

The Memory Box

Children and grief.

At our recent Blue Christmas Service one speaker wanted to address the feelings of grief and loss experienced by children. Whether it be a pet cat or a favorite grandparent, the question is always about what others can do to help the kids work through their pain.

Their questions often come out concerning basic needs. Who's going to take care of Ronnie? Will Allison be lonely?

I know of one family who witnessed their favorite farm dog attacking a new pet cat. The children, who were not from a church-attending family, knew there had to be a funeral for their little friend – a not just any funeral! Grandma and the kids had to dress up, with hats and gloves if you please. The kitten was placed in a tea-towel lined shoe box, and they all went out to the farm's pet-cemetery in the trees. Each found a few words to say. Rituals are important. And it was also important to find a way to forgive old Ruff!

At the Blue Christmas service the speaker brought out a box. This box was to be used as a Memory Box.

What were some things they remembered about Grandpa? He took them on fishing trips. He read stories to them. He liked his big cup of coffee. With each memory, they thought of something they could put in the box that would help them remember – a battered lure, a pair of eye glasses, a story book, a coffee cup. The kids even got excited about how they were going to decorate the box. Enthusiasm about the project grew.

Each time they felt the need to be near Grandpa they could go to the box and chose something special that would help them give voice to their feelings.

Stories connected with these memories brought warmth and comfort.

(Written by Joyce Sasse)