

A reflection for Baby Loss Awareness Week



Hi I'm Mel Beynon, curate in the Halas Team of churches in Halesowen, Hunnington and Romsley. October the 9th to the 15th each year, is **Baby Loss Awareness Week**, and that's what I'm here to talk to you about.

Any loss of a loved one is a very difficult thing to face.

The loss of a baby is particularly hard, because we all feel strongly in our deepest being that it just shouldn't happen. Having a baby should be a joyful, wondrous moment. And for most people, in the UK at least, it is.

In my previous career I spent 20 years as a midwife, and some of that as a bereavement midwife.

I've had the pleasure of seeing many healthy live births, and witnessed the relief and the joy and the love - that instant connection.

Yet I've also cared for mothers who get so close to the time of birth, only to find that their precious little one's heart has stopped beating for no apparent reason.

I've had the great honour and privilege of staying with parents through hours of labour, when the outcome we all knew would be a baby born sleeping.

And I've sat with parents when a little one is born alive, but doesn't stay long.

Why do I call it an honour and a privilege? Because I could in some small way be helpful, and also because it felt like holy ground. The Holy Spirit literally seemed to 'hover over' at these moments like at the creation itself.

Do you know what always amazed and humbled me the most when caring for bereaved parents? Often one of the first things they ask, even in the midst of their own deep suffering, is how can they help others in the same situation.

One year on Christmas Eve, a couple turned up at the maternity unit with toiletry packs for bereaved parents. They were beautifully done, in lovely handmade bags. When they had come, a year ago, worried about their baby's movements, only to discover that their baby had died, they'd been away from home, and had nothing with them - no toothbrush, no shampoo, nothing. They wanted to help other parents in the same situation in whatever way they could. So they were spending their Christmas going round all the hospitals, delivering these gifts of his and hers toiletries.

The babies who die are of course no less beautiful and precious than those born alive and well. It was a profound experience to care for them, help their parents to wash and dress them, to take photos and hand and foot prints. And when I carefully wrapped them, with their teddy bears & keepsakes to go on their final journey, we were held by the God who in Christ knew pain and sorrow.

In this Baby Loss Awareness Week, please hold in your prayers all those parents who don't get to take their baby home. And all the staff who compassionately care for them.

And if you want to help, consider giving to a charity such as SANDS or Aching Arms. But most of all, if you know anyone who has suffered the loss of a baby, let them know that you care, and that you'll listen.

On 15th October at 7pm you can join the wave of light, by lighting a candle in your window for one hour, in remembrance of all the babies who have died too soon.

Parents who have suffered such a loss always live with the 'what if?' The potential never realised. Missing this little person with whom they're so intimately connected yet never had the chance to get to know.

For many this week of remembering is an opportunity to openly talk about their babies, to name their loss. It brings this difficult subject out into the open, and lets it breathe.

Oh God, our fierce refuge
Hear our lament
Be alive to us
as our hearts are shaken with sorrow
The joy of welcoming our child into the world
has turned into mourning
and our arms are empty
Reckon with us God
For life so full of promise has been taken,
and we do not understand
Contain us in our sadness,
Meet us in our anger
And bear the questions
which have no answers

- <https://babyloss-awareness.org>
- <https://www.sands.org.uk/>
- <https://www.achingarms.co.uk/>

