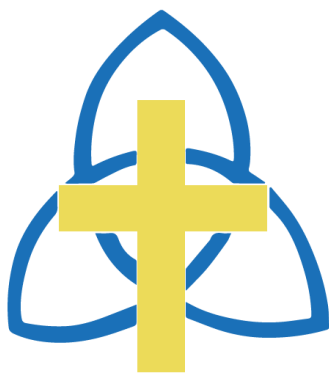




WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2026

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"We would see Jesus and be transformed into His Likeness"

Dear Friends,

At the evening worship on Sunday, Themba gave a message about grief. He used an example about a tyre and how getting a puncture in the tyre and having it go flat can describe how grief hits unexpectedly and causes us to feel deflated and need to stop. He then spoke about 3 spare wheels which can help us to navigate our grief: Commemoration, Community and Christ. I also preached about death and grieving at the Elphin Lodge Retirement service last week Thursday. I thought that I would continue with the theme of grief in this letter and draw upon a talk on bereavement given at the UPCSA inspire conference in June by Braam Kloppe, a South African pastoral therapist who has specialised in grief and bereavement for over 25 years. (This will be a long read, but I think there are some lovely things which we can learn)

In talking about how we care for people who have lost a loved one, his central message is that we do not need to try to repair the unrepairable. We cannot bring the person back, and we cannot replace them. People are not a car or toaster or fridge or any other object which, in our society, has become easy to repair or replace.

This often leaves the bereaved feeling helpless, overwhelmed and even angry. That anger may be directed towards doctors, family members, pastors—or even God. We should not be shocked by this. Sometimes anger towards God is an expression of deep faith, as if to say, "God, I believed that you could have prevented this." In such a moment, a grieving person does not need correction or an explanation. They need someone who can remain present and listen.

What not to say

Our society often expects people to recover quickly, look on the bright side and carry on as if nothing has happened. Even Christians can unintentionally place this pressure on those who mourn.

For this reason, we should be cautious about words such as:

- "You need to be strong."
- "At least they are in a better place."
- "God needed another angel."
- "It was God's will."
- "At least you still have other children."
- "Your loved one would not want you to be sad."

- “You must try to move on.”

Some of these statements may contain an element of truth, but they can be deeply unhelpful when spoken at the wrong time. The fact that someone is with the Lord does not remove the pain of their absence. The end of suffering does not eliminate the loss. A grieving person is mourning not only the past, but also all the future moments that will now never happen.

Every loss is a complete loss. The death of one child is not reduced because there are other children in the family. The death of a spouse is not made smaller because other relationships remain. We should never compare one person’s grief with another person’s grief or try to calculate how serious a loss is.

Nor should we try to make people feel better immediately. Grief is not a problem that we can solve with the right words, a tablet or a quick explanation. There is a time to be sad. There is a time to mourn. There is a time to acknowledge honestly that something terrible has happened.

We must also be careful not to speak too confidently on behalf of God. Statements such as “God needed him” may unintentionally make God sound like the cause of the tragedy. In the face of death, we do not need to defend God or explain everything. We may humbly acknowledge that we do not understand, while holding on to the truth that God is near to the broken-hearted.

How we can help

The first and most important thing we can do is listen, listen and listen again.

We do not always need to say something profound. Often the most loving words are simple:

- “I am so sorry.”
- “This is a terrible loss.”
- “You have every right to feel the way you do.”
- “I am here to listen.”
- “Please tell me about him.”
- “What do you miss most?”
- “How are you feeling today?”

We can listen to what the person is feeling, what they are thinking and, where appropriate, what happened. We can also listen to their memories. The bereaved need opportunities to speak about the person who has died, not only about the death.

When we listen, we should not rush to correct them, defend God, explain why the death occurred or persuade them to feel differently. We should give them room to speak honestly and safely.

We should also acknowledge that many reactions to grief are normal. A person may cry constantly, or may feel numb. They may be angry, confused, exhausted or unable to express emotion. They may feel guilty,

relieved, helpless or even strangely calm. Grief does not look the same in every person, and there is no timetable by which everyone must grieve.

This is especially important when the relationship was complicated. A person may be heartbroken and angry at the same time. They may love someone who treated them badly, while also feeling relieved that the relationship has ended. These conflicting emotions should not be judged or denied. They need to be shared with someone trustworthy and emotionally safe.

The work of grieving

Grief is not simply something that happens to us while we passively move through a fixed series of stages. It involves certain tasks that we gradually work through. These tasks do not always occur in a particular order, and we may return to them repeatedly.

First, the reality of the death must begin to sink in. Funerals, memorial services, photographs, conversations and the opportunity to say goodbye can help us face the truth that the person has died.

Second, the emotions connected with the loss need to be expressed. Tears, anger, sadness, confusion and longing should not automatically be suppressed. There is healing in being able to acknowledge what is truly taking place within us.

Third, we need to commemorate the person who has died. Death ends physical life, but it cannot erase the meaning of a person's life. We can remember through photographs, stories, music, candles, memorials, favourite meals or special traditions. We may celebrate a birthday, prepare a loved one's favourite dish or simply tell a story that reminds us of who they were.

Fourth, conflicting emotions may need to be acknowledged. This can be particularly important after suicide, an accident, addiction, abuse or a difficult relationship. We may need the freedom to say, "I am deeply sad, but I am also angry," or, "I miss this person, but I am relieved that their suffering, and perhaps the suffering they caused, has ended." Such feelings should be handled with compassion, not condemnation.

Finally, the loss must gradually be incorporated into life as we live forward. Living forward does not mean forgetting, replacing or leaving the person behind. It means learning how to continue living with the loss. Like someone who has lost a limb and must learn new ways of doing familiar things, we make adjustments without pretending that nothing has changed.

Remembering beyond the first weeks

In the first days and weeks, many people rally around the bereaved. There are phone calls, visits, meals, messages and practical arrangements. But after a while, the support often decreases, while the grief remains.

The three-month mark can be particularly difficult. The initial shock may begin to wear off, and the pain may become more intense. The reality of the absence becomes clearer, and the people around the bereaved may already have returned to their ordinary routines.

This is a good time to make contact. We might say:

“I realise that it has been three months since Peter died. I imagine this may be a very difficult time for you. I am thinking of you and I am here if you would like to talk.”

The first anniversary can also be especially painful. During the first year, the family encounters birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, New Year and other significant occasions without the person who has died. Each occasion may highlight the missing presence.

A helpful image is that of a jigsaw puzzle. Even if 1 499 pieces are in place, our eyes are drawn immediately to the one piece that is missing. At significant family occasions, the bereaved may be painfully aware of the one person who is no longer there.

A compassionate response

People grieve in different ways. Some need to talk about the circumstances of the death. Others do not want to hear details. Some find comfort in music, photographs, candles and shared memories. Others cope by attending to practical matters and trying to understand exactly what happened. We should not force our own way of grieving upon someone else.

As a congregation, we can offer meals, transport, help with children, assistance with household tasks and companionship at difficult appointments or anniversaries. But our practical care should always be accompanied by patience. We are not called to make another person “get over” their grief. We are called to love them while they grieve.

May God give us the grace to listen without judgement, to speak without presumption and to remain present when there are no easy answers. May we remember that sometimes the ministry of presence is more powerful than any explanation.

And may those who mourn discover, through the faithful care of God’s people, that they do not have to carry their sorrow alone.

With love and awe-filled appreciation,

Iain



MAKING MELODY IN MY HEART

Song of the week

(Iain Kemp)

I was listening to this song in the last week, and it helped remind me of God's presence in times of sadness and struggle.

"He will hold me fast" by Keith & Kristyn Getty – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936BapRFHaQ>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/track/4wegRLQumuxDEpFVZR3igu?si=75404e3b47274c8d>

Apple Music: <https://music.apple.com/us/song/he-will-hold-me-fast/1440919364>



"Our Purpose is to GROW DEEPER! Grow deeper with God, in Relationships with each other, by creating Opportunities for ministry and as Witnesses."

Friday night Youth – Junior and Senior Youth on Fridays

Sunday School on Sundays at 09h00

Check out the WhatsApp group or contact Ross for more information

What's coming up....

*6 Thinking Hats:
Brewed for Better Thinking*

Putting Thinking on The Table

		
Facts	Benefits	Feelings
		
Creativity	Caution	Process

Join us as we explore six ways of looking at Scripture.

Date:	Time:	Venue:
19 September 2026	11:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Trinity

Open to all teens and young adults

 Trinity Presbyterian Church

We need your braai! →



← your help means a lot!

Barrel Braai's Needed

MESSAGE ROSS IF YOU CAN HELP

Hosting a special Vac Refresh event on
24 Sept 2026

Giving

Please take note:

EFT Payments

We would like to ensure that the payments made to Trinity towards tithing, retiring offerings, food bags etc are allocated correctly. In order to do this, please would you ensure that the reference shown on your payment has the correct beneficiary.

For Tithing, please use the following methods:

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
STANDARD BANK
CURRENT ACCOUNT
NUMBER: 42 448 2088,
BRANCH: 016 342

Zapper QR Code



On Sunday we wished our Pastoral Care Coordinator, Dawn Shewring, a blessed 80th Birthday. Dawn has been serving in this role at Trinity for 21 years! She is a blessing to us and we pray that God will continue to bless her in the year and years to come. Thank you for your faithful service to Trinity and to Christ.



Wendy Watson, the daughter of Chicko Watson, and a member of Trinity, was celebrated with a lifetime achievement award for her dedicated work as a ward councillor for the DA in the Gauteng East District. Well done Wendy!

In line with the POPI Act, if you do not wish for your photo or information to be shared on church platforms, please contact Felicity at office@trinitychurch.co.za or 011 453 7729