

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | April 25, 2017

After the death of Jesus, his community was grieving. Some, as we read in today's text, were perhaps getting out of town, filled with emotion as they walked and talked together. And then the risen Jesus joins the sorrowful men on their journey. But it isn't until this little group engages in the ancient tradition of hospitality (through sharing a meal) that the mourners recognize him as the resurrected Jesus. Joyfully, the men return to Jerusalem to share their experience; God finds us in our sorrow. Alleluia!

But what of human death and loss? C.S. Lewis writes in *A Grief Observed*, "Talk to me about the truth of religion and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolations of religion or I shall suspect that you don't understand." It is true that our faith in a loving God aids us with resilience during difficult times; but the suffering associated with grief is profound in every situation. And when a death is sudden or violent, when the person who died was one's spouse, romantic partner, or child, or when the bereaved person has a history of depression, anxiety, or substance abuse, grief can be complicated.

"Adapting to loss is as much a part of us as grief itself," said Dr. Shear, who directs the [Center for Complicated Grief](#) at the Columbia University's School of Social Work. With complicated grief, "something gets in the way of that adaptation," she said. "Something impedes the course of healing." Mental health support may be a vital part of healing for some who grieve.

The NJ Assembly has recently taken up three bills to make mental health care more accessible.

[A4469](#) would make it easier for existing mental health screening services to expand their regional work in all counties of NJ.

[A4468](#) would require the DHS to expand early-intervention programs so that one existed in each county.

[A4523](#) would make it easier for patients to receive basic behavioral-health services at the same place they receive primary-care treatment.

LEAMNJ is supporting these bills and urging the NJ Senate to also take up this work of getting mental health services to people who are in pain. Please help to destigmatize complicated grief and all expressions of mental illness. Talk about it in your parish or community and inform those who suffer about the help that is available.

RESOURCES

[Governor's council on Mental Health Stigma](#)

[Grief Speaks](#) (Hotline information in every county in NJ)