son suffers a lot still. It's been 17 years!

Being alone is the hardest part. Asking for help is also difficult but most of the time we do not know what we need.

There is nothing about our lives now that has not changed. Nothing is the same. Not even my ministry. Be gentle and kind. Encouraging but a deep listener. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in your interactions with us. Speak His words to us. We are very fragile that first year. Encourage a steps toward Jesus not move on.

They need to make it a priority and make it well known they have a ministry for widows.

It seems so forgotten everyone reaches out to kids, teens, singles and married couples

I attended two churches at the same time one small rural church and one big mega church neither reached out neither have ever contacted me

As a young widow, you feel like an oddity. There was and is no one in our church with a similar story. It's like they forgot us. Being a widow doesn't go away. It's not easy. There are continual struggles and it's hard to find your place.

We don't know what we need so you just need to show up and say you are doing it. We're too tired to say no

Grieving is forever. Not just the first month or so. And everyone grieves differently.

Offer to help with practical things. Check if they need financial support

Just to be there for me. A place where I can get emotional support.

In the beginning we are numb and in shock. It would be so nice for the church to already have a list of what they provide for funeral instead of you trying to figure it all out. Hunting people down. Reaching out to different groups to ask for help. There should be scheduled counseling for kids and check ups for the kids. You should have to ask them to reach out to them. Going back to church is so hard. It was what you did together even sitting in the same spot is painful. I also suggest assigning different ladies to make weekly phone calls to check on and pray for you. I honestly feel forgotten.

We need people to be there for us, even if we cry or are sad. And we still need to have men in our lives, and enjoy to hear men's opinions.

That we just want someone from church to check on us once in a while

Be there and reliable for support for longer than a month after the funeral

That nobody really feels like eating for a long time, but deep, felt needs continue for at least the first year. That widows come in all ages and stages of life. That instead of planning one-size-fits-all events or programs, deacons (men and women should regularly visit widows' homes and know the specific needs of the widows in their church. That nobody likes to feel like a project. That "widow's banquets" once a year don't cut it. That widows are vulnerable, but not weak. So much more could be said.

It's a lonely place and support is needed.

Regardless of how together they might seem. They are all on the brink of collapse. The first year is really just to catch your breath and be able to breathe again in the midst of muddy waters. The widow needs to be cared for like Jesus cared for Mary magdalene.

It's a very lonely life at times. Especially on weekends.

It is not something you recover from quickly.

You need time to heal.

Do not look down on widows with pity.

I think that ministry leaders need to know that grieving widows really don't know who they are and how they fit anymore into the church. I think a practical thing would be to ask someone to save a spot for the kids and the widow who are coming, and just make sure they feel welcomed and have a place to sit when they come in. It's a very simple, but very very daunting as widow to walk into that sanctuary and feel alone.

That it's important to have continued support post- passing of a spouse or loved one. Have someone appointed to just give follow up connections via phone, text, or email until the end of year 2. The first year you're in shock and trying to figure out life as a widow; the second year you realize life has completely changed and I feel the real grief comes creeping in!

It's not about writing a check and checking off a to-do list. It is the most treacherous grief to walk through and especially for a widow, the spiritual leader of their home is gone.

1. Spiritual leadership help.

2. Grief/trauma counseling resources on hand.

3. Someone who can help the widow walk through all of the legal/financial paperwork that follows an untimely death.

4. Help with kids.

I'm sure you can tell by what I've written that I'm so fired up about this. I think the whole thing has been such a shock to me and I've already gone to the source to tell them what went wrong and nothing changed. It's heartbreaking. We gave so many years of our lives to several ministries in this church and now that there are a few thousand people there, I feel like we don't matter. And there is just one other young widow at our church and the church had no idea she was there. I found her through a mutual friend.

Widowhood isn't contagious.

Young widows is a Ministry that is needed In the church.

Widows come in all ages. Many people hear "widow" and assume it's someone older. On the flip side of that- we need to remember that younger widows need help too

Helping with small daily needs like meals & help around the house is huge to give time to take care of the many of other apts & paperwork. I think active care from the church should be up to 2 years. I am near the two year anniversary & I just am feeling like things are calming down to a manageable schedule.

Please know that support should continue in year 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. It will look different, but know that long-term support is so appreciated. Also, offer help more than once. I took few seriously who said "anything I can do to help" right after my husband died suddenly. It was those who kept asking that I believed truly wanted to help and felt I could actually request help from them.

That we are valuable outside of being the widows the Bible talks about - we are still whole people that can contribute, not just widows to be taken care of

Do not wait for a widow to come to you and ask for help. Have something in place that when you know of a widow in your church family that the resources and people are already in place. Widows are not in a place to be able to ask for help or even know what they need.

Widows need and crave the support from other widows. There should be a way to connect widows within the same church organization to support each other.

There is a need.

Keep showing up with a coffee, come check on the yard, offer to fill up my car. It's not about the money, I would even give them a credit card to go get my car filled up but just the fact we have to do everything and something that takes 2 minutes could change our whole outlook. Come and pray with us ask us if we need to talk about anything. Just continue being a leaning ear longer then weeks after their passing

Offer tangible ways to help—not just “what can we do” or “what do you need”. Drop things off without being asked. Support groups and small groups of widows of all ages, but especially those with young kids, help us feel connected and not alone.

We're not a disease and it's not contagious LOL I didn't need space or to be left alone, I needed/need community and support. I didn't know how to handle it, and I needed people to help walk alongside me. I also was not going to be the “same” or get back to “normal” since my who world had been rocked by his suicide AND the trauma of the abuse that took place before his death. I needed people to understand that my brain felt (and sometimes still feels) so foggy and I HATE that about myself because I was never like this before. I definitely feel like no one knows what to say or how to act, so they just do nothing instead, and leave widows (especially younger ones) out in the wind on the assumption that someone else will take care of them. But if the church isn't going to, who is?

It is important to try and support them anyway possible but specifically any that are on social security disability and social security related to age. What they don't tell you is you get knocked

down to one income and if you're disabled you have no recourse for helping your finances. I know widows who are losing homes. I have been selling jewelry.

Widowhood is very isolating, scary, lonely. So painful. We are devastated and takes so long to work our way back to any sort of joy and normalcy. Giving widows at least 1 year of support would be life giving. I'm at 2.5 years now and finally feeling more like myself and feeling like life will be good again.

Care goes long after the funeral and her immediate family go back home!

Especially at the beginning people need to come and check in often. Actually come to the house and sit and talk or go on a walk. That is the only way to truly see needs because she will have trouble communicating at the beginning due to fog, depression, and other things.

I'd like to have groups for adults and children , be more aware that even after many many years people still grieve their spouses and parent , death of a spouse totally changed your life from inside out ...

I want my pastor to check in with my regularly. I want men in my church to come alongside my son and get to know him well and disciple him, without me having to ask for that. It feels like to much to ask for.

I am currently 7 months into my grief journey, and the support was great right after it happened but now I feel like life has just gone on and I'm supposed to move on as well. Support is still needed months and even years later.

Do it even if it is uncomfortable or a small numbers.

As time goes on, we STILL need help w household maintenance and we still feel lonely and love for people to check on us. Our grief is ongoing!

Don't tell them to ask for help. Instead, find someone who is close to her and gather ideas of things she needs. Lawn mowed, lightbulb changed, getting things from storage.

Helping move a piece of furniture.

I need someone to help me read legal documents bc I was too emotional.

I had to reach out to the church for spiritual counseling/help in a time where I didn't even know what I needed. I wish more people would've reached out or been pursuant from the church to lift my arms in a time where I felt I couldn't.

Widows won't ask for help. They need practical offers. They need to be sought after for at least the first 2-3 years after losing their husband. It feels nearly impossible to grieve and raise and family and maintain a home. Especially when you're so young

When your husband passes, you have no idea what you need or what people can do to help you (or refuse to ask for the help, if you are anything like I was). I have found that speaking to someone close to them is helpful bc many times they have a much better idea of what the new widow needs. They also need to remember that even after the first year, many widows are still working through their grief. I've found that year 2 has been worse at times bc the dust has settled and the realization really sets in that I have to do this on my own.

We need to know how to be there for the widow or widower in a more patient and loving way. Specially in our Hispanic community. I'm Hispanic and I really didn't find much resources for me in Spanish. My dream is to help other Spanish speaking widows to navigate this new life that we have as widows.

They seem like they don't need your help and they don't want you there, but they need you desperately. And and for the first few months help with yardwork is so awesome. Even if the

youth leader would just come and be with your kids because the widow is grieving so much. She doesn't even know how to take care of herself much less do what is necessary for young children to teenagers. it was definitely the darkest hour of my life. I had a woman say to me now is the time to hold onto everything you've been taught for dear life and that is not what happened I wanted to throw it all out because I blame God for not healing my husband. Instead God held onto me which was so beautiful. My faith is restored, but it has been 20 years. It was a long journey, and I think the church could have been more present even if you don't know what to say just go and sit with them.

I speak now to a lot of widows and so many of them share they struggle that God had to take their husband to teach them a lesson 🤔 I had one sweet 80 year old widow tell me she and her husband ministered to widows but felt like she wanted to go back and apologize because she just didn't realize how hard it actually was until it happened to her. It is so horrific. I tell people caring for a widow is like caring for an animal in a bear trap. You have to take it slow, approach with gentleness and humility, understand they have enormous pain, but if you can crawl next to them in the hard places weep with them, you will bring healing. Every time people brought a meal or showed up or you name it I told them they were showing Gods promise to be a father to my four very young fatherless children. I believe what the enemy wanted to steal, God is working to reveal His character and power. Their faith is different because my church showed up 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

I was 34 and never in my life faced so much spiritual warfare than the first year Galen died.

I was saved at 5 and lived for God. Church was home for me, they were my people but it was a STRUGGLE every week to walk into church, I fought through it to go and for my kids, but often times I wanted to fall down and just cry. It was a reminder of the life I had and the one I no longer would have anymore. It took everything I had to show up.

Church is such a nuclear bio family place that widows feel out of place. They often lose couple friendships because they don't have a partner anymore.

It's not just elderly that become widows, support should not end after a few days/weeks

That it's not a quick fix to "get better". Grief is a journey and continue to support and remember your spouse and speak about him.

Community is key! Even if you don't have a direct widows/grief community through the church, have resources available to connect these women to others like them. Also, age matters. I was widowed at 28, and my grief was very different from a 60 year old widow I met 3 months out — I was very jealous that she was grieving the man she spent her life with, when I didn't get to make those memories.

We need help for at least 3 years in the daily decision making. We don't always know how to ask and it would be good to check in regularly for the first 3 years.

It needs to be intentional, it needs to be regular and consistent. It needs to be practical. I don't need a "let us know if you need anything", but instead a specific offer such as "we want to come on Sat to work in your yard" etc.

Consistent checking in to let me know I'm remembered and thought about.

To operate in the gray.

That we want to talk about it. We want to be involved and have life continue along a normal flow. We need someone to talk to via counseling. Having someone call and ask what kind of household tasks we need assistance with would help tremendously even if it is just one day a year.

It would have been nice if someone from our campus reached out and checked on me. Maybe offered to sit with me when I came the first few times. It's just been a real shock. One I feel like I am not missed but also just to know they care and understand what we are going through. There is a gal she has a website called windowing well with hope. She has a pdf for churches on how to support the widow. The gals name is Kim Berndt you should reach out to her she's done some work on this.

They need meals, someone to assist with caring for their children so they can rest or attend to all of the newly assumed responsibilities, to ask how they are doing as the spiritual guider, to just be there in the day to day.

Even if a reach out or text or call is not answered or acknowledged by the widow receiving it it still means a lot to them. Ministry leaders need to learn to not take a lack of response from a widow personally and continue to reach out or check in even years after the loss.

They feel guilty that they aren't volunteering for children's ministry anymore because church has become a place of refuge for a break. They want to feel seen. They want to be reached out to occasionally to see how they're doing... even years later. So much help and care is given immediately but it's many months and years later when it is desperately needed.

Keep showing up and offering your support in various ways, even if they ignore calls or say no to help. They don't know what they need a lot of the time.

Also, because we live in a fallen world, how connected you are to the church often determines your level of support from the church. It'd be nice if that weren't the case and the church would continue to show up regardless of outside factors.

In my case, I didn't know what I needed. My husband died quite unexpectedly and I was at a loss (no pun), once I completed the immediate things (burial, memorial service, for example). I'm not the first person in the congregation to whom this has happened. It is a large, well-established institution. It was disappointing and left me disheartened and disillusioned.

We need help even if we don't ask..keep showing up so we know we aren't alone!

To be gentle and compassionate towards widows. Even when the widows are questioning their faith and are making harmful choices. Our world fell apart and we are questioning everything. The absolute worst has happened to us and we have never been so lost and confused. Keep showing the love of God and with time we will begin to turn to our Lord again. Allow a widow to withdraw from social life and even church. For some, being with people is exhausting and we don't have any extra emotional, mental, or physical energy. This will only be temporary and we will come back, but it will take time. By time, it is not only one year, it is many years.

Saying we are here to help, or if you need anything let us know, it's just not helpful. When you can't even remember to eat, you have no idea what you need and have no capacity to ask others for help.

Show up and do. Don't ask. Don't offer. Just do it. Get people together to show up and just mow the lawn. Create a go fund me. Just do without asking the widow.

Don't discount us.

We may need some help at first finding our new normal but that doesn't mean we are a burden. Us serving actually helps the grieving process. Widows are some of the most generous people.

The biggest thing for me would be house maintenance. Such as plumbing issues and just different maintenance upkeep. Because I've run into a few things and I panic, as I don't know how to do these things, and/or do not have the income to cover it at this point in my life. Whereas when my husband was alive, it would be something that he could do or he had his buddies that he could just call on and they would come and help. Not to mention at the time there were two incomes so it made life a lot easier financially. And not to speak for others, but this is a conversation that I have had with many of my widow friends.

Be practical

The only thing I can think is that caring for widows is ongoing. It shouldn't stop after a few weeks or months.

It's so much responsibility that falls on to you at once. It's so overwhelming and support really falls off after a while. Sometimes we just need another person to take over a daily, easy task like walking the dog. For a day a week. The basic things are the most helpful.

They need community and offers for help rather than feeling like they need to prioritize what they ask for so they don't become a burden. The first round of small groups, the only one I fit in was a single women's group which was mostly young 20's. They called groups "young marrieds". I did ask them to call them "young families". There isn't a huge base of us so including us in any way possible is so important. Also, offering child care for church events is huge. Mine rarely does so it's such a struggle to make it to adult-only things.

Also, at the 6 month mark, I got a random card that was supposed to be kind but it was signed very generically. I appreciate the sentiment but it felt like I was a quick thing to check off a to do list. I wished someone called or got together with me or reached out instead.

Not everyone is the same. Some need way more support and some less. The help and support is needed more in the 2nd and 3rd years.

Check with us periodically no matter how long ago we lost our spouse and ask what we need if anything. Do not separate us from the church body. It's as if we are now all thrown in a box and they do not know what to do with us.

I find that a lot of churches offer "grief support" groups which is great! But I don't share the same difficulties and daily struggles that somebody who's loss was not a spouse. Of course, we can still have empathy for others going through grief, but I wish I had a community who actually

understood what I was going through. Losing a husband and father of your children takes a toll mentally, emotionally, financially. It affects my daily schedule and my ability to work or even schedule doctors appointments. It impacts every moment of every day.

A touch point 1 x month would be helpful. Having some form of widow ministry

A great thing the first church did was create a spreadsheet of helpers based on their interest and skills. Smart!

Empathy

Periodically checking in on us aside from when they see us in church or not

Having a safe place to discuss life's hardest questions about death and afterlife is comforting.

Do not assume that they are ok

Be mindful of single people and families . Involve them in activities. Check on them if they were not in church on special event.

Visit and grieve with them when the crowd is settled

Contact and check on them offer to help for a time for longer than a few weeks.

We struggle and are exhausted from having to make every single decision without help from our husbands and not only do the work we were responsible for but also the work around the house and yard that our husbands did (or have to hire and pay someone to do it, which can be difficult

either financially or just not knowing if we're hiring the right person or if they're handling the job like it should be done).

Just care. Reach out. Offer assistance. Be engaged for more than the first 2 or 3 weeks of what is now for the widow a lifelong journey to one extent or another.

One of your questions was if my husband or I were involved in ministry leadership before his passing. I wasn't sure if you meant as a minister or as in serving in the church in a leadership role. We were not in the 2 or 3 years prior to his passing, but before then I helped in several "leadership-type" roles, such as facilitating Bible Studies, being on the leadership team for a mentoring program and being a mentor for that program, etc.

What I'd like ministry leaders to know about caring for widows, to actually help with the grief and walk alongside a widow, it probably needs to be a widow doing that--someone who has kinda walked in the same shoes. However, I think the church could step up by having role models/mentors for teens and young adults who have lost a parent. I would have loved and still would love that for my children, who were 18 and 21 when their daddy went to heaven. People who would service cars or do small household repairs would help a lot!

Hope this helped in some way.

Widows need love and support.

Follow through on offers of help

Reach out. See how they are. Help them through their grief and issues surrounding loss and the church.

I don't know. There are many things I would like to educate our SOCIETY on, regarding their unrealistic expectations of how widows should feel.

How hard it is to be in our family's church without him and how long and intense the grieving really is.

Just to check in with them. Meet with them maybe monthly. The first 6 months after I was an emotional train wreck. I think a specific group for widows. I'm not sure about grief share. It was not available for me. The one church that offered it was too far away and in the evening. I don't like to drive at night

Definitely need more pastors trained in biblical counseling

The commitment doesn't end after a few months. The needs are ever evolving

caring for them even into the second and third year is really important

It's ongoing and gets worse after the funeral. You're numb then. After is torture.

They need to be there for widows and widowers. They need to understand that they are grieving and may be for a very long time. They need to check on them long after the funeral is over.

I'm at 17 months. I'm still not ok. My kids are not okay.

I could have used more support with my kids. Mentors to meet with them. Help transporting them to appointments and school. Gift cards for them to be able to do coffee and things with friends.

Some of the ladies to reach out to me to go to coffee or other one on one meeting. I'm too overwhelmed and exhausted to be the one to reach out.

Maybe an actual list of who would be able and willing to help in specific areas of need.

Providing a support system works be beneficial as we need something more than a once a week meeting.

We are not fragile. We still want and need socialization

They don't like to ask. Someone should be assigned to a widow for first year to see what their needs are and have people who could assist with those, childcare, yard, home maintenance (within reason)

There are so many different things that are disrupted. It would be good to have someone who's been through this experience check in on widows/widowers and have connections to resources so they can provide specific help in the moment.

That we need singles Sunday School classes for younger widows, divorced and singles. Co-ed is even better. When one of my widow friends approached my pastor he said, "We aren't a dating service!" This man had never lost a spouse. He had no idea how cruel his words were. We didn't ask to lose our spouses! The majority of us do not care about dating but for the few that do, isn't the church the best place to meet someone!

They need your support! Help with maintenance on homes, vehicles etc!

They did provide some meals at the time of his accident

Widows are lost in those first months and it's important to reach out and keep in touch. Also to just show up with food, yard help, help with child care etc.

It never goes away

We enjoy hearing about our spouse

Remember everything they did good, bad, funny

Just so they aren't forgotten. They were our whole lives so we don't know who we are now.

I have had a bit of a crisis of faith since my husband's passing and I'm not sure who to talk to about it. Reading and praying more has brought me closer to God but when family (adult children) have serious issues I need to talk to someone about how best to respond or help if needed. At my age many people think we've got it all together. Not..

Be specific with offers of help. (Not just call if you need something)

Make sure stuff that is asked to help follows through.

Be intentional in checking in with them.

We don't like to ask for help so prefer others to reach out to us with specific support.

Thru advertising of a different church I found an all women's widows group. I joined this group not only for support but also to make more woman friends. Maybe having the church send out a note with helpful organizations going on throughout the community, not just in our own churches and not just grief related. Social activities help too.

They want people to check on them, to help without having to ask for it.

It is easy for the widow who looks like she has it all together to really actually feel very much out of sorts and alone.

Outings or groups just for widows are a must.

Needing a place to feel loved and cared for. Needing support in so many area. My church we go to 2 different ones. Neither have support for anyone in this situation

Don't refer to stages of grief. Grief isn't checked boxes and comes in waves. Don't tell a widow she looks great or she's strong, her world came crashing down. Be there, hug her, feed her, love her. And most importantly, talk about grief, talk to her, even when you don't know what to say!

That it takes more than a couple of weeks

I think meals and regular visits are important. To be there to listen and not necessarily have to respond. Regular check ins. Simple offers like walks or getting a coffee.

It would be good to have a plan in place to check in on widows -- plan to call or visit on important dates like birthdays, wedding anniversary, anniversary of death, etc. Invite the widows to reconnect when they feel ready, like for bible study or small group/Sunday School. Sit with the widows in church - it's hard to go and be alone after years of sitting beside your husband and children. Don't assume that a smile for 10 seconds on Sunday morning means that all is well. Recognize that widows may be feeling lonely, overwhelmed, juggling too much, grieving, and spiritually worn-out after losing their spouse. Reach out with a visit, phone call, invitation to meet for coffee.

Widows want to be back at church -- especially if they were committed, active members prior to their husband's death, church feels like a "home" for them, so make that home welcoming, warm, full of joy, and also a place where it's ok to be sad and grieve with other believers.

Widows don't just need help because they are not physically able. An old lady may need help shoveling snow because she can't do it. But a young widow may need the help because everything in her life is hard. She has lost the person who did the jobs. Every decision she now makes alone fatigues her. She can take out the trash, but it makes her cry. Showing up for widows can look a whole lot like just taking a few things off her over full plate, even if she can do it.

Even if she can afford to pay for it. Taking care of widows should acknowledge that a woman's life is changed when she loses her advocate and partner.

Reach out to us. Some individuals may feel lost now that their person is no longer attending. It can be difficult for our families to sit in a congregation and see other families together. It's just easier to watch from home even though weekly I feel convicted to attend. I am an introvert and it is hard for me to go alone.

It's been 2 and a half years now and I'm still exhausted, more lonely than ever, and feel like I don't belong anywhere. As a younger widow, I didn't really connect with anyone in the grief share group I tried at another church. I have to pick my battles with my kids and getting to church on Sunday morning is one I've given up on. I still believe, I want to feel more spiritually connected and alive. I'm just so dang tired and alone.

Just ask if they need help ... whatever their specific needs may be.

We are still people...we are much more than widow. We are grieving, but we are still vital in our own right. Please reconsider how you respond to all those who are experiencing loss...know that we have lost a part of our heart, we need some care in finding ourselves again. Try not to have a "couples only" mentality...we are single for many reasons, but ultimately, we are all worthy.

We need love and support, and just to know someone cares. We also sometimes need help around our home, and it would be nice if there was some sort of ministry to help when we get in a bind needing help.

It would also help to just be loved on during our darkest hour.

Compassion, empathy, just a moment to check in. Letting me know that they're praying for me would be nice. Letting me know that I'm not forgotten because I am only a half a couple now.

We each have our own timing and issues to deal with. Grief counseling is not a "cookie cutter" response, especially for those of us who are also in ministry. We also know the right answers, but they aren't the ones that help us figure out the ministry side of things.

Checking in personally more often and not just waiting to hear if our family needs something. Providing and organizing a group and a space for widows of all faiths in the area to gather and find support with leaders and other widows. As a widow I would love a group to be around but don't have the energy and time to organize it.

There are things that widows can't do that their husbands used to do, such as spring cleanup for the yard, mower issues, and things like that. I personally am not one who needed grief counseling. Just being a good friend with a listening ear, I think it's important.

Again, my answers do not pertain to BRCC. I think BRCC is a wonderful church and there are so many wonderful people. There are kind and thoughtful. I enjoy going to BRCC.

It's difficult and different for everyone. I hate attention so the constant asking How are you bothered me so much but I knew it was with good intentions.

The entire first year is critical! We don't know what we are doing, we are in a fog. We need guidance and community that we don't even know about. We need diligence from the church to just do, and not ask. Because we don't know.

Frequently the wife is the spiritual leader of the couple. Ignoring Widows is like ignoring the spiritual needs of the family. We're looking for friends who don't think we're 3rd wheels.

Not all of us are looking to get remarried. We just want fellowship and to grow in our faith with Jesus.

#I would love to see men rise up and help widows --Older women in the church to help widowers. Many of them don't know how to cook-- or how to talk to girls about periods, etc.

Car repairs--doing the work or at least taking the car to the shop and dealing with that.

Doing or helping the spouse learn how to maintain a house... gutters, furnace filters, cleaning drains, winterizing house like outside hoses,, cleaning dryer vents etc.

Someone pays to have the house cleaned once a month....someone to plant and mulch. Help with snow removal and mowing.

Offer to shop for Christmas and wrap the gifts--hard to have Christmas cheer but you want a Christmas for your kids.

Help the widow get away for counseling--widows retreat--help with kids and practical needs to make this happen.

The spouse needs self-care to care for the family.

Support but don't take over. So many felt I couldn't make decisions. I could I just needed time to learn to walk again--practical helps give margin to relearn living again. Time for healing and counseling. Counseling or mowing the yard--which will bring life back?

Space to not be okay--

It is okay for two men or two women to come together but don't treat the widow(er) like a scarlet threat.

Talk about the loved one who is gone.

Don't ask how they are doing financially--listen to the Holy Spirit--if He say give--give. How would you feel if someone asked how you are doing financially? How do you think they are doing--respond to that need that the Lord speaks.

Be careful with your words---no Christian lingo is goin

Narrative Responses

Sally

In general -- 6 years on April 20th -- Christians have been no better at understanding grief than anyone else. The only ones that truly understand (and are just kinda normal people) are other widows. That's one group we will always be included in :) All the best to you moving forward.

Lori

I lost my husband soon to be 2 years ago. The most hurtful thing I found is how quickly you are forgotten. Friends and even my husband's brothers (except for one) disappeared. Fortunately, my family has been there for me. I tried counseling, but didn't find it particularly helpful. Making new widow friends and staying active in my independent living community have helped me move forward as best I can.

Natalie

Hey, Amy. We met at the Never Alone Conference last year. I'm glad you are working on this project. I feel like my church experience since my husband passed has been a mixed bag. I'm going to think on this and give a little more in-depth reply once I'm at my computer instead of my phone.

Lorraine

I've learned people don't ask if you need anything. I guess they're waiting until you ask them.

Susan

I'm older, so no young kids, but when the weather events come up, the elders from the church call to see if I need help preparing my house for it, freeze or flood, etc. Also, Valentine's Day is something one of my financial planners has remembered to send a card or box of candy or something to let me know they're thinking of me. Our pastor communicated once a month for a year by mail to let me know help was available if needed, sent grief books (annoyed emoji) and generally left the door open for requests from the men at the church ready to help where needed. One even came to change the light bulb on my front porch, too high for me to reach, discovered the whole fixture needed replacement, and after I bought one, replaced the old one so I had a light on my door. So nice. Another hauled clutter my husband had accumulated to clear my garage a bit. These were people who knew my husband and were friends with him. Our church takes seriously the mandate to take care of the orphans and widows.

Vicky

I am a widow of 7 years. I too was on staff at a Catholic Church when my husband passed suddenly. Although the People of God meant well, they were sometimes very intrusive. I'm glad you are trying to find ways to help, thank you.

Janet

What an excellent mission. I'd say the church sees you in the immediate aftermath. After that, life as usual. A widow is a widow going forward.

Christine

My church that I was a big part of (sadly fell apart for other reasons) stepped up big time by hosting my late husband's reception in the hall downstairs with food and everything. I felt so much support. It was a tradition there.

Wendi

My church completely embraced our family. Feel free to message me and I'll be happy to share with you the many ways they helped us that first year.

Dianne

I asked to meet with my priest after my husband passed away I was told he didn't have any time. Needless to say, I don't attend church anymore. I called the Deacon whose wife had passed away, expecting some compassion. He had no time for me either. Doing okay without my church community.

Tara

I also felt that I did not get sufficient grief support from Grief Share at my church. I learned that losing a spouse is a "trauma," and you need to seek out a trauma therapist to navigate the intensity that you will experience when dealing with grief. I realize that all of our journeys are different, but I do think it is important in order to heal. I am five years out and still reach out to my therapist.

Tammy

And the widowed mom really needs to be open enough to allow this kind of assistance. I've seen some go deep within, barely holding it together. It's so hard that it is also critical for the care team to be more insistent on helping. Even a couple of hours can make the hugest difference.

Rebekah

I think you need to think, "I need to put this person in intensive care." Cards, groceries, help around the house, regular check-ins. Don't wait to be asked. If they have ids, babysit. Just listen. Don't give advice. Sit with them. Don't try to fix it with God language. It's lonely, so include them. Don't let them sit alone in church. Church events with no childcare, make sure you watch their kids. Oh, another thing. Help her with all the paperwork. Make the phone calls. All the horrible administrative stuff she needs, all the places to send the death certificate. Etc. Bank accounts. Life insurance.

Robin

I'm Catholic also. A priest from my church came to give my husband last rites (he was already gone). We were fairly new to this church. We had recently moved before he passed, but no one reached out to me after the service. There is a grief group at the funeral home that was helpful for a bit. Sad. I agree they could do more.

Tanya

Check on them after the funeral. I felt like I was dropped after the funeral. They did check on my kids (kids had their own phones), but not me.

Linda

The Eucharist gave me the strength to carry on. My husband was a priest, one of the few married Catholic Priests. He was an Episcopal priest for 20 years before. The 1st pastor would always give him the ministry of the death of children because he felt inadequate. Priests and staff are human and make mistakes. No excuse. Maybe talk to a Deacon.

Diane

Meals! The meals just kept coming! Ha!

I was on pastoral staff at a church when my husband died 4+ years ago. I was only given 2 weeks off. It wasn't enough. People also didn't realize at first that I might like a little space. I got better at voicing that random drop-bys weren't helpful, but it never stopped feeling awkward. Oh the platitudes! How many times someone told me my husband now had angel wings or God had a good plan for me....bleck! I never raked a leaf or shoveled snow. It always just was done when I went out to do it. A Christmas tree just showed up on my porch, and all those handyman things also just seemed easy to get taken care of.

Colleen

I feel like I could honestly write a book about all we encountered, both good and bad, throughout my husband's terminal illness. Concerning the church, one example always comes back. I called our parish to inquire what the process was to have a priest come to our home to give my husband the sacrament of the sick. I am a nurse. I felt like he was at the end of his fight. The church secretary seemed busy and annoyed. She actually said, "is he dying today?" I am still shocked by her callous and rude question. The priest that eventually came was very caring and actually officiated the funeral. I or my family have never been offered support from the church moving forward. I have a strong faith and do feel God has carried me during this time but do not feel supported through this loss from the church itself.

Phyllis

Ah.... I offered this info to the new paster: One designated individual from the church should come to me in my home to discuss my (or any widow's) current situation and see in what areas I would need help. If emotional/spiritual, then set up meeting initially with pastoral care and then Stephen Minister. If financial, then look at alms for immediate aid and then toward financial advisor. If housing needs or repair, engage youth group to help. If trouble with kids, engage counselor and arrange a parenting partner (I really could have used this for my sons.) And more.. You get the idea. We have a large church from which all of these people could be found. Probably the most curious is that most of what I listed above is offered to those who may be in desperate need -- poverty, homeless, recently evicted, etc. That is all good, but they fail to find that their own congregants may be in need, too. Of all the money I have given over the years...but that's another story. Per your question what did my church do regarding my acquiring widow status....nothing. They did not reach out. One of my pastors did pray for me and my family when I called to tell him of John's death. Considering I even asked the pastoral care directly what help or services are in place for widows, I was told that another church had a Bible study on grief. When I said that I didn't want a Bible study, a short-term pastor met with me. He discussed how I could start a Bible study! Incredulously, my huge church had zero to offer widows. Early this year, I met with one of the new pastors (pastoral care) with lack of widow care being one topic discussed. Sadly, he said he had no input on any need such as this.

Ona

Bravo!!! The first thing is there is no right/wrong way to grieve and everyone is on their own timetable. I felt judged for being too happy or too sad. It felt like I was expected to be something different for everyone, even my own children. When the person you love and have made your life with for over 30 years is suddenly gone with no warning, there is no manual of how to act. Just getting out of bed was all I could do to get our youngest out the door for school. It felt like my life had ended, too, and to some degree it had. Grief changed me forever. We are never the person we were before. Oh, also my body betrayed me with panic attacks that physically landed me in the ER. No one tells you about the physical changes you will endure. Got me. It has been 6 years and life is good. I remarried, but I don't go a day without thinking about him. Just listen. And there is a lot of help in the first few weeks and then everyone disappears. It's like we have the sad death disease that no one wants to catch. I saw people avoid me. Maybe they felt guilty if they were happy. I don't know, but honestly happiness is needed when you're grieving.

Natalie

One of the best ideas I have heard as related to sharing and educating others about grief is to stop saying, "The 5 Stages of Grief." Coaching for Widowed Moms with Krista St-Germain has a podcast episode on this that is great (Ep. #237: Stop Saying "5 Stages of Grief")

Kristi

It's just plain and simple hard. People all said they would be there and help, but yep, they all disappear. And yes, my kids and I feel judged for it all. What we wear, if they go to school, if they don't, what their grades are, if I work too much or not at all. I had to put them in after school care as his entire family walked (over 50 people live within 15 miles) and none could watch them for an hour after school. Yet I was judged for that. Would have loved, loved more people to just show up and do. Show up and show me how to do. My husband was amazing and took care of so many things I didn't have a clue how to do, like setting the a/c unit. Thank goodness for u-tube (sic.). But I agree, it doesn't have to be this way. I tried to join widows groups, but I live in a smaller town, and they are during the work day. And there is nothing for kids in my area.

Vivian

At least for starters, the church should try not to overtly hurt women, be cruel to them, while they're going through the horror of losing their life partner. "First, do no harm." That would be a good start.

Debra

I would love for the church to have social events for seniors (widows and widowers). It gets so lonely and sad, but good to be around others who understand.

Denice

I was widowed just six weeks prior to COVID shutting down the world, so I didn't get much of a chance to go to church before I couldn't anymore. The one time I did go in person, I asked that someone come and visit me. They came and said they "didn't understand" why I asked for a personal visit. So I told them that I was recently widowed. They said, "Oh!" and then walked away. I never went back there. Could the church do more? Definitely!

Christie

I think it's important to remember that in grief, many of us question our faith. Some go as far as to resent God and their beliefs. Patience, assurance, and normalizing grief are important. Normalizing emotional devastation, depression.

Mindy

I no longer attend church, but two of my boys have attended the same church for over 3 years. I attended the first year with them, and my husband attended the church for two years. When he passed, I had one visit from the pastor and the youth pastor to give their condolences and pray for us. My husband volunteers with the youth and my boys are very involved. A church group did provide the food for his memorial. Other than that, no one has reached out. On the few occasions I have attended church with the boys, I am avoided like the plague. No one has

offered any help of any kind or friendship. On the other hand, the nice people at the local bar have taken me under their wing and check on me within they haven't seen me or when the kids and I go out of town, they'll text to make sure we're safe.

Kimberly

I was a widow for 8 years, just got remarried this past July. My current husband has only been divorced, so it was strange to me the first time I realized that he was jealous of my deceased husband. I had been talking about him. I had children with my deceased husband. I explained that, yes, my deceased husband WAS the love of my life, but that he IS the love of my life.

Beth

I am still so disoriented from the casual outlook of a day to day stressful life, I am aware that I cannot relate to single or married adults, and yet I try. I find very few others who try to understand what I must be struggling to process, manage, overcome, etc. I do know that even well-meaning people will try to get me involved by keeping me busy, but I'm tired in every way. I'm needy in every way. By the way, I heard an interview with someone saying there is no such thing as too needy. Just needy. There is the person who sits down to eat with manners. Then there is the person who has dragged themselves through the wilderness for days to find help, and ravenously shovels in food. Are they too hungry, or hungry? We are created for community. We need support. We are not meant to grieve alone.