As spring approaches, I think about the pretty butterflies I often see flying around. Butterflies have long been known as a symbol of rebirth, renewal, and happiness. They remind us of how beautiful, delicate, and fragile life is. They also teach us to appreciate our loved ones and to be grateful for every moment we have with them. As many of us are dealing with loss in our lives, whether it be from a death, loss of a job, divorce, or some other type, we have to learn how to move forward. Indeed, this seems to be the toughest thing for many of my bereavement clients. They want to move forward, but are at a loss on exactly how to do that.

Grief has no expiration date. There is no set time on how long you should grieve, so it is important that people give themselves time to grieve in their own way. Many people love to tell you that you should be moving forward, or handling your grief better, but they are not you. Work your way through the grief as a butterfly does in the transformation from the cocoon to the beautiful butterfly: slowly. At first, many do not feel like themselves, and are dealing with the realization that some people whom they thought would be there for them are not. Meanwhile, others they never thought would be there have stepped up to the plate to support them through their loss.

Reach out to your friends as they are our cherished blessings. We are not supposed to go through grief alone, though sometimes we do need alone time to absorb what we are feeling. Do not hold your grief in. Talk to a friend about how you are feeling. You may even have a friend who has been through a loss themselves who can relate to what you are going through. If so, they can give you an idea on how they did things to help themselves move forward. For many to move forward, they need to memorialize their loved one. Some do special memorial services, some keep journals of how they feel, some draw or paint, and many like to make scrapbooks. There will always be songs, scents, movies, restaurants, and other things in our daily paths that remind us of the one we lost. Take those good memories and hold onto them. They will help you in the growth process of moving forward.

The pain will pass. You can never replace the person you lost, but you can find comfort in solitude and befriend it. You do not have to stay busy all the time, but make sure you get the support that you need. Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care offers different support groups as listed in our newsletters. Some people are able to benefit more from talking to other people about their loss. This helps them to reconcile the loss, release the pain, and recognize that they are transformed to soar like a butterfly, moving forward in their grief.

Continued on page 2
**Grief Is Like a Cross Stitch**  
Saundra Yates, Bereavement Coordinator/Chaplain (Mount Airy Office)

I have often heard people say, “Sometimes I can be in a room full of people and still feel lonely.” That is a very pervasive concept for our world today that is filled with machines, voicemail, email, and text messaging all in the context of trying to be efficient. However, for many people, their loneliness is contained within a vacuum labeled “Grief.” As we lose those we love, we find ourselves with empty promises, unfulfilled dreams, and countless hours that we have spent caring for and interacting with them in a relationship that is now dormant. So, what do we do with those countless hours that pervade our living space?

As I think about loss and loneliness, I am reminded of the cross stitch that I enjoy working on from time to time. I like to compare loss and loneliness to the darker colors of the fabric that encircle the masterpiece I am trying so desperately to create. If you were to look at the back of my cross stitch, you would see a bunch of ravaged threads that seem to create a jumbled mess. Although I know that it needs to be done a certain way, I insist in wanting to do it on my own way, which is why we have the jumbled mess of strings and yarn that absolutely cross, intertwine and many times create knots. Try as I might to get it right, my skills are far lacking compared to a Master Weaver. But hope is not lost, for with those darker colors on the front of the canvas, I find brighter colors that are

**Continued on next page**

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**When the Music Stops, cont.**

remains that the organ was made for music. Its sad song should not trouble us, but its silence should.

Humans were made for music as well, and no song is always worse than a sad song. In more than one sense, the brain is an organ; it’s the conductor of a human symphony. Death and loss slow the musician’s movement and turn happy, sentimental tunes into slow songs of deeply-felt pain and despair. Emotions, the musical expressions of the mind, express what words cannot say. Once upon a time, the organ was tasked with saying the unspoken in a silent movie. Light, happy notes introduced spring; fast-paced tunes pushed the audience to the edge of their seats in anticipation of the climax; and a low, eerie score announced an approaching menace. So, the playlist of human experience seems to switch to a slow tempo and melancholy tune as death approaches and passes. Often it’s not the sad song born on a dark night that troubles me most. It’s when the organ grows strangely still and silent altogether. One of the most difficult yet unrecognized symptoms of depression is not the overwhelming sadness that people associate with it. For me, the worst symptom of depression is waking up to the monotonous nothingness. Sometimes feeling nothing hurts worse than pain. I’d rather hear a sad song than live without music.

People struggling with depression often go untreated because they’re not experiencing classic symptoms like sadness. Their depression is just an overwhelming, empty nothingness. It’s the longing to close that empty space that pushes some to unwisely pursue whoever or whatever can fill the chair. Still, others go so deep into the expanse of nothingness that they decide the only choice is to cancel the symphony and shut the doors forever. We assume that someone who takes their own life must have been deeply sad, but rarely do we consider that maybe it wasn’t sadness, maybe it was a sense of nothingness that convinced them to give up.

If music makes the world go round, then the world must come to a standstill when the music stops. Imagine then the “numb pain” of an inner life without the music of the mind. Has the show stopped? Are you overwhelmed with the sounds of silence? Perhaps it’s time to explore why the music stopped. If the organ is plugged in but will not play, it’s not a problem with the song, it’s a problem with the instrument. A broken organ doesn’t need to be thrown away, it needs repairing. The brain is really not so different. We were not wired for perpetual nothingness. If you are struggling alone with the loud sound of silence, please seek help from an experienced repairman. Talking to a friend, renewing a commitment to faith, seeing a doctor, and even taking medication may be necessary steps to bring the music back.

Organs break and there’s no shame in calling for outside help to bring the music back. You were made for music. Don’t settle for the silence when you were created for the symphony.
Following a patient’s death, Mountain Valley provides specialized grief support services to help loved ones cope with their loss. These services are provided as part of hospice care for 13 months, at no cost to the recipient, and include:

- Grief counseling and education
- Face-to-face/phone sessions
- Monthly support groups
- Monthly newsletter

Community support is also available for bereaved individuals whose loved ones were not in hospice care.

For questions and comments, contact Mountain Valley Hospice at 336-789-2922 or 888-789-2922, or mtnvalleyhospice.org.

**Bereavement Staff & Support Groups**

**Mount Airy, NC**
336-789-2922
Stacie Adams, MA, EdS, LPCA
Saundra Yates, M.Div. NCBF
Fonda Younger, BS

**Pilot Mountain, NC**
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Drew Southern, M.Div.

**Yadkinville, NC**
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Sarah Tweed, BSW

**Elkin, NC**
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Kelley Ingram, BA

**Hillsvale, VA**
276-728-1030
Bruce Thomas, M. Ed

**Martinusville, VA**
276-403-4764
Susie Pool

**Stuart, VA**
276-694-4416
Susan Lytle, MA

**Carroll County**
3rd Thursday of each month
11:30 a.m. Moments with Bruce
Mountain Valley Hospice’s Hillsville Office

**Henry County**
1st Wednesday of each month
2 p.m. Support with Susie
King’s Grant Retirement ● Martinsville

**Patrick County**
3rd Thursday of each month
2 p.m. Stuart’s Topics and Dessert
Mountain Valley Hospice’s Stuart Office

**Surry County**
1st and 3rd Thursday of each month
9 a.m. Koffee & Komfort with Kelley
Fairfield Inn (Breakfast Buffet: $7) ● Elkin
2nd Thursday and 4th Tuesday of each month
11:30 a.m. Fonda’s Lunch Bunch
Golden Corral ● Mount Airy

**Surry County cont.**
1st and 3rd Thursday of each month
3 p.m. Finding Your Way/Loved One’s Death
Lantern Restaurant ● Dobson
2nd Thursday of each month
6 p.m. Support for Bereaved Parents
Woltz Hospice Home ● Dobson

**Yadkin County**
1st Thursday of each month
11:30 a.m. Sharing with Sarah
Ace’s Restaurant ● Yadkinville
3rd Thursday of each month
5:30 p.m. Sharing with Sarah
Mount Olympus Restaurant ● East Bend

**Wilkes County**
4th Wednesday of each month
9:30-11:30 a.m. Sharing with Kelley
Rose Glen Manor ● North Wilkesboro

**Carroll County**

Get daily emails for grief support at GriefShare.org.

**Grief Is Like a Cross Stitch, cont.**

Intertwined and begin to form a clear picture of what the masterpiece will eventually become.

This illustration mirrors the result of loss and loneliness. We may not see the true masterpiece as we are trudging through the mud and muck of loss and loneliness, but if we can just keep moving, we will eventually see the fair masterpiece that we desire beginning to take shape. Does it come without work on our part? Absolutely not! Grief is a journey, not a destination. It requires movement, and with movement comes work. It requires an openness to others who are also on the journey of grief and life. It requires us to be transparent with our feelings and emotions.

That is real work. We build and grow new relationships, realize avenues to our personalities, and explore possibilities within our own “new normal.” Soon we discover that, as we were struggling, a weave was emerging with the darker and brighter colors complementing each other. We discover that our journey was never really one of aloneness to begin with, for we are all travelers on this road of grief, and that the Master Weaver, the friend who sticks closer than a brother, never left our side.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4

“Grief is itself a medicine.”
William Cowper
Mountain Valley Hospice • Northwestern Regional Library

GRIEF RESOURCES SECTION

Find more than 150 titles at Northwestern Regional Library locations in Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties. To view our complete selection of books and videos, visit www.mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-library.

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