



Malahide Bethany

"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares." (Henri Nouwen)

Malahide Bethany is a voluntary group that offers support to those in our community who have been bereaved. The Malahide group is affiliated to the [National Bethany Bereavement Organisation](#). Our volunteers have progressed through a selection process and training program that equips them with the knowledge, facilitation and listening skills required for their role. The selection and training process is conducted outside the parish by the National Bethany Bereavement Support Group.

Our group, which is based in Malahide, is an inter-denominational group. We welcome all, regardless of religion or beliefs who would like support with their grief journey.

The experience of grief is gradually becoming better understood in our culture. This is a very welcome development, as bereavement is an inevitable part of our human experience. Sadly, all our relationships ultimately involve parting.

The pain we experience due to the loss of a significant relationship through death, illness, injury or separation can be overwhelming and sometimes frightening. Following a bereavement, to be able to access support and understanding, within our own community can be a lifeline, during one of the most difficult times of our life.

Grief can follow many different patterns and can be complicated. We can experience a myriad of emotions and physical sensations following a bereavement, for example, extreme sadness; anger; hopelessness; anxiety; loneliness; guilt; fatigue and more. We can carry these feelings with us throughout the day or they may be triggered unexpectedly during our routine experiences when we encounter a reminder of the loss of the person we have loved and miss. During the acute stages of grief, we may worry that the pain we experience will never end and that we will never experience a sense of joy and purpose again in our lives.

When we are grieving, we need the opportunity to be listened to and share our experience of loss. We also need reassurance that our overwhelming feelings and endless tears are a normal human response to the trauma of loss of a loved one. Sometimes those close to us are also grieving and we may wish for the opportunity to express our grief to someone outside our family and social group; someone who can sit with us quietly, listen attentively, acknowledge the validity of our feelings, reassure us that our experience is normal and give us hope that in time, while still missing our loved one, we will learn to accommodate our sense of loss and pain in new ways and connect to the things that matter and make life meaningful to us again.



Malahide Bethany Team's aim is to meet this need in our community by providing the following confidential services.

Our Phone Line 087-7936189

We have a dedicated phone which is held on a rotating basis throughout the year by members of the Bethany Team. Any individual who would like support with their grief may contact us confidentially at this number and an arrangement will be made for them to meet with two members of our team.

Weekly Monday Morning Bereavement Support Group

We hold a weekly, confidential bereavement support group in St Sylvester's Parish Pastoral Centre at 10.30am every Monday morning throughout the year, except bank holidays.



This group is a confidential, safe and welcoming space, where members of the community who are experiencing grief can come as often, for as long as they wish throughout the year, as they journey with their bereavement. We would like to reassure anyone who is considering visiting this group that they will be listened to respectfully and attentively and supported along this often, lonely journey.

The group is facilitated by two Bethany team members on a rotating basis. Hospitality is provided in the form of tea and coffee.

Attendees have the opportunity if they wish, to share their experience. There is no pressure to speak and for some visitors to the group, it can be reassuring to simply hear other's stories and realize that they are not alone.

One of the unique benefits of this group is the support that those participating can offer each other. Our experience of grief increases our sensitivity to another person's suffering. Attendees are at different points on their personal journey with grief following the loss of a loved one. The kindness, compassion, empathy and reassurance that attendees at the group provide to others, who are at the beginning of, or are feeling overwhelmed by, their grief journey, is especially helpful.

We are very grateful to all those who attend or have attended this group over the years, the dynamic created by the spirit of sharing authentically and listening respectfully and compassionately is invaluable to all those who come along to this group.

We welcome anyone who thinks they may benefit from attending this group to drop in at 10.30 am on Monday mornings. If you wish to talk to a Bethany facilitator beforehand, please contact us on 087-7936189

Evening Bereavement Support Groups

Learning how bereavement affects us and how grief may vary for different individuals, provides us with important and reassuring insights into the often emotionally overwhelming and sometimes frightening experience, that may follow the loss of a loved one.



Throughout the year, we run several series of four weekly evening bereavement support group sessions. Over the course of the four evenings, the facilitators of the group explore helpful information about bereavement and simple ways of experiencing our grief with self-understanding.

This group is interactive, and participants are encouraged to reflect on how this information resonates with their own experience.

Please contact the Bethany phone-line 087-7936189 to enquire about our next series of evening meetings.

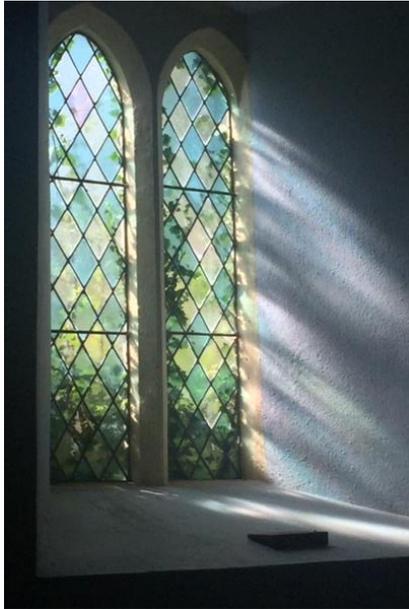
The Monthly Remembrance Mass

Is held each month at 6pm in The Church of the Sacred Heart, Yellow Walls, Seabury, on the first Saturday of each month. All the recently deceased members of the community are remembered at the beginning of mass by the calling out of their names by a member of the Bethany team and a candle is lit in their memory. Comforting instrumental and vocal music is also performed at this mass.

Families of all those being remembered are sent an invitation to attend this mass. Hospitality is provided by the parish hospitality group following the mass, in Seabury Pastoral Centre

Assisting families in the planning of funeral liturgy for their loved one.

Some members of the Malahide bereavement group also provide practical assistance to families at the time of bereavement. This is a separate support we offer which is not part of our role under the National Bethany Bereavement organization.



Our training and experience in bereavement means that we can assist families with sensitivity at the time of bereavement. We collaborate with the priest, in helping the bereaved family to plan the funeral liturgy for their loved one.

Two members of our team arrange to meet the family either at home or in the parish pastoral centre and guide them through the choices they may make in relation to readings, prayers of the faithful and optional aspects of the funeral liturgy such as selecting items that reflect the life of their loved one for a memory table.

Accepting this support is at the discretion of the family; many families find the guidance helpful.

The family's choices are recorded on a "funeral liturgy form". This form assists the priest in celebrating the funeral mass and inviting all those contributing to the liturgy in any way, to participate at the appropriate moment.

Knowing that they will be gently cued by the celebrant, to come to the lectern at the correct moment reduces the anxiety of relatives and friends who are waiting to step up to read or contribute in any way to the liturgy.

Annual Mass of Remembrance for all those who have died throughout the year

Each November a special remembrance mass is held in St Sylvester's church to remember all those who have died throughout the year. This mass is a special and meaningful occasion for the bereaved families.

All the deceased are remembered specifically during a ceremony including symbols such as the lighting of a candle for each loved one; a creative sacred space displaying the names of all the deceased and the presentation of a miniature St Brigid's cross in remembrance of each loved one, which is later incorporated into a display within the church in memory of all those who have died throughout the year.

Hospitality is provided by the parish hospitality group in the Gaffney Hall, for all the bereaved.



Volunteering with Bethany

New volunteers are always welcomed and needed in Malahide Bethany Team. Training programs for new volunteers are held by the Dublin region of the National Bethany Support Group, once a year. This requires a preliminary application and interview process which is conducted outside the parish, by members of the Dublin Area Bethany training team. If you are interested in joining the Bethany team, please contact Alan at 087 7585211.

Additional Notes

The Malahide Bethany Team is a group of trained voluntary facilitators. As volunteers, we need to be mindful of the boundaries of our specific ministry. Very occasionally, we may with the greatest of respect, advise an individual who seeks our support, that they may benefit from professional or more specialist support than we can offer them.

While confidentiality is paramount in all our interactions with those we support, in line with all voluntary groups, in very specific circumstance, we must comply with child protection legislation where mandatory reporting is stipulated.

A Final Thought

In the story of the enchanted forest the trees are withered, lakes and rivers dried. The birds stop singing and have flown from the sky. The sun gets darker, the moon shows her pale shine, it seems that everything is dead. As time passes the forest becomes a sad and desolate place to be. Is it destroyed forever? One day a small light begins to shine in the forest. Day by day the forest slowly begins to return to life. That small light of hope transforms everything – it brings healing to the forest and restores everything to its former glory.

In many ways this short story mirrors what it is to be human and experience grief. In life we cannot escape the process of bereavement but like in the forest there is always a light of hope. We gradually catch a glimpse of this light as we learn to live with our grief in new ways, with the support of those who love us, and a deepening of our humanity and personal spirituality in response to our grief.

