



# **Coming Together as a Community in Grief**



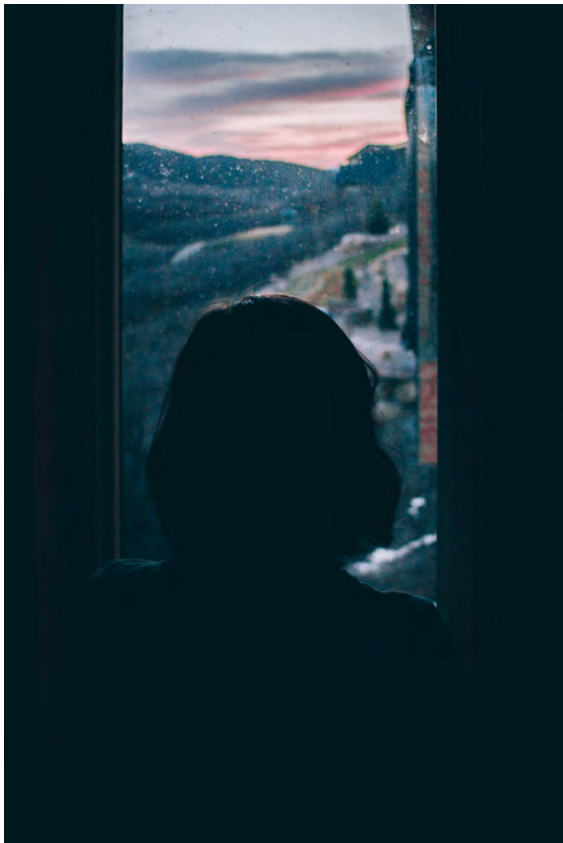
*Blessed are those who mourn, for they  
will be comforted.*

*Matthew 5:4*

# Grief and Loss

Grief and loss touch each one of us in our lives. God is near us in grief and he brings comfort, but the journey of walking through bereavement can still be incredibly difficult even if we know Jesus walks with us.

Colossians 1:17 says that 'in him all things hold together'. Somehow, even in times of deepest pain and loss, Jesus himself is in the midst of it. He holds all things, even our grief. For those who are grieving in our community, our prayer is that each person would know Jesus' comfort and presence in a deep and sustaining way. We also pray that collectively we would be the kind of church who walk faithfully beside those facing sadness, pain and loss, and that those bereaved amongst us would know they are not alone as, together, we 'mourn with those who mourn' (Romans 12:15)



We believe firmly in the hope of Jesus and contend for the miraculous breakthrough of God's kingdom here on earth, but we also acknowledge times of grief and sadness where we pour our pain and disappointment out at God's feet. If you are grieving, there is space for you in our church. You belong in the body of Christ even, or especially, when you feel that you have run out of hope and are full of pain.

We know it can be so difficult to engage with community in times of

loss, so as much as you can, please keep showing up on Sundays and to your small group. We understand there may be times when you need to be quieter and crave stillness, and times when you may long for the hustle and bustle of community.

Everyone's journey is unique. Within our church there will be so many different stories of the lives we live, and the people we love, including those we have lost.

## Our Journey of Grief and Loss

Although we recognise that there is a 'time to mourn', this is not a one time thing. Grieving is a process rather than an event and each process is unique. There is no formula. However, it can be helpful for us to recognise what can be common experiences. In grief, some people experience a movement between two places: leaning towards **loss** and learning towards **restoration**.

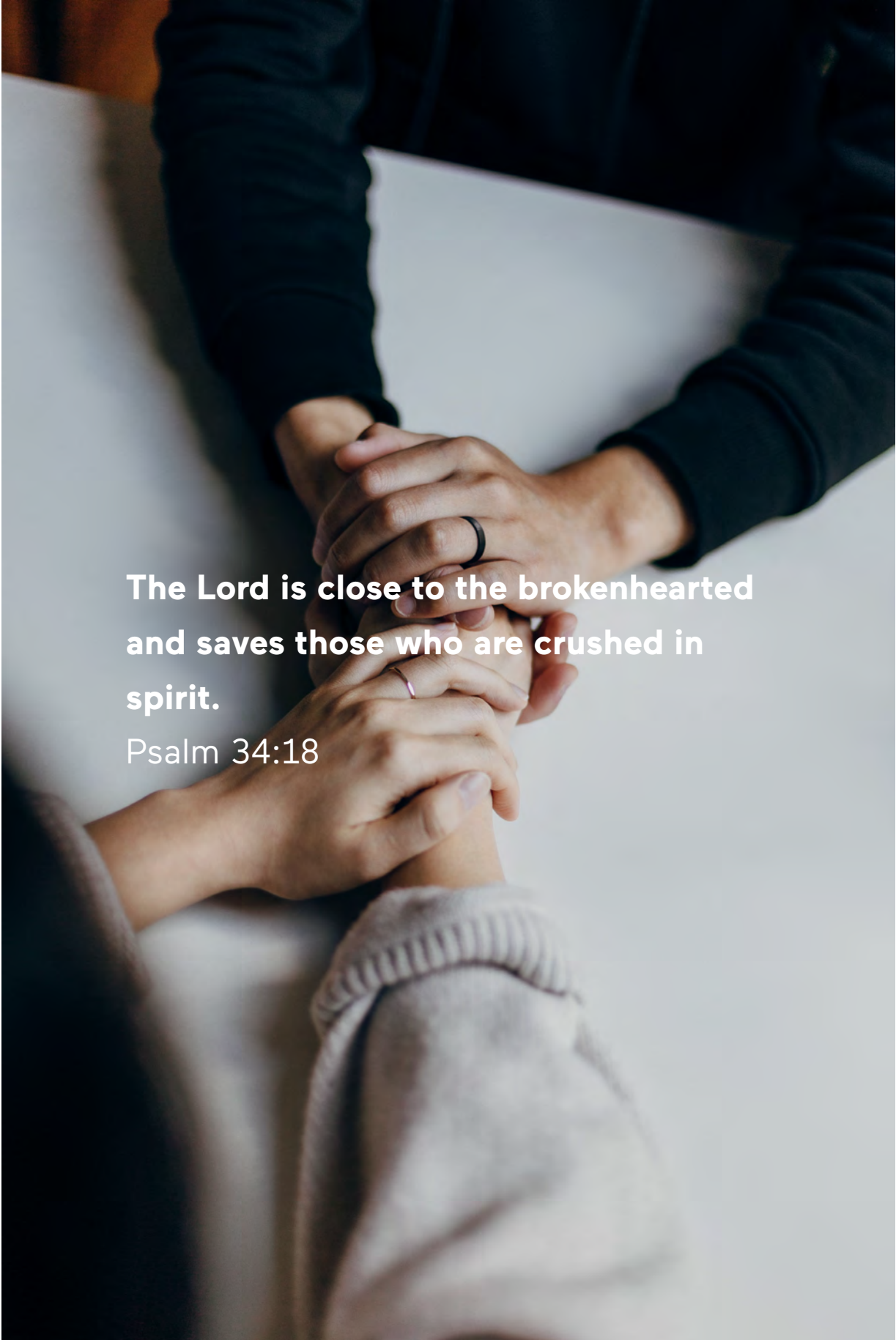
At one time, you may find yourself leaning towards '**Loss**' – as you think about some aspect of loss you are experiencing, remembering the person who has gone and connecting with feelings of sadness and pain.

At another time you find yourself leaning towards '**Restoration**' – as you focus on the other parts of life which are continuing, thinking of new changes which may need to be made or new skills that you are learning. And then you may find yourself again leaning into loss, and so on. Moving between these two places is normal and we need to be patient with ourselves and with one another in the process. There are times where you will be looking at your loss head on, and there are times where your focus will be on the rest of life.

The reality is that when we face a significant loss, we don't get 'back to normal'. Instead by God's grace, we slowly and painfully build a new normal. There will be hope again and God in his mercy will carry us through, but life will never be the same. Because the pains and losses of life do change us.

You may find yourself pulled back and forth between these seeming opposites (loss and restoration), sometimes even many times a day. You may be struggling to know what the 'right' way to grieve is. Some days you will feel the loss keenly, some days you will feel the need to be distracted from it. We want to acknowledge both loss and restoration, and pray that you will know that our loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit walks alongside with every step.

***"... that you will know  
that our loving God,  
Father, Son and Holy  
Spirit, walks alongside  
with every step."***

A close-up photograph of two people's hands clasped together in a supportive gesture. The person on top is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a black ring on their left ring finger. The person on the bottom is wearing a light-colored, ribbed sweater and a thin gold ring on their left ring finger. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

**The Lord is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in  
spirit.**

Psalm 34:18

# Reflections on Loss

We often speak so easily of the word 'loss' without fully reflecting on its depth and breadth. When we lose a loved one, that loss takes so many forms - and so our journey of loss and grief is often long and changing:

## Loss of a presence

The empty bed, the empty chair at the table, the gap on a team. This may seem the most immediate and obvious loss as we miss the physical presence of our loved one - but also over time where this is continually experienced sometimes in an unexpected moment.

## Loss of relationship

In losing a loved one, it is not only the relationship with our loved one that is lost, but their absence often changes our surrounding relationships too and this can be a very painful and unfolding loss sometimes impacting on our sense of identity.

## Loss of confidence

In losing a loved one, we may find ourselves having to do things we haven't done before which can impact our sense of confidence in ourselves. Death can also impact our confidence in the certainties we once had, even with our faith, and so we can find ourselves needing to rebuild, maybe engaging more with the question, "Why?"

## Loss of dreams

We all have plans for the future - dreams of how things will be and things we will do with those closest to us. In losing a loved one, these dreams are cut from us and this cut can be so painful, even as we connect with dreams we weren't fully aware of.

### **Loss of 'normal' life**

In a time of loss, we can lose sense of life being normal - for some of us every interaction, every person we meet, every part of our life is profoundly changed. There may be nothing and nowhere in their life which feels 'normal'.

### **Loss of opportunity to mend**

We all have regrets and, in losing a loved one, we will often reflect on things that have been said or left unsaid. There may no longer be the opportunity to heal fractures in a relationship and so we carry that loss.

***... And there will be other losses that are not named here ...***

In the coming days and months, you may find it helpful to reflect on some of your experience of loss in its different forms and to invite God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the God of comfort and healing to be present in the midst. You may also find it helpful to talk about some of your experience of loss with a trusted friend.



# Prayer

*God of all comfort, may your presence come near to me now.*

*Holy Spirit bring your peace, bring your grace, bring your hope.*

*Thank you that you are near to those who mourn, be near to me now.*

*Amen*

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

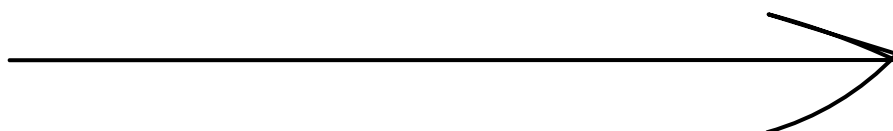
Psalm 34:18

As you sit in Jesus' presence, invite him to come close to the places where you feel brokenhearted. You may want to sit with your hands open in front of you as you welcome his presence. You might want to put your hands on your heart as you receive God's comfort.

## Breath Prayers

If we are facing loss, it can be helpful to have simple ways to go to Jesus when we are overwhelmed. Some may find it helpful to use breath prayers, where we pray a short prayer as we breathe slowly in and out. These prayers can be prayed in moments throughout our days and can be a way to engage with God when we don't feel we can sit to read our Bibles or pray for a long period of time.

Examples of breath prayers are below, you might want to choose one which feels helpful to you and pray it regularly in the days ahead, or find your own breath prayer in a Bible verse which is significant to you:



## Breathing Prayer

**Inhale:** Blessed are those who mourn

**Exhale:** For they will be comforted

**Inhale:** The Lord is near to me

**Exhale:** Even when I'm brokenhearted

**Inhale:** I will fear no evil

**Exhale:** For you are with me

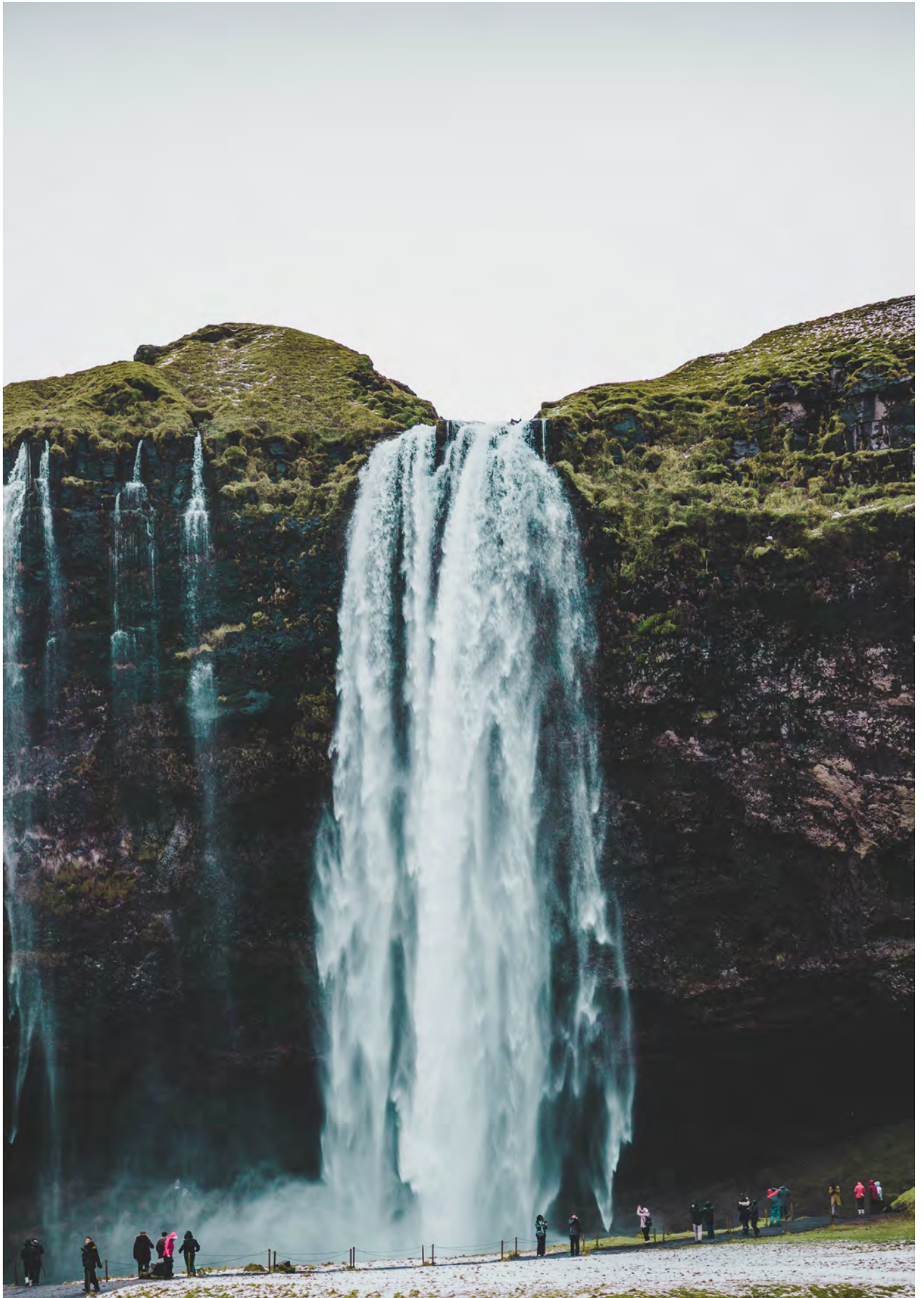
**Inhale:** You're the strength of my heart

**Exhale:** And my portion forever

**Inhale:** Help my troubled heart

**Exhale:** Even when I am afraid





# Waterfall

Bereavement has been described as an experience like going over a waterfall – plunging down into the whirlpool below, swept by the current of the water even though we desperately want to return to life in the river before we went over the edge. When we are in the whirlpool it can be completely overwhelming, with no sense that we will ever emerge, maybe feeling as if we don't even know if we'll be able to catch our next breath.

Coming out of this whirlpool at the bottom of the waterfall is a new river; a tidal river where the current changes. In time, somehow we begin to emerge from the whirlpool and find ourselves in the new river, able to see what life might look like for us in the days to come. In other times we are caught in the water current and find ourselves back in depths of the whirlpool again.

Psalm 42:7 says, 'deep calls out to deep in the roar of your waterfalls'.

Christians still experience the roar of the waterfalls of grief and loss. We are swept up in the overwhelming feelings of pain, loss, anger, hopelessness and fear when someone we love dearly has gone. Going over the edge of the waterfall can feel isolating. Somehow, God is in the midst of all of it, and wherever you find yourself today in the whirlpool, or on the new river, we pray that he will be near to you.

# Further Support

Within Trent our heart is that we can offer support and care to one another and this is primarily done through small groups, so if you are facing loss and need further support or prayer please get in touch with your small group leaders. We also offer prayer at our Sunday gatherings where we are always happy to pray for people for any needs they may have, physical, emotional or spiritual.

A number of organisations work with bereavement and have lots of excellent support and resources; below are some links which may be helpful but the list is not exhaustive.

## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

## **Nottinghamshire Hospice**

<https://www.nottshospice.org/our-care-services/bereavement-support/>

## **Let's Talk About Loss** (for those aged 18-35 who face loss)

<https://letstalkaboutloss.org>

## **WAY Widowed and Young**

<https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk>

## **The Good Grief Trust**

<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org>

## **At a Loss**

<http://ataloss.org/>

*Organisations which offer extra support for children/families who are bereaved:*

## **Winston's Wish**

[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

## **Child Bereavement UK**

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

## **The Laura Centre**, Derby – for parents who have lost children

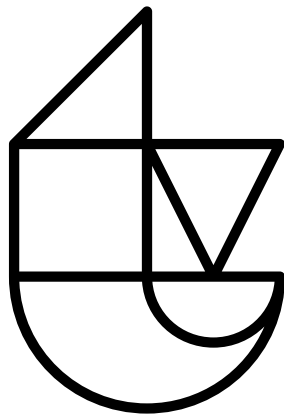
[www.thelauracentre.org.uk](http://www.thelauracentre.org.uk)

## **Children's Bereavement Centre**, Newark

<http://www.childrensbereavementcentre.co.uk>

## **Compassionate Friends**

[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)



**trentv.org**