

## Checklist for Ministering to Victims of Homicide

*Background to these points is given in Chapter 6 of Across the Chasm.*

### At first

1. If you are even thinking about visiting, do so. Go and make contact, perhaps with a card from all local churches.
2. Always remember, we are not simply doing a job (e.g. are contracted to take a funeral); but are trying to be God's representatives in our communities.

### With the Victim's family and friends

3. **Listen and hear.**
4. Always remember, you will not fully understand extreme suffering; but it is possible to stay there with those who have (but see 14 below).
5. Always remember victims are victims: the victim's life style may increase their chance of being violently attacked; but their death is due to the actions of another.
6. Meeting physical needs is a great way of ministering!
7. Only put forward your own thoughts etc when asked specifically.
8. If asked, gently encourage the family to see the dead person (& remember that to the family she or he is a real person with a name – they are not just a body!)
9. Avoid Platitudes and easy answers (You will cope, everything has a reason, all for the best, he's in a better place, have faith...)
10. Be concrete in what you offer; and if you say you will do something, DO IT!
11. Be real!

### For Yourself

12. *Be safe!* - follow appropriate safety procedures.
13. Do you need to 'off-load' in other areas in order to concentrate on the homicide?
14. Ensure YOU have someone to talk to; connecting with those in trauma is demanding.
15. If you can't cope, pass the ministry to someone who can (**there is no shame in this**).

### With Others

16. Be clear if you are ministering to family, to social groups (e.g. work colleagues), or to the community /church people.
17. Are there particular people within the Church Community who have connections with the Victim? If so, support them in what they can constructively do.
18. Don't forget that work colleagues, friends etc of the victim will be affected as well. They might want a Memorial Service. In general, ensure the family are happy with this.
19. Establish clear boundaries between any ministry to offender(s) and victims. **Don't even consider trying to minister to both.**

## Pre-funeral

20. Prayers at the scene of death can be very helpful for the family.
21. Prayers at the scene of death may be helpful for the community too.
22. Treat the dead body *and where it has been* with reverence.
23. Be aware that 'shrines' i.e. flowers, a candle, perhaps a photo, etc., in a place associated with the person, often help.
24. If there are young children, is there anything you can do for them?

## Funeral

25. If there is a delay before the funeral, consider holding a memorial service.
26. Assuming the family so desire, encourage the funeral service to also be a memorial service; let it be a positive remembering of the dead person's whole life.
27. If you are leading the funeral, contact your denomination's or Diocese's Media/Communications advisor.
28. Could you charge no fee for the funeral?

## Post-funeral

29. Above all, keep in touch. You can help in ways others can't.
30. There is likely to be profound anger at God. Do not mention forgiveness, but be prepared for the area to be brought up.
31. After most deaths, those grieving can move on; space (rather than time) often brings healing. That is much more difficult after a violent death. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) can occur many years later.
32. There is other help available for victims; In particular there are:
  - a. peer organisations where they can talk with others who've experienced the death through homicide of someone close to them;
  - b. organisations who offer counselling;
  - c. Annual Services of Remembrance around England.
33. Offer to help with official organisations.
34. If possible, minister for as long as you can. Trials, appeals, perhaps release from prison, all cause great stress. Any ministry is likely to be very highly valued.
35. When you leave a church, make sure your successor knows of those you have helped.