

Being Mortal: Honoring Choices & Leaving a Legacy

Mayflower United Church of Christ, 2015

Being Mortal Series: Resources and Ideas

In January 2015, Mayflower United Church of Christ offered an educational series about issues many families need to consider as we age and plan for what happens when we die. If you missed the class or would like more info, we've prepared some resources to help you and your loved ones plan for dying, death, funerals, and leaving legacies. Stop by or contact the church office to request a booklet produced by the UCC entitled "Before You Die: Reflections and Resources," written by the Stillspeaking Writers' Group and two brochures: "Mayflower Church Legacy Giving: How to provide for an end-of-life gift to Mayflower" and "Mayflower Columbarium and Memorial Garden." Mayflower's ministers or the other contacts listed with the class sessions are always available to talk with you.

Session #1: Honoring Choices: Medical decisions when serious sickness or injury strikes

Presenters: Susan Lampe, parish nurse, at 612-201-1527 or sslampe68@gmail.com and Rev. Diana Robertson, hospital chaplain, at 952-913-1779 or dianarob2@gmail.com.

- 1) **An Advance Care Directive** is the plan in which you document your treatment choices for your future health care. If there comes a time when you are so ill that you are unable to speak for yourself, the advance care directive will assist your family and your health care providers to know your wishes. You complete a form called Honoring Choices (<http://www.honoringchoices.org/resources/>) with assistance from your health care provider or assistance at Mayflower from Susan Lampe, R.N., or Rev. Diana Robertson or Rev. Dick Sellers.
- 2) The other decision you want to make before an emergency strikes is to name a **Health Care Agent**. The person you choose should be someone: you can trust; who is willing to accept the responsibility; who will follow your wishes even if they don't agree with them; and who can handle making difficult decisions under stress. This person represents you to the health care team and works with them to follow your wishes described in the advance care directive as closely as possible. This is a legal document. It is important to discuss your ideas for your Advance Care Directive with your Health Care Agent to be sure they understand your intent. Once these two forms are complete, it is important that you share them with your health care provider and all your family members. Keep the documents where they can be accessed easily (not in the safety deposit box). Both these documents can be changed at any time.

Session #2: Honoring Choices: What should I do with my body?

Make your wishes known to your family.

- 1) **Be an organ, tissue, and eye donor.** Organ donation saves lives. One person can save and heal the lives of up to 60 people through the gifts of organ, tissue and eye donation. Every day in the U.S., 123,000 people are waiting for an organ and 18 people will die waiting.

Aside from the life-saving reality of donation is the healing that comes to families of those who donate. When someone loses a child or parent or spouse, nothing will take away the agony of that loss. But organ donation can be a glimmer of hope, and the act of giving life-saving gifts to others is healing. Donor families repeatedly say that one of the things that got them through the hell of their grief was the hope that they were able to give others. Pope John Paul II was onto something profound when he said that organ donation allows us “to project beyond our deaths our vocation to love.” It is easy to designate yourself as an organ, tissue, and eye donor through the DMV or at www.lifesourcedonorregistry.org/donate.aspx.

- 2) Consider **donating your full body for medical education and research** through the University of Minnesota Anatomy Bequest program. Some people feel a strong call to offer their whole body in the service of medical science and this donation makes a powerful statement about seeing the body not as a machine but a gift. One can still donate his or her organs and have a viewing and funeral as long as arrangements are made in advance with the Bequest program. Usually bodies are kept for about 18 months and then cremated. The cremated remains are either returned to the family or interred in a common plot in Lakeview Cemetery. More information available at <http://www.bequest.umn.edu>.
- 3) **Go Green with your funeral and burial.** There are many variations on the spectrum.
 - **Home Funeral Movement** helps families bring the body of their loved one home where, in imitation of our ancestors, the body is washed, dressed, and viewed before burial or cremation. In Minnesota as long as it is kept cool with dry ice, an un-embalmed body might be kept in a home or religious space for up to four days before burial. More info: <http://homefuneralalliance.org> and <https://mnthresholdnetwork.wordpress.com>
 - Others are finding ways to **simplify traditional funerals** by utilizing handmade wood caskets such as those crafted by the Trappist monks of New Melleray Abbey in Iowa. More info: <http://www.trappistcaskets.com>
 - The **Green Burial Movement** promotes eco-friendly burial. Bodies are buried in a simple shroud or a biodegradable container. According to the Consumers' Funeral Alliance of Minnesota (<http://www.fcaofmn.org/green-burial.html>), there are three "Green" Cemeteries in Minnesota:
 - Mound Cemetery in Brooklyn Center near Minneapolis is a hybrid green cemetery certified by the Green Burial Council (GBC). "Hybrid" means the cemetery allows burial without casket and vault anywhere on their grounds. (http://www.moundcemetery.com/Mound_certified.pdf)
 - Oak Hill Cemetery is a hybrid burial ground located in Minneapolis at 5901 Lyndale Ave. So. NOTE: No website. For more information, call 612-869-6404.
 - Prairie Oaks Memorial Eco Gardens in Inver Grove Heights is Minnesota's first exclusively natural burial grounds. Prairie Oaks is a land restoration project that will provide habitat for wildlife and a more diverse ecosystem. (<http://www.natwincities.com/Twin-Cities/February-2014/Prairie-Oaks-Memorial-Eco-Gardens-Offers-Green-Burials/>)

Session #3: Honoring Choices and Leaving a Legacy: What would I like at my funeral?

Presenter Rev. Sarah Campbell, 612-824-0762 ext 112 or scampbell@mayflowermpls.org

1. Keep a file with your preferences (though make it clear that these are preferences if possible) for your funeral. Make your wishes known to your family:
 - scripture or favorite bible stories
 - favorite poems or other quotations
 - favorite music and hymns. (Don't forget the white hymnal.)
 - where you would like memorial gifts given
 - anything you would like to include in the obituary
2. Keep a file with your Proverbs, sometimes called an Ethical Will. This is your wisdom about how to live that you wish to pass along to your progeny, nieces and nephews. In your file: what has been most important in my life? What would I like to see endure? What do I most highly value in life? What is the purpose of life? What family traditions would I like to see endure, if possible? Even, what would I like to ask for forgiveness? Perhaps write it as a letter or make a voice recording.

Session #4: Leaving a Legacy: Do I Need a Will and Where Do I Even Start? What are my options for including Mayflower Foundation and Church in my will/estate plan?

Presenters: Catherine Shreves, JD and CFP; Mayflower Foundation representatives

Topics covered:

- Why have an estate plan
- Typical estate planning documents
- Estate tax issues
- Income tax issues
- MN requirements for a valid will
- How to leave a legacy gift to Mayflower Church

(numerous materials are available for download related to this session)

