

FELLOWSHIP FOR WIDOWS

Ideas for Getting Started



INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, Our Lady of Grace and the Archdiocese embarked on a journey to support widows in their grief journey. Women have gathered from over five states and two continents and, in these years, we have seen new Widows Fellowship Groups formed.

Starting a Widows Fellowship group can be as simple as turning on a coffee pot. We've included some of the creative ideas we've seen work in the hopes that you might gather fellow parishioners to offer on-going support throughout the year. If you can dream it, you can do it! Take the first step and be amazed at what unfolds.



GUIDELINES:

If you want your group to be a **widows fellowship group**, state that clearly in all your bulletin announcements. If a friend wants to join you who is not a widow, gently let her know that this group is intended for widow support and fellowship. Our experience is that women who are not widows (or not yet widows) do not fit well in a group intended for widows. We could tell you some funny stories, but trust us, hold the line and keep the group for widows.

Occasionally men ask why we don't have anything for widowers. We're not opposed. If men want to start a group expressly for widowers, there is plenty of space and ideas. However, we believe that mixing the groups to include widows and widowers changes the group dynamic so we have intentionally kept our fellowship groups as widows only. Women need other women who understand them. Women need fellowship where they can share freely. Women need women in their AMEN corner. There are plenty of grief support groups that are open to men and women. We are not that.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Keep scheduling consistent. A clear and consistent time to meet (as an example, Our Lady of Grace Widows Fellowship meets second Fridays after daily Mass every month)

Open to all widows. The door is open. If you are a widow, whether you worship with us or not, you are welcome.

Meet in public spaces. Our Lady of Grace meets in the Dining Room, a comfortable space for a newcomer to join. Meeting in private homes can be intimidating for a first time attendee. Want to start a coffee club? Pick a Starbucks or Caribou.

Hospitality. Offering coffee and water helps to break the ice and makes people more comfortable. Some groups add in something small like cookies or muffins around special occasions or holidays.

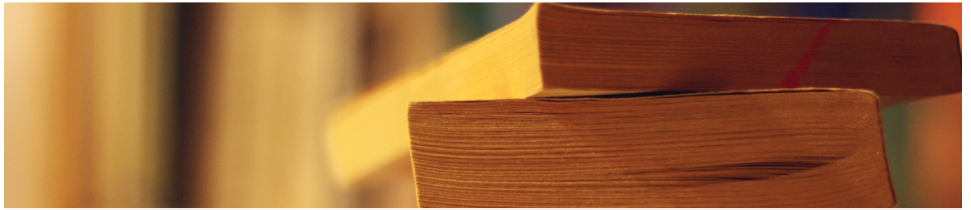
Nametags. Trust us, knowing each other's names helps, especially as you group gets started.

Stick with it. In the early months, groups can take a while to gel. Be faithful, show up. Give every group 6-8 months to see if there is a need and desire. It takes time to get the word out. Give your group the benefit of time to become something nurturing and sustaining.



COFFEE

Find a place to meet once a month for coffee, muffins, and fellowship. Perhaps meet after daily Mass at your local parish. As women of the parish become widows, the women who already attend the coffee can sign a card and invite those new widows to the coffee. The card can be sent out by the parish to welcome the new widows.



BOOK CLUB

Agree on a place to meet, select a book, and decide on the pace you would like to go as a group. Read a few chapters each month or an entire book. Book clubs can meet at coffee shops, community centers, or at the local library. Your book club can help to keep your mind sharp and help you to take a mental break from everyday stress.



PRAY THE ROSARY

Contact your church to schedule a spot to meet at a specific day and time to pray for your family or the priests of your parish. Either start your own widows rosary group or join an existing rosary prayer team to unite and grow in a group of shared faith!



LUNCH CLUB

Enjoy a regular meal together. Decide on a day and time to consistently meet each month. Each time you meet, choose a new restaurant to try, or return to the same place if it is a central location for the group. Lunch Club is a great way to nurture your mind and maintain your social connections, while making the most of a meal prepared just for you!



WALKING CLUB

Give your mental and emotional health a boost by committing to regular exercise! Schedule a consistent day to meet up with other widows and enjoy the sunshine on a beautiful outdoor walk, or find a local mall where you can walk before the stores open during inclement weather. Walking is an easy way to get to know others and has a positive impact on depression, anxiety, and your overall mood.



OUTINGS

Would you like to visit the Arboretum? How about the Chanhassen Dinner Theater or History Museum? If you think these events would be fun, it is likely another widow who lives close to you would enjoy them too. Either sign up with a community education program or gather your own group to carpool or meet up. Be sure to ask for group or senior discounts if they might apply.



MOVIE CLUB

Going to a movie alone can be difficult once you become a widow. Try connecting with other widows, perhaps at a coffee club meeting or after Mass, and ask who would be interested. Many theaters offer discounts on matinee showings for groups of a certain size, or discounted senior tickets, so be sure to ask. This can also be a fun outing to share with younger family members if they live nearby.



CARD CLUB

Meet monthly to play a specific card game – Bridge, 500, or Euchre for example. You could ask your parish office if there is space available to meet, or contact the local community center or library to schedule a room. Being part of a card club makes it easy to socialize while keeping your mind and hands busy!



KNITTING CLUB

Do you like to knit and want some company? Pick a comfortable spot to meet and invite fellow widows to join you. Prayer shawls are always needed for your parish community, or the local pregnancy center would love to receive a donation of baby hats. Knitting together for a common cause will be rewarding and enjoyable!



RESOURCES FOR OUR LADY OF GRACE WIDOWS

Widows Coffee

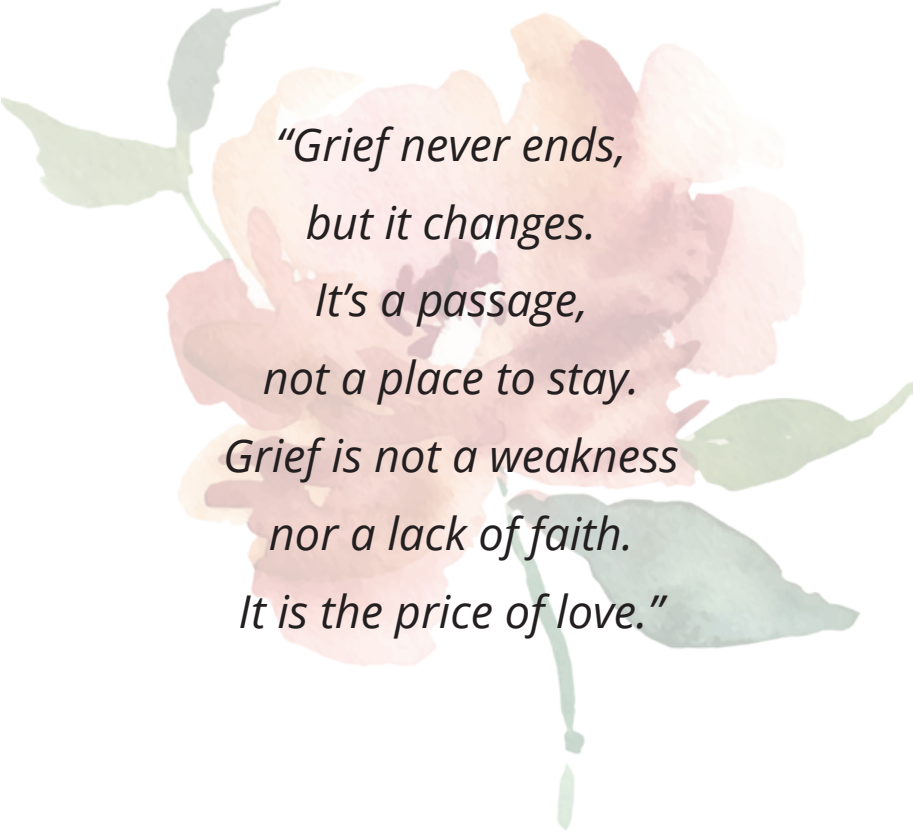
2nd Friday of each Month at 9:30 AM in the Dining Room
Feel free to join us for daily Mass at 9:00 AM beforehand!
Contact: Cheryl Broich (952-831-2656)

Parish Library

Contains book titles that widows might find helpful. Contact the Parish Office to reserve this room. It makes a great meeting space!

Widows Day of Reflection

Our annual Widows Day of Reflection is held on the 3rd Saturday in June. Join us at Our Lady of Grace, 5071 Eden Ave, Edina, MN 55436



*"Grief never ends,
but it changes.
It's a passage,
not a place to stay.
Grief is not a weakness
nor a lack of faith.
It is the price of love."*

OUR LADY  OF GRACE

CATHOLIC CHURCH
EDINA