

Death Café Report - August 10, 2013 Flagstaff, Arizona

From the evaluations: "3 words that describe my experience"

"Being with Community" ~ Moving, Respectful, Awesome, Bitter-Sweet, Helpful, Caring, Inspiring, Beautiful, Safe, Joyful, Validating, Open, Exhilarating, Educational, Intimate, Touching, Fun, and Rich!

The Café: It was a beautiful summer day at downtown Flagstaff's Federated Church. We had two meeting rooms today (a large space for full group sharing, and more intimate space for repeat patrons). Menu included snacks, cake, scones, coffee and tea.

The Wait Staff: Facilitators included Meg Leander, Angela Krupica and Aleia O'Reilly (that's me). Robert McCarter (that's my husband) was our tech support guy.

The Patrons: We welcomed 27 people to our Death Café (eight were repeat patrons). Ages ranged from 19 to 74. Alexis's 20th birthday was August 11th, so the entire gang sang "Happy Birthday" to her at the end of our time together. The refreshments included homemade scones and a gf chocolate fudge cake that doubled as birthday cake!



Why they came:

- To be a part of a solution
- To share and learn
- For the experience of openness
- To do my best to live fully and die with dignity. I feel it's something that needs to be (partially) done in community
- To listen, feel and reflect with others
- Thought-provoking opportunity
- Seeking resources to help me prepare for death
- To further my comfort about death/dying
- To meet others who want to live life fully

What insights they gained:

- People think about death more than they would like you to think they do!
- Feels safer to talk about the fear in a group
- We need each other to open and learn about life and death; the sharing of both facets so powerful!
- So many insights from just listening to others
- We have many common concerns, desires and goals about life and death
- Was reminded of lessons learned, but easily forgotten
- There is a universality of feelings and struggles
- You can discuss death without promoting specific beliefs or points of view
- Gets you thinking and talking about the inevitable
- A personal insight that bodies may die, but souls live on

An intimate bite for repeat visitors included meaningful conversations about:

- The universal fear of death; how western materialism supports holding on at any cost; a spiritual part of us has a knowing that can help us to let go; the irony that western religion offers little comfort to the fear
- Did I "do enough" when I cared for my loved one at the end of life; the shared feelings of guilt/remorse; the hope for grace and healing that comes with time; the collective energetic 'field' of guilt that is difficult to override
- Issues around euthanasia and the right to die; does comfort medication hasten?; when does life 'end'?; the irony of suicide being 'illegal' in our culture; the difficult decision-making a POA faces; death vs. suffering