



S.

Christ Church Clevedon

The Rev Canon Yvonne Richmond Tulloch was Canon for Mission at Coventry Cathedral when she was widowed suddenly in 2008, causing her "life to go into freefall".

Her experience of grief led to her passion for helping other bereaved people find support. She established the charity [AtaLoss](#), which offers a bereavement signposting website, and went on to help run *The Bereavement Journey* – a course which helps equip those grieving to come terms with loss.

According to Rev Tulloch, we don't get over grief, we learn how to live with it – but people need to be helped in this.

"Grief can affect every aspect of a person's life – not just emotional well-being, but physical and mental health," she explained.

"Bereavement is one of the most stressful times in life, but for many people, it's devastating.

"Those grieving are so often left feeling isolated, floundering, and confused.

"People don't know what to say to bereaved people, so they steer clear of them – or they assume when they see them that they're coping well, when they've just managed to pull themselves together or are still feeling numb in the early stages."

For anyone bereaved during Covid restrictions, all the usual problems were exacerbated.

This was the case for Ounissa Benali, whose mother died during the pandemic.

"When my mum went into hospital, it was a nightmare: I couldn't see her or visit her – I went from being with her 24-7 during lockdown to not being able to see her at all and having to isolate," she explained.

"When my mum passed away, I really struggled. I was crying all the time, it was so difficult. I didn't know where to turn or what to do.

"My life stopped. I felt like an alien everywhere, and like nothing mattered.

"It had a terrible effect on my health. I had to stop working for about three months.

"I was praying to find something that could help me. I did not know yet that *The Bereavement Journey* course was something that was even available."

She first heard about the course - a series of films and facilitated discussion groups - after hearing about it through a friend at church.

"It came at a time when I was feeling guilt that I was somehow not a good enough Christian – otherwise my prayers would have been answered, and my mum would have been healed," she said.

"At the first meeting, I was still in so much pain, but I started to understand what loss is, and the weight of the grief that I was carrying.

"The course films were so good; I recognised myself in almost everything."

The course concludes with an optional seventh session offering a Christian perspective on commonly asked faith questions.

"The last session on faith was amazing. It took away my guilt and gave me hope," she added.

"Sharing faith questions with other people, I realised I was not the only one wondering about these things, like why God heals some, but not others."

She reflected: "For the first time in my life, I really started to feel God's love – I knew it intellectually before, but I didn't feel it.

"The Bereavement Journey was one of the best things I have done in my life, it brought me so much peace – although the pain was still there, I now had something I could fall back on. I was reminded that even Jesus wept.

"During such a horrible time in my life, it brought me closer to God."

More information

- The Bereavement Journey was developed over 20 years ago and has proven effective in helping people process grief whenever or however the person died.
- Currently over 180 courses are being run by churches across the country.
- When advertised to the public, a large percentage of guests attend from outside church, with over 90% choosing to attend the optional session on faith.

[Learn more.](#)

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/stories-and-features/my-life-stopped-why-bereavement-ministry-vital>