

# AFFIRMING LIFE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DISTRICT LCMS

## Pastor, please come. My son just killed himself...

My family, by the providence of God, has never directly experienced suicide and its affects, but I've ministered to families immediately following. I've sat with people on their front steps while the police worked the scene. And every time I'm speechless.

All the preparatory training we think we have for these moments? The usual Scripture texts we have "in our back pocket" for all other times of grief? These just don't seem to "cut it." There are not words. Each time I have felt so incredibly ill-equipped for these situations, but it didn't matter. The Holy Spirit is very good at interceding for us with "groans too deep for words" (Romans 8:26).

This is all still very fresh in my mind because this happened again in my parish less than a month ago. And so if I may offer a few thoughts (by no means intended to be exhaustive because I am no expert, nor do I wish to be) on what I've learned in these instances, I pray that they may serve you in the unfortunate time that you should ever have to walk into this.

To those who minister in times like these:

What you say in these moments may not be remembered, but you were there – and this WILL be remembered! Don't worry about being profound. Don't worry about a polished theological answer. You are walking into a disaster and it is a terrible mess. Lots of tears. Lots of anger. But also lots of hugs. Just be there.

**What you say in these moments may not be remembered, but you were there – and this WILL be remembered!**

This monthly newsletter, serves to support the Rocky Mountain District in the ministry of defending those who cannot defend themselves and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to those struggling with life-related issues.

Comments and suggestions are always welcomed and appreciated.

Deaconess Sara Smith, Rocky Mountain District Life Coordinator

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Remember that we are incarnational in our theology. When "the word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), literally it means that He pitched His tent among us. He sat down on the steps outside the house.

One of the hardest parts for me is pointing people to Jesus and the hope that we have in Him, but without ever being able to definitively say that their loved one is with Jesus. This flies in the face of everything we are trained to do in regular ministry situations. We are good at finding ways to show that the Gospel predominates. But we cannot ever definitively say that their loved one is indeed with Jesus, because we don't know. What happens in the tortured mind to get to that point only Christ can redeem and we commend it to Him. Lord to whom shall we go?

Allow people to ask the "why?" Question. Will this question ever be answered? No. It is a senseless situation, but it's important for them to try and process this out loud. And they are trusting that you are safe to have this conversation with. Allow them to ask it and have the conversation with them that sometimes there is no answer. Lord to whom shall we go?

Remember that you also need to grieve. Whether you knew this person or you simply knew the family, if you are ministering to them in this time, you will also hurt. The trauma is real and you will take on some of this – it's simply reality. So often we who minister are

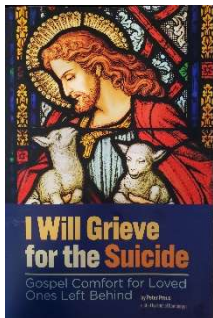
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not good at our own self-care. Take time to mourn for this family on your own. If Jesus can weep. You can too.

Remember lastly that this is not how it is supposed to be. So much in our world is not. Commend it to Jesus – It belongs to Him. When it comes to redeeming, He knows best. The words of Isaiah 53: 4-5

sum it up best: Surely He has born our griefs (all of them) and carried our sorrows (all of them)... and by HIS wounds, we are healed!”

Rev. James Maxwell, President  
Rocky Mountain District, LCMS



### ***I Will Grieve for the Suicide***

In this book, the Rev. Peter Preus provides Gospel comfort for those who are left behind after a Christian commits suicide. He addresses the stigma, psychology and theology of suicide, as well as the grieving process that follows it, and the hope Christians can find in Christ.

You can download this book from our LCMS Life webpage, [www.lcms.org/life](http://www.lcms.org/life).

A message from Deaconess Dr. Tiffany Manor, Director, LCMS Life Ministry:

“Some of you may be aware that there is a pro-life movie that will be in theaters this autumn. We were offered an advance viewing opportunity for Lifemark and were impressed that there is nothing theologically problematic in the movie. We will be publishing a discussion guide and Bible study for congregations and schools to use alongside the movie, hopefully they will be posted online at the end of this week, [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org). As a part of the official doctrinal review process a reviewer watched the movie as well and had no hesitations about recommending the movie to the LCMS.”

This movie will be in theaters from Sept. 9-15 (and I suspect be available for livestreaming on some platform afterwards). See more at <https://lifemarkmovie.com/>.

LCMS Life Ministry

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