

THE CARE COURIER

Holidays 2025, Vol 11 Issue 5

NOT A MERRY CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR!?

Snow dusted the windows at Cabin Coffee as the grief group gathered for their weekly meeting. Vivian set down a small tin. “Gingerbread with lemon glaze,” she said. Ted reached for a piece, and Margaret—our grief group leader—smiled. “Start with one. We only have so much sunshine.”

Glen arrived with a box of sufganiyot. “Hanukkah jelly doughnuts,” he said. “Grandma fried everything in oil all December!”

“Eight nights of calories,” Ted joked. “Good. I need insulation.”

Chairs shifted as everyone settled—Howard adjusting his prosthetic cuff, Sheila warming her hands around her cup, Donna holding herself tight, Jessica brushing an imaginary crumb from her sweater.

Margaret looked around the table and let the quiet soften. “You made it through another December day,” she said. “Let’s honor that.”

THE ORIGINAL LYRICS—THE HONEST TRUTH OF GRIEF

Margaret opened her notebook. “Tonight we’re looking at the original lyrics of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. They were so honest Judy Garland refused to sing them.”

“Can’t be worse than Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer,” Ted muttered.

“Oh, just wait,” Margaret said, and she read:

**“Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
It may be your last.”**

Donna’s breath caught. “That’s... too real. Like the last version of anything good already happened.”

“The first Christmas after the boys,” Jessica whispered, “everything felt like a ghost of what should have been.”

Margaret read the next line:

“Next year we may all be living in the past.”

“I’m already living in the past with Steve,” Sheila said softly. “That’s where he still is.”

Ted leaned back. “We make Christmas into a romance—Hallmark movies, cocoa in matching mugs, lights, tidy happy endings.”

“Don’t forget gingerbread houses and glitter,” Glen added. “I celebrate Hanukkah, but trust me, my family had just as many expectations!”

Vivian smiled faintly. “George and I once got so lost singing at the piano that we burnt an entire pot of fudge on Christmas Eve.”

Howard chuckled. “Even Blue-Ribbon Vivian burns things. Thank God.”

“But now,” she said, “all those perfect commercials make me feel like the only one whose story didn’t get the happy ending.”

WHAT HURTS MOST ABOUT “MERRY”

Jessica nodded. “Everyone wants the picture-perfect Christmas morning. But my boys should be here. And they’re not.”

Margaret continued reading:

**“Faithful friends who were dear to us
Will be near to us no more.”**

Howard swallowed. “That’s every holiday now. The chair Jan sat in is empty no matter who fills the room.”

“And honesty,” Margaret said gently, “is where healing begins.” She read:

**“From now on we’ll have to muddle through
somehow.”**



"That," Ted said, "is my entire holiday plan. Except the kids want to go to their mom's family for Christmas, and I don't know if I can do it."

THE REWRITTEN VERSION—THE ONE THE WORLD PREFERS

"Those darker lyrics were rewritten for Judy Garland," Margaret explained. "Frank Sinatra later asked Hugh Martin to 'jolly it up' again."

She read:

**"Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
Let your heart be light."**

Jessica wiped her cheeks. "My heart feels like lead"

"From now on, our troubles will be out of sight."

Donna shook her head. "My troubles are in the cart with me at Hy-Vee. No more making Christmas cookies with my little boy."

Vivian wrapped an arm around her.

GLEN TELLS THE STORY OF HANUKKAH

Glen leaned forward. "People love dreidels and decorations, but the real Hanukkah story is courage and loss. The Jewish people reclaimed the Temple, found one day's oil, and watched it burn for eight nights. God provided."

"That's us," Jessica whispered. "Running on one day's emotional oil."

"Then here," Ted added softly, "Lord, give me oil in my lamp."

Glen handed him a jelly doughnut. "Eat. Miracle fuel."

"IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE"—AND THE MEANING WE DON'T ALWAYS SEE

Jessica spoke quietly. "Larry and I always watch *It's a Wonderful Life*. George Bailey didn't know he mattered. I wonder sometimes what meaning Martin and Brett made. They never breathed outside my body... but they changed me."



"It takes time," Margaret said. "David Kessler teaches that meaning is how love continues."

THE INCARNATION—LOVE MADE FLESH

Margaret folded her hands. "Christmas is about the Incarnation—love entering the world in vulnerability (Luke 2). Not in perfection. In a stable."

She looked around the table. "Your loved ones incarnated love in your life. Love took on flesh in them."

"Robby gave me wonder," Donna said.

"Jan gave me comfort after I came home from war," Howard said. "No leg. Nightmares. She held me through all of it."

"Erika incarnated truth," Glen said.

"Tina gave me courage—and stubbornness," Ted added with a smile.

"George was steadiness and joy," Vivian said. "Love came down at Christmas. Love doesn't fade."

VALUES NEVER DIE

"Traditions change," Margaret said softly. "Values don't."

Howard exhaled. "I just miss the old days. My parents. My grandparents. The old country foods."

Vivian nodded. "Those were special years. But their values remain." She touched his arm. "Howard, please join us Christmas Eve. I still make my great-grandmother's Swedish dishes—Janssons frestelse, julsinka, köttbullar, and risgrynsgröt with the almond."

Howard's eyes shone. "Vivian—this is the best Christmas gift." He said patting her hand still on his arm. She placed her other hand on his.

Across the table, Ted and Glen exchanged a wink.

"Maybe there *is* a Santa Claus," Donna whispered.

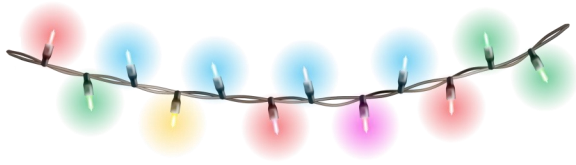
"He came early," Jessica murmured with a grin.

THE GROUP CONTINUES IN LOVE AND LIGHT

Candles. Gingerbread. Jelly doughnuts. Laughter and tears. Stories of Hanukkah gifts and midnight Mass. Snow, lights, pageants, cookies, movies, memories—both cherished and painful.

In that small room, love took on flesh again.

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INSPIRATIONS:

“Blessed are the cracked places. That’s where the light gets in.” — Leonard Cohen

“There are stars whose light reaches the earth long after they have fallen. So too, there are people whose love lives on long after they are gone.” — Jewish Teaching

“You don’t heal by forgetting. You heal by remembering with tenderness.” — David Kessler

“Some of the greatest gifts are invisible—peace, comfort, courage, hope.” — Unknown

KEEP IT LIGHT!

Knock, knock.

Who’s there?

Snow.

Snow who?

Snow use hiding — I can see you behind the tree!

Knock, knock.

Who’s there?

Holly.

Holly who?

Holly-day greetings to you!

Knock, knock.

Who’s there?

Icy.

Icy who?

Icy you peeking at your presents early!

YOU’RE NOT CRAZY — YOU’RE GRIEVING – 2026 GRIEF GROUPS

Grief can feel overwhelming, confusing, or even disorienting — but you’re not losing your mind. **You’re grieving.**

Our groups help you heal the **painful thoughts and emotional wounds** that create *suffering-grief*, and guide you toward *loving-grief* — the kind that honors your loved one and helps you live again.

Begins January 15 is an **Introduction Session**. Come, listen, and see if this group feels right for you. No pressure.

Here you’ll find:

- The Truth and Knowledge to Survive
- Compassion
 - ♦ Understanding
 - ♦ Confidential support
 - ♦ Wisdom and grace
 - ♦ Skilled grief educators
 - ♦ A circle of caring companions

We use **Understanding Your Grief** by Dr. Alan Wolfelt (*a gift for you*)

Led by:

VickiJolene Lindley – Certified Grief Educator, Ordained minister.

Deb Gingrich, RN – Former Director of Nursing, ICU, ER, Cedar Valley Hospitals,

Both are widows and bring 40+ years professional experience.

Meeting Thursdays

Except when schools close for weather

Daytime: 12:45–2:30 p.m. — Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball Ave., Waterloo

Evenings: 5:00–6:30 p.m. — Locke at Tower Park, 4140 Kimball Ave., Waterloo

Let us help you heal your grief and end your suffering, so you can live again.

A Community Gift from Locke Funeral Services

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JOIN US every week!

2026 Continuous Care Support



Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00—2:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball,
Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Locke at Tower Park,
4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Suicide Grief Support Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Locke at Tower Park,
4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Biweekly Wednesday Dates:

January	7, 21
February	4, 18
March	4, 18

Thursday Dates:

January	15, 22, 29
February	5, 12, 19, 26
March	5, 12, 19, 26

*Please feel free to bring a friend. All groups are **free** & open to the public!*
Call with questions 319-233-6138.

WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.

Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, to join our quarterly newsletter list.