



If You Care, You Prepare

A conversation with Rev. Dr. Philip Joseph Mayher,
Pastor and Teacher, The Congregational Church of Weston,
United Church of Christ.

1. What are your thoughts on health care planning?

I think it is one of the most important things we can do for each other- 'if you care, you prepare'. Talking with your family and loved ones is an act of real love, care and concern. Making your wishes known in a written plan is a great gift to your family. I remember when my mother passed at the age of 61 from emphysema, she had made decisions and prepared by putting everything in a binder, and had even transferred the property to us. It was the capstone of all her great gifts. It was a true act of love.

2. What possibilities can clergy and the church offer regarding health care planning and connecting people to care?

Clergy have the opportunity to offer pastoral care around planning and health care throughout a person's lifetime. I could see how a men's group and a women's groups could explore faith and care decisions, share experiences, and help each other in planning and preparation. As a church community, we are present throughout a person's life to help and sustain each other through challenges, and in particular be responsive to the changing needs of our seniors. We are also present to help families with the end of life journey, creating holy images to help transcend death and loss and offer compassion and support.

3. How can clergy be present with families after the loss of a loved one?

I do think the biggest spiritual and religious issue for a church is bereavement, and how we help a person handle the loss of a loved one. My job as clergy is to walk with the person on his or her journey and if needed, facilitate other support. Clergy can befriend a person's bereavement and talk with that person to acknowledge both the loss and the love.

Read more about The Congregational Church of Weston at www.congwestonucc.net/

Biography

Joe Mayher has a B.A. in English from Drew University and M.Div. and D.Min, degrees from Andover Newton Theological School. Two special awards include the first Rabbi Murray Rothman Award for contributions to Jewish-Christian understanding, granted by Andover Newton in 1995, and a national "Excellence in Teaching" Award from the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Joe has published many articles and co-authored Scripture and Imagination with William B. Abernathy.