

What Matters

It has become cliché to say that these are challenging times, mainly because they truly are. Each day brings another example of the effects of this pandemic. Even things typically as present and real as the seasons have come and gone without a great deal of notice. Spring was destroyed by waves of bad news. Summer was something of a blur. Fall is here but not really felt. This simply means that if our days, weeks and seasons are to have any significance, we must find within ourselves the energy and perspective to make it happen.

The holidays before us can be challenging under the best of circumstances, and it is certain that the pandemic will be with us throughout Thanksgiving and Christmas. As a result, what can we do to observe and truly celebrate this season? First, there is the wonderful gift of memory. Our memories are good friends that can enable us to have warm feelings and thoughts when the present is not so warm. While memories also include some sad times and events, somehow even those memories can bring meaning, especially when we view them through the lens of experience and greater perspective. A second thought is to reach out to others. During difficult times, there is the danger of withdrawing into oneself. In this age of technology, one of the positives is the variety of ways we can and do communicate. If making a phone call is too difficult, maybe a few lines of text can break through one's hesitation to reach out. While clicking "like" on a facebook posting may seem like the absolute least one can do, if it can turn into warm thoughts and eventual communication, it is a great start. Third, we can find and develop what I like to call a spiritual reality, which



is just another way of examining and nurturing our spiritual nature. Is it regular prayer, meditation, yoga, acts of charity, scriptural study, immersion in nature? What matters is to continually explore what our spiritual reality might be and pursue it. In these times more than ever, it is the effort to journey towards our spiritual nature that matters more than being or knowing what our ultimate destination will be.

As we move toward the holidays, let us journey through this season looking back for the value of the past and looking forward to each step on the road to a better future. Be safe and well.

- Jack Aupperle

About Jack Aupperle: John (Jack) Aupperle is a graduate of Bethany College and Drew University. He currently teaches at St. Vincent College in Latrobe. For ten years he served as The Senior Pastor at The Baldwin Community UMC in Whitehall. You can also find Jack giving book reviews across the Pittsburgh area. His life is made joyful by sharing in the thoughts and activities of his grandchildren. Jack is honored and privileged to be a part of the Slater grief ministry.

The Companion has a new look, but it is still the same message of hope & healing that the John F. Slater Funeral Home has been providing since its first edition 25 years ago. The newsletter is mailed to the primary AfterCare family member. To include additional family members interested in receiving our quarterly newsletter, please call or email our office at communityservice@johnfslater.com and provide the name and address of who you would like to receive the newsletter. Names stay on our mailing list for one year. If you would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please call.



Anniversaries • December / January / February

Elizabeth Frances Arnold	1/27/20	Grace A. Gildea	1/31/20	Carolyn M. Orban	2/24/20
Horst H. Bandle	1/16/20	Bruce Albert Goodale	12/8/19	Margaret L. Parker	2/27/20
Michael James Bayton	2/14/20	Mary E. Gugliuzza	2/27/20	George Joseph Paterni	2/25/20
Thomas Robert Birmingham	12/16/19	Joan Harrington	12/24/19	Scott William Patterson	1/13/20
Mary Kathleen Bondi	12/27/19	Lois M. Hiller	1/3/20	Nelda Perkins	1/1/20
David Alan Brandt	1/7/20	George Howard Hoffman	1/12/20	Eugene R. Perrotti	2/21/20
Margaret A. Brindle	12/5/19	Lawrence V. Holpp	2/12/20	Bradley David Peterson	12/27/19
Michael Brody	2/8/20	Dennis J. Homer	1/2/20	Rosemarie A. Pierce	1/1/20
Mary Louise Brophy	1/14/20	Elsie I. Homer	1/31/20	Paula Ann Poleski	2/26/20
Timothy M. Burke, Sr.	1/2/20	Kathleen Mavourne Horosko	12/5/19	Lyoubomir Popovitch	2/16/20
Dolorita M. Butkus, OSF	12/21/19	Marian B. Joseph	1/26/20	Raymond M. Radzanowski	1/12/20
Jarrett Michael Chero	1/10/20	Viola R. Julian	12/5/19	Margaret Lee Rainey	1/10/20
Danielle Pittson-Churilla	2/3/20	Harold J. Keener	1/8/20	Robert John Ratay	12/25/19
Raymond Joseph Coll	2/22/20	Rita Kleinhample	1/31/20	Francis Richard Recktenwald	1/19/20
Arthur Collins	12/15/19	William J. Koepl	12/17/19	Manuel Rhodes	12/14/19
John Richard Conway	1/29/20	Geraldine M. Komoroski	12/27/19	Caesar Louis Romanowski	12/7/19
Kathleen E. Cramp	12/23/19	Mara Kukulj	1/19/20	John David Ryan	12/28/19
Annabelle Marie Cullen	1/31/20	Thomas Michael Lehman	2/11/20	Dorothy E. Schachner	2/23/20
Thomas W. Cummings	2/26/20	Gayle Ann Liberto	2/25/20	Eugene M. Schopf	2/6/20
Carol Ann Daly	1/7/20	Sara Jane Loar	1/10/20	Alfred O. Schwarm	12/27/19
Valeria Elizabeth Deitzer	12/29/19	John Dennis Lynn	12/8/19	Mildred Magdaline Sehn	12/2/19
Jeremy David Dentel	2/16/20	James M. Madden, III	2/3/20	Kenneth F. Sites	12/24/19
Pearl J. Dilla	2/16/20	John A. Major	12/29/19	Joseph S. Spagnolo	1/28/20
Shirley M. Draft	12/13/19	Roberto Marinelli	12/26/19	Eric F. Spath II	12/1/19
Robert J. Dryer	1/20/20	Elmer K. Matto	1/10/20	Martha Stone Stanish	1/10/20
Margaret C. Eckert	1/1/20	George Albert Mazur, Jr.	12/27/19	Boris J. Stoicovy	1/8/20
Mary Lu Eiben	1/22/20	Ruth Ann McDonald	12/26/19	Joan Elaine Striegel	12/22/19
Felicia M. Emanuel	1/15/20	Patrice D. Michalski	1/23/20	Carole F. Sye	1/27/20
Susan Lynn Eperthener	12/8/19	Paul Miller	2/2/20	Alice C. Thomas	1/10/20
Constance M. Fahrner	1/6/20	Robert C. Minster	1/17/20	Donald W. Trimbur	1/27/20
Barbara Ann Fitzgerald	12/23/19	John P. Mion	2/26/20	Barbara Ann Whalen	2/5/20
David C. Fitzgerald	1/25/20	Jeanne H.T. Mirena	1/8/20	Teresa Willoughby	2/3/20
Mary Ellen Forcucci	2/26/20	George W. Mirena	1/11/20	Peter John Winovich, Sr.	2/19/20
Dorothy Doty Forman	12/23/20	Gladys "Jean" Morgan	2/8/20	Pamela J. Yeager	2/9/20
Eugene L. Franceschi	1/2/20	James Mroski	1/22/20	Ellis W. Young	12/21/19
Ernest John Frankenfield	1/16/20	Lillian Mutschler	2/23/20	Mark Robert Zabielski	1/31/20
Deonne Frey	1/3/20	Marilou E. Neff	12/23/19	Daniel Richard Zack	1/5/20
Maria Rosa Garofalo	2/13/20	Richard E. Niccoli	12/18/19		
Valerie L. Gilchrist	12/14/19	Helene S. O'Leary	1/23/20		

Love gives us memories. Faith gives us strength."





How grieving with gratitude saved me

By Kelly Buckley

I began my journey towards a grateful life sitting in the parking lot of a funeral home.

On the back of an envelope containing my cable bill, I scrawled random thoughts; the serene beauty of the lake, the divers, his friends, the cool rain that mingled with my tears as I stood on the shoreline, the 4th of July Fireworks that illuminated the night sky, as if heaven was welcoming my beautiful son home.

And so began what I call the most awake years of my life. My 23 year old son Stephen was dead, and I was shattered into a million pieces. I was groundless, looking desperately for the rug that had been pulled from beneath my normal life, only to find that someone had taken the damn floor too.

It seemed counter-intuitive to even think of thankfulness at the darkest moment of my life. But I knew this was to be my path. From that moment, I knew that this was a conversation that I needed to have with others about how we perceive and journey through grief and loss.

So I started to write. My younger son Brendan and I agreed that if we could find "one little thing" each day to be thankful for, we would get through this. Each day we would look for simple blessings and I would write about it. On particularly difficult days, I could not even completely inhale because of the physical ache in my chest from the pain of losing my beautiful boy.

As the days, weeks and months passed, our list of tiny blessings continued to grow, bringing flickers of light and hope along with it. We found we couldn't just limit it to one little thing any longer. Blessings were sprouting up all over the place. Butterflies, belly laughs with snorts included, fresh strawberries, naps, a letter from Stephen's friend, birds, chats with my son or a moment of normalcy with my husband.

It did not change the pain of the loss. But it did alleviate some of the suffering. I started to see that all these one-little-things were actually the big things that really gave meaning to my life. This path of gratitude was healing me, and tethering me to the present moment as I grieved. And in the present moment, I was okay.

I decided to invite others to the conversation, and through the power of social media, connected with thousands of people from all over the world on their own personal grief journey. Each person's grief was as individual as their fingerprint. Some grief was related to the death of someone dear; others suffered the ending of a relationship. I befriended people struggling against the grip of addiction, grieving the loss of their very sense of self. I have been humbled by their strength, and honored that they decided to walk with me for a while, looking for the simple blessings that they could tie together each day. Together, we've discovered that we can still be happy, even when things are less than perfect. We are having a new conversation about grief.

Six years later, I am often at a loss for words when people ask me how I feel about how much this has grown. I have released two books, and our Facebook group "Just One Little Thing" has over 120,000 members from over fifty countries speaking over forty languages. I like to call our members JOLT'ers, and I consider each and every one of them my family. They show up each day to give thanks, to talk about the good things happening in the world, and to share how they are making a difference in their neck of the woods.

It's a little petri dish of humanity, and it is beautiful. Nothing thrills me more than watching a man from Ireland encourage a mother from Ohio, or a woman from British Columbia realize that she is working through the same grief as a young man in Egypt.

There is a man from Chicago who has applied the concept of JOLT to his work at an addictions center. There is a teacher in Africa who shared the message of JOLT to the children in her dirt floor classroom. Even horses have become JOLT'ers, with Equine Therapists sharing the message in Pennsylvania.

This happened because I decided to listen to that quiet voice within, and allow the transformative power of grief to guide me. My purpose now is to tell others that not only can they be okay, but that they find hope and happiness after hardship.

I now look at each day as a gift. With each step I take and every ripple of hope that continues to circle the globe, I feel Stephen smiling. And that is one big thing.

Printed with permission. For more information visit her website, kellybuckley.com



Navigating the Holidays

Acknowledge

The holidays will be different this year. A loved one is not with you. You are grieving. Holding onto expectations that this holiday season will be the same may leave you feeling disappointed. Relax your idea of what “should” be so that you can make a realistic plan to do what is comfortable for you. If you are the one who always prepared a large meal and you’re feeling overwhelmed by the thought of cooking, you may have to pass this responsibility to another family member this year.

Choose

You have choices. Make a choice to do what is comfortable for you. If the idea of attending a big party makes you feel panicky or nervous, re-think it. It’s OK to want some alone time. Choose what traditions you would like to keep and what you might like to change. Choosing a remembrance of your loved one, whether through a toast or telling a story, is a lovely way to honor a memory and acknowledge their absence.

Communicate

Tell your friends and family how you feel, what you need, and what you want. They won’t know unless you tell them. Listen to what their thoughts are. You most likely have many of the same concerns as they do. There is usually more than one option and talking about your concerns will set the stage for compromise and planning. Communicate that being with everyone may make you emotional, you may cry and it’s OK if you do.

Energy

Be mindful of the energy both grieving and the holidays take. They are both hard work. Take care of yourself by being careful not to overbook yourself with activities. Make sure to get plenty of rest, drink lots of water and eat nutritious meals.

Plan

Creating a plan will reduce your anxiety. If Dad always carved the turkey, waiting until mealtime to see who will carve the turkey will create tension for everyone. Talking about it and planning prior to the day will make everyone feel more at ease.

Trust

You will make it through the holidays this year. Even with the differences, you will find the experience bittersweet. There will be some happiness. Look for it. Trust that while this holiday season will be tinged with many emotions. You will be able to join in with the celebration more fully in the future. You will experience joyful holidays again.

Janice McCarthy, MSW, LSW

The above article was reproduced with the permission from Janice L. McCarthy, MSW, LSW. Jan has done a series of videos on grief. You can find them at www.johnslater.com/events



Self-Care Minute:

Do you know you have a tool available at all times to calm and relax you? It’s your breath. We aren’t talking about your inhales and exhales that you do without thought. We mean breathing fully and intentionally. Get comfortable in your chair. Close your eyes or gaze down at the floor. Inhale through your nose. Feel the oxygen fill your lungs. Hold it for a few seconds and exhale. Repeat several times. Notice how you feel after you’ve taken the time to breathe with intention.





Time Out (or in)

HOLIDAY SIGHTS

Pittsburgh Zoo

Zoo Lights drive thru: November 27 – January 3

Drive through the Zoo at night while guided by a themed audio tour as thousands of environmentally friendly LED lights transform the park into an unforgettable winter wonderland.” Tickets must be purchased in advance on line. \$60 per vehicle/\$40 per member vehicle.

<https://www.pittsburghzoo.org/zoo-lights/>

Shadrack’s Christmas Wonderland

Big Butler Fairgrounds November 13 – January 3

“Immerse yourself in over 2 miles of custom-built light displays all dancing in perfect synchronization with the festive music playing on the radio in your car, including a 300’ drive-through RGB tunnel and 50’ RGB light tree! Plus, the show features giant, LED displays of the 12 Days of Christmas with a comical spin on the traditional song.

<https://shadrackchristmas.com/pittsburgh-pa>

Pittsburgh’s Creche

Pittsburgh’s Crèche is the world’s only authorized replica of the Vatican’s St. Peter’s Square nativity scene. It opens on Pittsburgh’s annual Light Up Night in November, and remains open through Epiphany in early January. The large-scale crèche is located on the outside courtyard of the U.S. Steel Tower in downtown Pittsburgh.. Since 1999, the crèche appears annually during the winter season. It is sponsored by the ecumenical Christian Leaders Fellowship.

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Pittsburgh CLO

Pittsburgh CLO “CLOse Ups”: Reoccurring Tuesdays at 3:00 pm

Join the CLO live on Facebook and YouTube pages for CLOse UPS. Jump on line and be a part of the fun while they give you behind the scenes look at all they do at CLO.

<https://www.pittsburghclo.org//about/close-ups>

Doors Open Pittsburgh

Doors Opens Pittsburgh Stories: A Virtual Storytelling Experience: Reoccurring Mondays November 2, 2020 through March 8, 2021.

“Join Doors Open Pittsburgh” as they tell the stories of Pittsburgh. They will explore our heritage, arts, music, culture, neighborhoods and people who make life a little more interesting living in Pittsburgh! Visit their website for the list of upcoming stories that will be told.

<https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/events-festivals/dop-stories-a-virtual-storytelling-experience/>

Grab a Cup of Coffee

Did you know that WalletHub (a personal finance website) named Pittsburgh one of the Best Coffee Cities in America based on the number of shops and cafes, affordability, and a few other things. Explore the great privately owned coffee shops in our area.

“Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree.
In the eyes of a child, they are all 30 feet tall.”

Larry Wild



John F. Slater Funeral Home AfterCare Services

Holiday Memorial Service Update

Due to the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19, we are saddened to announce that our traditional Memorial Service is canceled.

On Monday, December 21, between 4:30 - & 8:00 p.m., we will be lining the funeral home with luminaries in memory of your loved one.

Please see page 7 of our newsletter for more information on our Winter Solstice Memorial Event.



Grief during the Holidays: Video Blog

It's extremely challenging to think of celebrating the holidays when a loved one has died. The celebrations only seem to magnify grief. Bereavement Counselor, Janice McCarthy, MSW, LSW, has prepared a short video for our website addressing this topic. We encourage you to check out Jan's video on Grief during the Holidays along with her video series – The Task of Mourning.

Grief Websites

Although there are thousands of websites dedicated to grief, we have listed a few that have been recommended to us by families we have served.

www.grief.com

www.helloGrief.com

www.kellybuckley.com

www.ModernLoss.com

www.planB.org

www.WhatsYourGrief.com

Our Book Picks

Finding Meaning: the Six Stages of Grief

by David Kessler

This book is Kessler's response to finding meaning beyond the "stages of grief" into a more peaceful and hopeful experience.

Gratitude in Grief, and Just One Little Thing

by Kelly S. Buckley

We featured an article of Kelly's in our newsletter this month. Kelly's mission is to have a conversation about life, gratitude, compassion and resilience, in the hope of helping others navigate through both the hills and valleys of their own lives.

Please check our website for links and videos offering support:
johnfslater.com/news-events/blog/

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you."



We are sorry to announce that our traditional Memorial Service is canceled. It has been our honor in years past to gather annually with the families that we have served. This year, however, the safety of those families, and of our community at large, is our utmost concern.

Instead, this year we will offer an Event of Remembrance on the Winter Solstice, December 21st. The shortest day of the year, the Winter Solstice is the day when we face the long darkness and remember that each day ahead will see increasing light. For those who are grieving, the Winter Solstice can be a reminder that recovery follows loss just as light follows darkness.

Although we can't gather together, the funeral home will be lit with luminaries in memory of your loved ones. You are welcome to stop in our chapel to pay silent tribute and take a candle as a remembrance and as a symbol of light to come.

Winter Solstice Memorial Event

Monday, December 21, 2020

Open from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m.

The Chapel at John F. Slater Funeral Home

4201 Brownsville Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15227

If you have questions, please contact us at

412-881-4100



Funerals • Cremations • Life Celebrations



JOHN F. SLATER
FUNERAL HOME, INC.

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the Companion

The Companion is published quarterly through the efforts of John F. Slater Funeral Home, AfterCare Services. Our hope is that this newsletter will be meaningful and comforting to you.

Family and friends of those we have served also contribute to the newsletter. If you wish to contribute an article, poem, or saying that has touched you, please mail it to:

AfterCare Services
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email: aftercare@johnfslater.com



AfterCare Services provided by the John F. Slater Funeral Home include:

- Support Group Referrals
- Follow Up Calls
- Professional Referrals
- Newsletter
- Brochures & Pamphlets on a variety of topics
- Lending Library
- Annual Holiday Memorial Service

Support Services include:

- Funeral Pre-Planning
- Assistance with Benefits & Insurance Claims
- Community Service and Outreach

