



Prairie Faith Parish Nurse News~~October 2022

Body

Mind

Spirit

On October 25, 1988, President Ronald Reagan designated the entire month of October 1988 as **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month**. On that day he said: *“When a child loses his parent, they are called an orphan. When a spouse loses her or his partner, they are called a widow or widower. When parents lose their child, there isn’t a word to describe them. This month recognizes the loss so many parents experience across the United States and around the world. It is also meant to inform and provide resources for parents who have lost children due to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, stillbirths, birth defects, SIDS, and other causes. Now, therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of October as **Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month**. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.”*



While a family’s grieving with this type of loss is never consolidated to just one month, recognizing October as **National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month** gives us a dedicated time to pause and remember those who have lost a child during pregnancy or infancy.

Pregnancy loss is the death of a baby who is not yet born, at any time during pregnancy, occurring in up to 1 in every 4 pregnancies--most happening during the first trimester. Some early pregnancy losses are from defects in genes or chromosomes but much of the time the reason is unknown and there was nothing anyone could have done to prevent it from happening.

- ♥ **Ectopic pregnancy**--when a fertilized egg grows outside of the fallopian tube
- ♥ **Miscarriage**--the spontaneous loss of a pregnancy before the 20th week of gestation
- ♥ **Stillbirth**--the death of a baby in the uterus after 20 weeks of gestation

Neonatal death by definition occurs within the baby’s first month after being born, while an **infant death** due to pre-term birth, low birth weight, pregnancy complications, injuries, sudden infant death syndrome, or other causes, occurs before the baby’s first birthday.

The loss of a baby at any time can be emotionally, spiritually, and physically difficult for the mother and other members of the family. Even at the earliest stages of pregnancy, women and their partners often feel a real connection to their baby, and will grieve for this baby and for the future they had imagined.

When a friend, family member, neighbor or co-worker has a pregnancy or infant loss, it can be hard to know the right words to comfort someone who is experiencing this type of grief, but many people say that *just having their loss acknowledged is helpful*. You might worry about saying the wrong thing, or you might feel that it would be better to say nothing at all. Everyone’s different, of course, and what one person has appreciated, another has found upsetting. That’s why it’s always important to **listen to the individuals involved and be guided by them**. Simply try... *“I’m sorry”, “What can I do to help”, “I’m very sorry that you have lost your baby”, “This must be really difficult for you.”, or even “I don’t know what to say”*.

Occasionally comments that are made with good intentions may upset someone. Often these are comments that try to explain or rationalize the loss, or put a positive spin on it. **Some examples of what not to say might be:** *“Don’t worry, you’re young. You can always have another baby”, “It wasn’t meant to be”, “It was probably for the best”, or “At least you have other children”*.

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And **if you can't find the words**, you might be able to support someone just by sitting and listening to them talk or giving them a hug. Sometimes actions rather than words are the best and simplest ways of providing comfort. If you can't see them face to face, phone calls, text messages, or a note through the mail can make a real difference, especially if they are feeling isolated. You might want to offer to do something practical to help, such as pick up shopping or take around a meal. You might think it's best to give people space and privacy, but this may leave them feeling isolated. If you're not sure, perhaps you could send a card or a brief text or email just to let them know you're thinking of them.

If you are pregnant or have a young child yourself, you may wonder whether you should visit. After a pregnancy or infant loss, some people will find the sight of pregnant women and babies upsetting, but that's not the case for everyone. Perhaps you could send a card or a text and check how they feel before visiting. If your adult child experiences such a loss, they may look to you especially for comfort. Your first concern will be for them and their partner, but you may also be experiencing a sense of loss for the grandchild you were looking forward to. And if you have experienced pregnancy or infant loss yourself, you may find those memories returning, adding to your sadness.

OCTOBER 15TH - WORLD PREGNANCY & INFANT LOSS REMEMBRANCE DAY

On October 15th, you are invited to participate in the International Wave of Light by lighting a candle at 7:00 p.m. local time to honor all babies gone too soon. Keep your candle lit for at least one hour to create a continuous "wave of light" across all time zones covering the entire globe!



Sources for this article and for readers to locate more information about the topic and available resources:

www.starlegacyfoundation.org www.unspokengrief.com www.nationalshare.org

www.chop.edu/resources/loss-resources

www.acog.org (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)



If you or a family member are hospitalized or have surgery, don't forget to call the pastor or church office—don't assume that they somehow know! (Hospitals don't notify pastors of admissions.) A hospital visit from the pastor can bring to your bedside healing prayers, comfort for an anxious heart, communion, & assurance of God's love & forgiveness.



Ever-present God,
you walk with us
through good times and bad,
mountain top and valley deep,
your footsteps our guide, hands our
support.

Ever-present God,
you are close to us
when life is smooth or rough,
in wholeness, and brokenness,
your healing our hope,
your touch our desire.

Ever-present God,
bring comfort and peace,
and the warmth of your presence,
and I shall fear no thing,
for you are with me, always.
Amen.



(Source: John Birch faithandworship.com)