On Death and Cake.

Report on the Pilot in the Diocese of Lichfield of the GraveTalk Project, October 2013 - March 2014

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DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD
GOING FOR GROWTH

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Executive Summary

The Diocese of Lichfield GraveTalk Project was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council to conduct and evaluate a pilot "Café space to talk about death, dying and funerals" for Anglican parishioners. The overall vision was to assist in the development of 'death confident congregations'; the strategy was to stage café style events in which conversation about these difficult questions was facilitated in small groups by the use of 'Conversation Cards'. In all, facilitators staged 32 events across 25 parishes or groupings of Churches, involving a total of 513 participants during January and February 2014. Feedback was gathered from individual facilitators; participants; and during a 'Feedback morning' at the end of the project.

Although the sample was necessarily small and selective, the results were strongly positive across the whole range of measures. GraveTalk achieved its aim of involving a wide range of people (mostly Churchgoers) in conversations about death and dying which they generally found stimulating, useful and enjoyable. This report therefore concludes with a strong recommendation that the project move to a national pilot, and thence (assuming the results are replicated) be made available to the Church of England as a whole. On further analysis of the results, it makes some recommendations for changes; and also indicates issues which require further deliberation and/or decision.

Introduction and Background

Introduction

In 2006, the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England embarked upon an extended series of projects to examine, critique and reform the Church's practice concerning the three great 'Rites of Passage': Birth (Baptism), Marriage (Weddings) and Death (Funerals). Currently under the oversight of the Council's Head of Projects and Development (Revd Dr Sandra Millar), the 'Weddings Project' is almost complete, and attention has turned to the other elements of the programme. The Church of England thus announced in January 2012 that it would be launching twin projects to examine and enhance the Church's ministry at the moments of birth and death (i.e. christenings and funerals) (Field 2012). The research detailed in this Report is one of a number of contributions to what has come to be known as 'The Funerals Project'.

The background to the project is one in which the social experience of death is changing. The demographic, social and medical changes in the UK over the last 50 years have contributed to a situation in which:

- An increasing proportion of the population know that they have a terminal diagnosis some weeks, months or years before they die. This increases the opportunities for people to make practical (Wills, ACPs, Care Home planning, funeral planning), social (family gatherings, reconciliations) and personal (memoirs, prayer, reflection) preparation for their death.
- However, the improving general health of the population and our social arrangements around dying mean that we are less exposed to death throughout the life-course than ever before. It is quite common now for a person to undergo their own dying process without having had the opportunity to observe death in detail or accompany another in their dying.
- Finally, the Church is in danger of losing its traditional authority in matters of death and dying. The discourse on mortality is less prominent and explicit in the Church than it was (compare e.g. the 1662 Funeral Service with the equivalent in *Common Worship*) and, arguably, less lively.

The Church still has significant influence and involvement with the provision of funerals for the population at large, but is losing its pivotal role and can no longer claim to be the automatic 'default option' when it comes to dealing with death, bereavement and its aftermath. Between 2000 and 2011, the proportion of total deaths in England that received a Church of England funeral dropped 10 points, from 46% to 36% (Archbishops' Council 2013, p.16); and if anything the trend may be expected to have accelerated since statistics were last gathered. Along with the decline in Church attendance and the

increasing secularisation of British society, the Church's 'natural monopoly' in funeral provision has been eroded by the proliferation of other options (such as a Humanist burial service) and an increasing demand for custom-tailored funeral services.

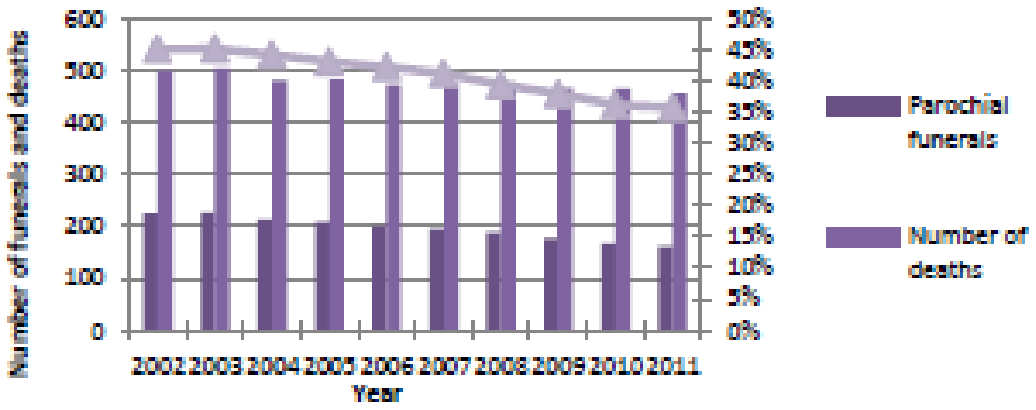

Figure 1 Funerals comparison 2002 to 2011 (Archbishops' Council 2013, p.16)

The assumption of the funerals project is that this decline in the role of the Church of England at the time of a death is both unwelcome and reversible. It is unwelcome not just because the Church is losing 'market share' and so institutional influence, but because the Church *should* have something distinctive and life-giving to offer at times of deep existential significance generally, and in the face of death and mortality in particular. If the Church is losing the opportunity to respond wholeheartedly and creatively to the challenge of living life in the face of death, then it is not simply losing its 'market share'; it is losing a component of its mission and identity.

Accordingly, the research and development being generated by the funerals project is taking two distinct forms. First, there is research into the 'market' for funerals and the acceptability of the Church's current 'offer'. The most visible fruit of that research has been the internal report, *Understanding Attitudes to Funerals in England* (Rowe and Hopwood, 2012). But secondly and arguably more importantly, there is an attempt to reflect upon the way in which death and mortality are part of the whole discourse of the Church; and so how the Church may be the 'natural' place where conversations on human finitude may take place.

It is a cliché that, as a society, we no longer speak of death and dying; that we are exposed to it relatively infrequently and tend to treat it as an aberration rather than an intrinsic component of human existence. It seems obvious that one of the roles of the Church is precisely to address the fragility and impermanence of human life, and there is a wealth of research to show that religious people deal with death differently, and usually better, than secular society (Bachner et al 2011; Neimeyer et al 2011; Abdollahi 2012; Dobbs et al 2012 Vail et al 2012; Ellis et al 2013). Nevertheless, death and mortality are

not frequent topics of discussion in Church circles, and there is no reason to believe that congregations generally are any more at ease with the subject than the population as a whole.

It follows that, if the Church is to recover its role of accompanying people of all religious commitments and none through the experience of death and mortality, it must rediscover its role as a place where death and dying are talked about. In the jargon that developed around the GraveTalk project, it must seek to grow 'death confident' congregations.

The GraveTalk Project

The purpose of this project was to pilot one proposal for enriching the local Church's discourse on death, both in terms of its content and by encouraging the widest possible conversation on mortality, death and dying. The ultimate aim of this initiative is to provide insights into how Churches may learn to approach 'matters of life and death' with sympathy, openness, confidence and authority; thus to contribute to the wellbeing of society at large and also to attract those who seek God in the face of death. The intermediate aims are:

1. To create 'death confident' congregations of members who will be able to engage with a ministry within the community, talking easily to friends and neighbours, helping them to prepare for death.
2. To enable conversations to happen which embrace the physical, practical, emotional and spiritual issues which emerge from talk about death.
3. To provide a safe space in which questions can be asked and emotions named.
4. To provide materials for planning funerals and wider information about death, dying, funerals and bereavement.
5. To encourage conversations about the reality of death amongst the living, including both those with no immediate life-limiting diagnosis and those who already have a terminal illness or are caring for others.

The phase of the project which forms the substance of this report is, technically, a 'pre-pilot'. It was restricted to a maximum of thirty parishes in the Diocese of Lichfield: its purpose was to test the concept, training and materials to be used in a later Pilot Project across four representative dioceses of the Church of England. Specifically, its aims were:

1. To develop and assess a method for training group facilitators and enable them to host 'café conversations' around death
2. To develop and assess tools which facilitate conversation.
3. To assess the impact of the 'café conversations' on those taking part and within the wider life of the Church/community.
4. To consider the viability of including this approach within a national Church of England framework to support the ministry around death/dying.

Key Ideas

In order to provide an accessible template for conversations about death and dying, the project drew upon two seminal ideas, which are briefly introduced below.

The café concept and death café phenomenon

Faced with the premise that death is a taboo subject in contemporary society, Death Cafes were developed as places where "people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death". Their stated objective is *'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'*. (http://deathcafe.com/what/). The original conception was and remains explicitly process-led: no content is imposed or encouraged from participants.

The Death Café phenomenon has attracted a great deal of media attention and been widely reported (see website for details) but is, in fact, quite a small movement so far. What is perhaps more important is the way it has crystallised a popular sense of the need for such conversations. In particular, it has demonstrated that the creation of a dedicated space, specifically for the conduct of conversations about death and dying, enables participants to be prepared for the challenges of the conversation while reassured that the other participants share the same expectations.

The potential contribution of the Church to responding to this shared concern is significant. By way of comparison: the Death Café website estimates about 6460 participants across Europe, North America and Australasia since September 2011; GraveTalk involved 513 participants in the Diocese of Lichfield alone, in the two months of January and February 2014. These figures will be scrutinised more closely in the Results section, but give a preliminary sense of the potential to be tapped by the Church.

The concept of Conversation Cards

The basic principle of Conversation Cards is that one of the interlocutors in the conversation begins by turning over a card with a question that all attempt to answer, rather than simply posing one of their own choosing. Cards have been used particularly to develop conversations with children by family counsellors and in a psychotherapeutic context (e.g http://www.morethanatoy.com/products/conversation-cards). Relatively recently, the concept has been developed to include a range of family, educational and health projects (see http://finkcards.co.uk/); and in a number of cases cards have been developed specifically to enable conversations related to deasth and dying. The fundamental proposal, that conversations can usefully be initiated and structured around a

set of cards when unstructured conversation may be too difficult or threatening, seems to hold true across a range of topics.

In relation to death and dying, the 'Conversations for Life' programme has developed a card-based game to stimulate discussion about palliative care needs with dying patients and their families (http://conversationsforlife.co.uk/conversation-game/) in the UK; a broader-based game has been successfully introduced in the USA , which closely parallels the GraveTalk pack of conversation cards (http://mygiftofgrace.com/).

There has been little research, but what there is (Ball et al 2013) suggests real efficacy in engaging a family or group around a difficult subject. The reasons are unclear, but our own impression is that the device of presenting the question on a card means that nobody 'owns' the process, has prior warning, or will be offended if it is rejected.

The GraveTalk cards were developed in collaboration with Fink and covered five broad areas:
Life – what makes it special for you?
Death – memories and experience
Society – how our culture deals with death
Funerals – what happens and what could happen
Grief – the reality of loss

Key Contributors

The project was commissioned by The Revd Dr Sandra Millar, as Projects Officer for the Archbishops' Council.

Dr Peter Kevern (Associate Professor in Values in Care in the Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University) led the planning and conduct of the research and evaluation exercise.

Manjula Patel (Compassionate Communities, Sandwell) contributed materials and assisted with the Facilitator's Day

Jennifer Sanders (Lecturer in Health Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University) conducted the interviews and analysed most of the data.

Parishes were recruited by Rev David Primrose, Director of Transforming Communities for the Anglican Diocese of Lichfield, who also coordinated the Facilitators' and Feedback Days.

Further details can be found in Appendix E

Figure 2 Examples of GraveTalk conversation cards

1. The organisation of the GraveTalk pilot

Although the eventual intention was to develop a model for 'conversations about death and dying' that could be extended across the Church of England and beyond, there were clear advantages in running the pilot project in a single diocese, and drawing largely upon existing church attenders. The diocese of Lichfield was particularly well-placed to serve as the pilot for several interlinked reasons:

- its relative size, as the ninth largest in the Church of England;
- its diversity, with a mixture of post-industrial urban, suburban and rural parishes;
- its deep involvement in funerals and ministry in the face of death. The diocese has more funerals per year than any other in the Church of England; and 47% of those who died within its boundaries in 2012 had a church service, compared with a national average of 34% (Archbishops Council, 2014)

Furthermore, the pilot needed to be robust enough to stand scrutiny and enable decisions to be made. This meant it should include some assessment of impact at both a personal and organisational level. It thus became clear early on that the success of the GraveTalk pilot depended upon the appropriate selection, training and resourcing of key individuals who would run 'events' in their respective parishes.

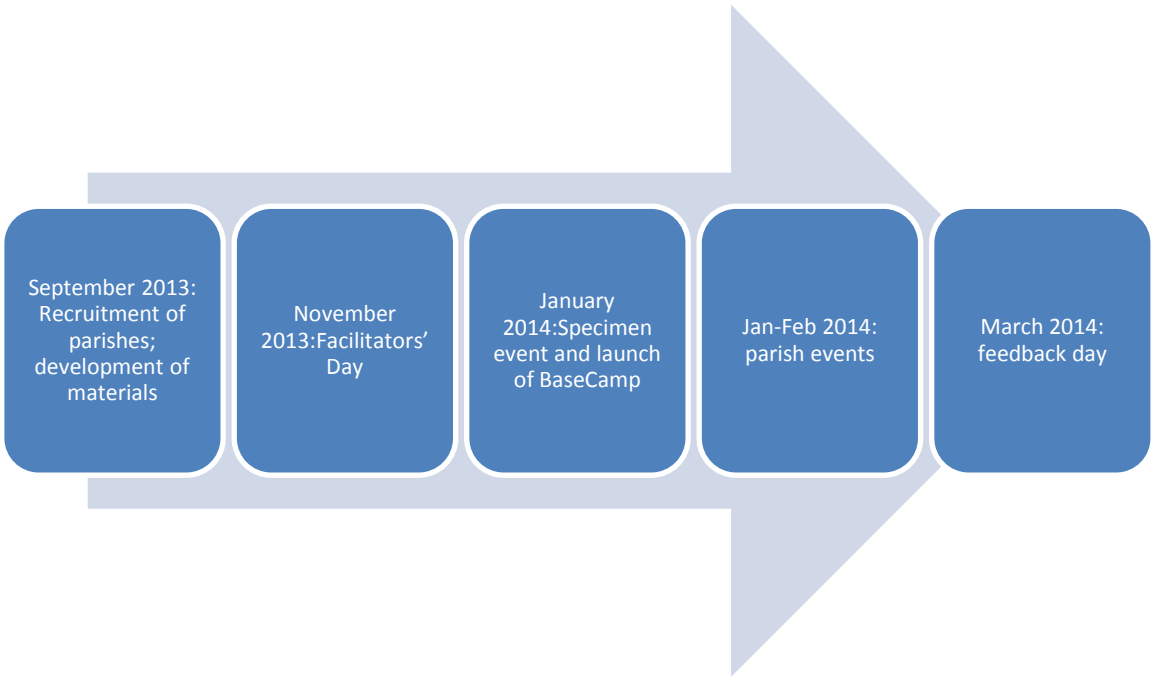

Figure 3 Chronology of GraveTalk events

The overall structure of the pilot involved five phases:

i) The selection/self-selection of parishes and preparation of resources.

A total of 25 parishes/groups of parishes in the Diocese of Lichfield were recruited to the pilot from a range of urban and rural contexts. As well as the conversation cards, which were developed by a team around the Revd Dr Sandra Millar, publicity materials were provided on behalf of the Archbishops Council. The major material item was the development of a physical 'Resource Pack' for facilitators, to be supplied on the induction day. Finally, a supportive online community was provided on the 'BaseCamp' platform. The purpose of this was to provide encouragement and a forum to exchange experiences between facilitators during the period when they were staging their own events. (See Appendix A)

ii) The training of 'Facilitators' and 'Hosts' at an induction day on 14th November 2013

Each trial parish or benefice (group of parishes) was asked to send at least one, and preferably two, representatives to the induction day. Its purpose was to:

- Identify in each case two individuals prepared to serve as 'Facilitator' (who would seek to initiate, guide and end the afternoon/evening) and a 'Host' (who would take responsibility for the hospitality). Clergy were gently discouraged from taking these roles for fear that their involvement might inhibit some conversations; however, the team insisted upon the explicit consent of the incumbent or priest-in-charge. Facilitators and Hosts were each issued with a resource pack.
- Establish the terms of the pilot and its conduct. Key elements included the fact that this was a small pilot to trial the materials and the process; discussion of the role of discretion and sensitivity; and a request that the attempt to publicise GraveTalk should not include local or national press (a position later reversed).
- Provide a simple structure for a 'typical' GraveTalk event, as well as stimulating some discussion about how it might be appropriately adapted for local circumstances.
- Resource and allow space for some reflection upon death, dying and funerals.
- Recruit to the research and data-gathering exercise, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

iii) A specimen GraveTalk evening for Facilitators and Hosts on 8th January 2014

There was wide agreement in the feedback from facilitators that the 'specimen event' offered to them would have been better timed if it had been before the Induction Day, so that they knew what to expect. Unfortunately, the specimen GraveTalk evening had to be delayed until the GraveTalk conversation cards were printed and available. As well as providing some first-hand experience of a GraveTalk event, the evening provided an opportunity for the team to observe potential practical difficulties. The Conversation Cards could be trialled in the event, and were distributed to facilitators. Finally, the event provided the occasion to introduce Basecamp and deal with any last-minute questions.

iv) Individual parish GraveTalk events in January and February 2014

Although a normative structure was provided for a 'typical' GraveTalk event in the Resource Pack, facilitators and hosts were encouraged to adapt it to their local situation. In practice, the majority remained within the provided structure, exercising discretion mainly in relation to the venue and timing of the event.

v) A final 'debrief' morning on 13th March 2014

This provided an opportunity for participants to exchange views in a plenary as well as in smaller groups. Although its primary purpose was to facilitate the gathering of feedback for the research and evaluation phase, on reflection we concluded that it had provided an important sense of closure to the pilot project.

Figure 2 Photos from the specimen event

2. Research design and data gathering

The primary purposes of this evaluation exercise were to test whether the basic concept of "a café space to talk about death, dying and funerals" was viable; and if so, how best to develop training mechanisms, materials and support strategies to enable the model to take root and fulfil this potential. Given this relatively narrow scope, a small sample size of (in the event) 25 parishes or benefices running a total of 32 events was appropriate; but given the complexity of the task, the results would necessarily require a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach.

Design

In the event, we settled upon a strategy of gathering data from a multiplicity of sources which, we hoped, complemented each other. These were:

1) After each event, a Facilitator's Report which covered a range of topics from the usefulness of the training and materials, through the appropriateness of the process and setting, to the responses of individuals and the group of attendees as a whole. The data were subjected to both demographic and thematic analysis by two independent researchers. From this we could judge how the resources functioned in practice, and what improvements needed to be made to the induction process which prepared facilitators to use them.
2) Also after each event, a telephone interview with one person who had attended and who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted. This short interview (typically 15 minutes) provided information on the way in which the event was perceived, and how it met the needs and expectations of attendees. Results were analysed independently and thematically by two researchers.
3) At the feedback day, short Focus Groups of facilitators and hosts who addressed the question, *"From your experience, if some-one else was considering running GraveTalk, what reasons would you give to recommend running GraveTalk, and what advice would you give to address potential problems?"* This provided the opportunity for participants to reflect upon and synthesise their shared experience, to identify shared perceptions which would not necessarily be identifiable in the written facilitator reports. Key themes were extracted from the recordings by two independent researchers.
4) Feedback from facilitators and hosts (at the feedback day) on the usefulness or otherwise of individual cards. These data gave us information about the quality of the materials, and how they might usefully be revised for wider circulation. Responses were analysed, and a 'rating' from 1 to 5 given to each card.

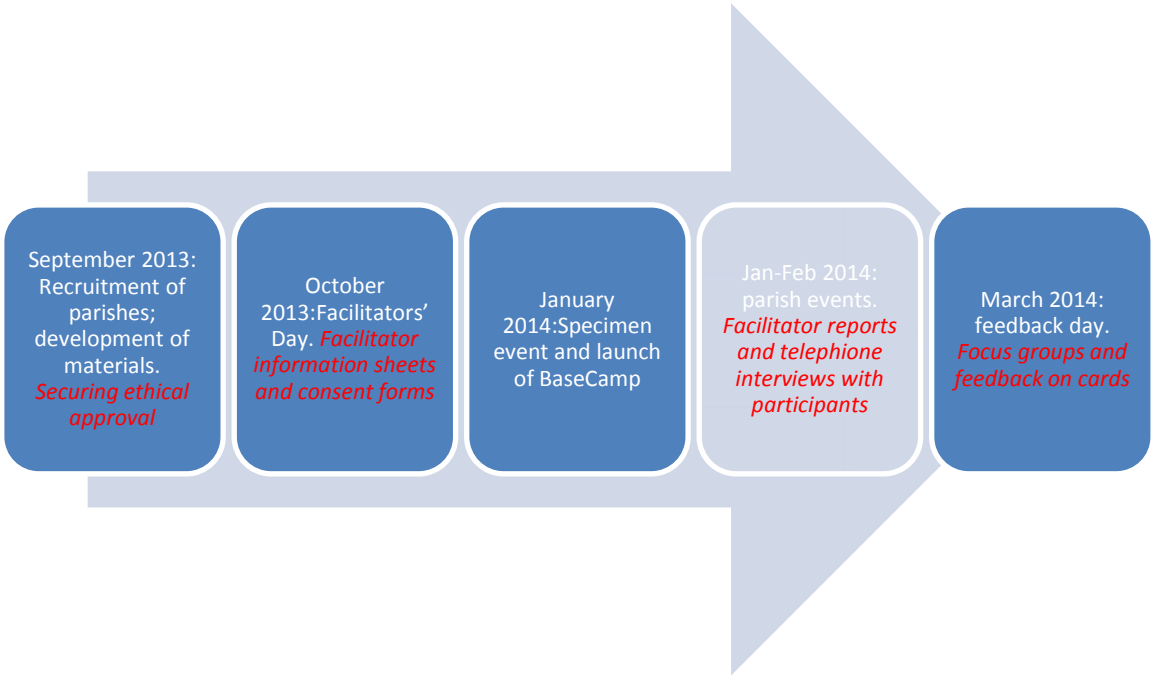

Figure 3 Chronology of GraveTalk events with data collection points

Ethics

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Faculty Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University. Full details are available in Appendix G.

Limitations

It is in the nature of a small study such as this that compromises must be made. Even if the appropriate metrics existed, the sample size and diversity precludes detailed quantitative analysis; while the need to gather a broad spread of perspectives and the time constraints equally precludes a detailed qualitative study. Furthermore, the fact that the project was launched and completed within a six-month period by definition rules out any estimation of longitudinal effects. Finally, and by definition, since the attendees were largely Churchgoers they shared certain demographics (higher average age; possibly a preponderance of females) which are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole.

Nevertheless, within the restricted aims of this project, the research design provided sufficiently rich and detailed information to enable insights into the experience of the participants, while at the same time offering a basis for critical analysis.

3. Data analysis

During February and March 2014, 32 events were held across 25 Parishes in the Diocese of Lichfield. Facilitators ranged from 35-70 years old, with 17 of the events run by a male. In total, 513 people attended the GraveTalk events (Mean = 16.03, Median = 14). Of these, 158 participants agreed to be contacted for a post-GraveTalk event telephone interview. Telephone interviewees ranged from 40-84 years old. Further demographics are unknown. Only one event had no participants willing to be contacted for an interview, resulting in 31 interviews being conducted.

In the analysis comprising this chapter, the order of reporting will follow the order in which data were collected, with a summary of the findings from each stage from the Facilitator Report to the final Feedback morning. Recurrent and aggregated themes from the data will then be identified and explored in the Discussion chapter which follows.

It is easy, when aggregating data, to lose the sense and immediacy provided by the individual voice. Therefore, in parallel to the main body of the report, some of the individual comments will be provided in boxes. The selection of comments is in no way scientific, but is intended to add colour and depth to the results.

Facilitator Report Feedback

Facilitators were asked to provide their feedback on the GraveTalk events held, including comments on how participants experience it, what went well and any changes they would make. One report was in narrative form and had to be discarded; three combine the findings from two events in the same parish. This gave a total of 28 reports covering 31 events. The suggested format for the GraveTalk event was followed in 24 events, with only minor alterations/adaptions (e.g. to the introduction, leaflets, closing comments) made for the others. All but one event, (no reply to the question), reported participants finding the experience valuable. Facilitators reasoned this was due to the sharing of thoughts and feelings of the topic. Six events reported some participants finding the event unpleasant/distressing, explaining this was due to experience of bereavements or issues that were raised, rather than event content. Nine events reported tears, but felt this was natural due to nature of the topic, rather than evidence of distress. In addition, they report laughter alongside tears.

Table 1 indicates what facilitators listed as what went well or was difficult/disappointing for each event. Three events reported nothing as difficult/disappointing. Positive observations of participants having good quality conversations and interactions support the concept of Death Cafes for "people, often strangers, [to] gather to eat cake, drink tea

and discuss death." Feedback on the use of conversations cards was generally positive, with some comments about questions being irrelevant or requiring further explanation: these comments led to the inclusion of the feedback exercise on which cards were most valuable during the debriefing day.

What went well	**What was difficult/disappointing**
Quality of conversation (14)	Low numbers (9)
Refreshments (12)	Refreshments/logistics (6)
Quality of interaction (10)	Only Church goers (6)
Layout (9)	Questions wrongly chosen/hard to understand (5)
Planning (6)	Managing people (4)
Enthusiasm/engagement (7)	Some people didn't come (4)
Cards/topics (5)	No time for questions/debrief/follow-up (5)
Candles/prayers/tree (4)	Wrong expectations (2)
Good seating arrangements (3)	Cost (1)
Mix of Church and non-Church goers (2)	Advertising (1)
Good response (1)	Initial superficiality (1)
	Nobody felt need to pray or light a candle (1)
	Not enough take away sheets (1)

Table 1 Reported aspects of events that went well and were disappointing (number of times reported)

For the purposes of evaluating and developing GraveTalk, it is encouraging that facilitators followed and found the suggested framework positive. Interestingly, whilst the café conversation style worked well, in five cases there was the need expressed to have whole group feedback on conversations at the end. This was also reported by facilitators as an aspect they would change for future GraveTalk events. Main difficulties reported included the facilities of the event venue (refreshments/logistics, 6), as well as advertising resulting in low attendance numbers for some events. Initially advertising in local press was not encouraged, with analysis of the telephone interviews and focus groups indicating that this is unlikely to have had an impact on event numbers.

What worked, and what didn't? Insights from the Facilitator Reports

People were surprised at how easily they talked

There was a good balance of laughter and deeper discussion on each table

There were two people that got a bit upset but it was because of the relief they felt about being able to talk freely about experiences they had in the past.

No one showed signs of being upset. Several asked, 'How do we initiate a discussion with family?'

No – no one was unduly upset. A few tears shed about Cattle lost in Foot & Mouth outbreak

Most people used to opportunity to leave a prayer request. These were on 'cards' hung on a branch, and all referred to named individuals in a variety of circumstances

Availability of a local funeral director to provide some factual answers to specific questions – he was pleased to be invited and contributed significantly to the refreshments without regarding it as a marketing exercise!

Attendance was very low for both sessions. We are an urban priority area and people find it difficult and scary to try new things and be part of small groups.

Despite all my prior explanation, some-one still thought they were coming to a talk on wills, legacy etc etc

I am adding a follow up event about the practical side after the death of a loved one

When asked whether facilitators would make any changes to initial training materials, training day event or support offered to facilitators the majority (23) indicated no or did not reply. Comments on changes to training materials centred on the conversation cards (6), which led us to seek feedback on the cards at the feedback day. Suggestions included removing some cards - presumably those deemed irrelevant questions – as well as colour coding them by theme and increasing their size. Importantly for future GraveTalk events, the only change to the training day would be for the specimen event to come before the facilitator's day (2). This suggestion was so facilitators would understand, and attempt to overcome, some of the issues faced.

Support for promotion was mentioned, possibly due to the disappointment of low numbers at events. Invitations and advertising of GraveTalk were also the focus of suggestions for changes to future events. The majority of facilitators indicated they would run GraveTalk again, and suggested a number of different formats, including evenings so it is accessible to more people, several times through the year.

Telephone Interview Feedback

One willing participant from each event completed a short structured interview about their experience of GraveTalk. Only two of the 31 participants reported a negative experience.

Participants' overall impression of the events was positive due to the organisation/facilitation (6), as well as the concept of a death café enabling them to discuss a taboo subject (12). Conversely, the negative comments (5) typically came from participants who were disappointed that discussion was left to the groups, rather than led by the facilitators. The comment from two participants that there was a need for clear aims and objectives indicates that they approached the event with a different expectation, one of a lecture/educational event rather than an informal discussion.

Participants were asked what prompted them to attend the event, with a large proportion crediting an invitation, support for organisers or personal contact (15). The next most common comment was that the participant had attended because of a recent or repeated experience of death, either among close relatives or through having a terminal disease (9). This suggests that an advertising campaign of GraveTalk would not lead to an increased uptake of participants, since personal and social reasons seem more salient than general curiosity.

When specifically asked what they enjoyed, participants reported enjoying the relaxed and open atmosphere (24) the refreshments (4), being able to discuss a taboo subject (8) and gaining further information about death, dying and funerals through conversation (6). Participants explicitly referred to the question cards promoting thoughts/conversations (6).

Numerous comments from participants indicated that the conversations during the event had led to them feeling more informed, enthusiastic and prepared to discuss death further. These broadly support both the death café concept and use of conversation cards. One participant did comment that, with cards randomly allocated to groups, they may not all be relevant. This was also reflected in feedback that some participants felt they did not gain anything, possibly due to the shallow questions. Participants who were aware groups had different questions would have liked to swapped and share a wider range of thoughts around the topic of death.

Whilst group discussion was largely perceived as successful, participants were mindful that on some occasions the nature of group discussion made for awkward occasions. The two participants who perceived the events negatively commented on the lack of overall feedback and purpose, further supporting the idea that they arrived with specific, inaccurate expectations. Although the majority of participants found the event useful, follow-up suggestions included covering the practical aspects of death such as wills and funeral planning, as well as information on support from counselling services.

Combined with the feedback comments, it is encouraging for GraveTalk as an evolving concept, that of the 31 participants interviewed, 25 would definitely attend another event. Others did not say no, but were less sure. Whilst positive it needs to be taken into account that this was a self-selecting group of participants. No participants required support following the discussions on death, although this was reasoned that they had already sought assistance or that the questions were not challenging enough to warrant it.

How was it for you? What interviewees said

'Enjoyed' is probably not the right word, but I enjoyed the event. I found it helpful to talk, even though it was in a church setting, about death. Death isn't something you can normally talk about. The event got you thinking.

Last year 2 close friends died, and the husband of work colleague died. I have been thinking about death due to these recent events. I went with friends from church. I would normally avoid the subject, but went for the exact reason – 'to talk'. I wanted to know what you do if you find someone dead.

Thought provoking – what would you want to know if terminally ill? That card really got you thinking, especially due to recent deaths from cancer.

The cards were really good – they were helpful in starting conversations, thought provoking. Small groups were good, probably easier than large groups but a large group would have allowed more mixing between tables and maybe access other cards.

A surprisingly happy event

A safe and happy environment, no sad faces

The event was humorous, people telling jokes. I learnt information about people I thought knew quite well; seeing them in a new light, for the better

Ok. It was a typical Church of England event – involved a workshop with a lot of talking

Disappointed – there was no input from the organising team. They simply left it to the people in groups to lead. This resulted in people's opinions only being shared.

My attitude around/towards death etc. remains unchanged because the event wasn't helpful

I came because I was curious. My wife passed away 8 years ago and I was her carer for 2 years when ill. Other people are in same position but I avoid them as I am not sure what to say.

I am old and thinking about end of life. My wife wouldn't talk about it, but having gone to the event has changed her perception. I had questions about funerals etc. in mind, but the event was much wider than that which has led to a more balanced perspective

Round tables, nice tablecloths, tea and cake made relaxed atmosphere

I felt cards was a good way to facilitate conversation

At the end I did feel what happens now? There was talk about a follow-up session being held. It would be good to look at the other cards and discuss

There should be another on a similar scale. My only criticism is the title is unfortunate, and off-putting for those that are maybe in their 80s

Focus Group Feedback

At the feedback event in March 2014, facilitators were invited to share thoughts on recommendations for running GraveTalk and advice they would give to future facilitators. Across the four focus groups comments can be grouped into themes: structure of event, question cards and advertisement.

Structure of event

Facilitators had been encouraged at their training day to consider how to adapt GraveTalk to their local context. Although almost all used some variation of the suggested timetable and structure for the event itself, they more freely adapted the arrangement of the space, hospitality and key roles to suit local circumstances.

It transpired that a number of events had utilised the facilitators in different ways. These ranged from having facilitators who simply oversaw the event, to having a facilitator at each table as a 'chairperson'. Through discussion it was agreed that more than one facilitator is necessary, so that should anyone become distressed one facilitator can "go and support her whilst group continue to function" with other facilitators still present. There was no consensus as to whether the facilitators should be members of the clergy or lay people, with benefits of both discussed. It was suggested that people may "want reassurance of clergy [presence]", however lay people as facilitators may lead to inclusion of wider community.

Reporting of refreshments as a positive by facilitators and participants was reiterated during the focus groups. Interestingly, there was disparity in the way these were provided. Not reported in the initial feedback of each GraveTalk event was the concept of group dynamics. Through the focus groups facilitators discussed how important it was to separate those who came together, as well as being mindful of individuals who dominated discussions. One facilitator commented that, due to knowing the participants, they could "engineer" the groups to avoid issues. Another facilitator shared an experience of having to sit with one group as they were not letting one participant who had learning difficulties contribute to the conversation.

In accordance with the facilitators reports and telephone interviews, the importance of having time at the end for feedback was highlighted: "we had lots of folk who wanted to sit down and discuss". The need for inclusion of information around the practicalities of death was also raised. Some suggestions to address this included follow-up sessions focussed on practicalities, additional information available to take away, or having a professional (e.g. undertaker) present at event to "answer technical questions that arose."

Question cards

Below is a summary of the comments facilitators made on the conversation cards, in addition to feedback summarised in the following section.

- Some questions are more 'starter' questions; 'life' category more positive than others
- Some questions need to be reworded, at present they require further explanation for discussion to occur
- Some topics are not covered, for example child bereavement, child experiences of death, abortion
- Nature of discussion means some points may be covered, then turn over a new card which asks the same question – "like chance cards in monopoly"
- Led to different perceptions/answers and for action in some participants
- Some questions led to long discussions that did not go anywhere
- Some questions depend on the demographics of the group regarding relevance

It was noted that (for events which had non-Church goers present), there was more discussion with the regular Churchgoers than with visitors. Facilitators also commented that those of no religion gave "odd" answers, and that the "questions baffled them." It is important to consider for future GraveTalk events whether the wording of the questions is accessible to all people, of different and no faith.

From discussion of the question cards facilitators concluded it was advisable to look through the cards beforehand, have a starter "icebreaker" question, ensure there is a variety of styles and types of question per group. It was also highlighted that it is important to tell participant there is no right or wrong answer to the questions.

Publicity

A key discussion from facilitators focussed on the event name: "fantastic subject…not sure GraveTalk as a title works." Some felt that, with the majority of participants being Church goers, maybe GraveTalk does not "appeal to the outside world." Others commented that the title led to having to "explain all the time what it was." The ambiguity of GraveTalk may explain why some participants went expecting a lecture/educational session, and while others found the conversations positive, there was a need/want for information on the practicalities of death.

In the feedback reports, facilitators indicated a desire for additional support around the promotion of GraveTalk. Whilst telephone interviews suggested people attended for reasons other than local advertisement, the focus groups indicate that advertisement in the local press led to an increase in representation from the community. Despite this, one contributor commented that "in [the] community it fell flat on its face."

Putting our heads together – what the Focus Groups said

One of the things that makes it . . . is the size of the room and the way the room is best used

One woman in the wider community was heard to be saying, "I've heard they're holding a séance in the church"!

There was resistance to getting it run in our church because of the title . . . but I can't think of a better title

Allow some time afterwards because . . . we had lots of folk that wanted . . . to sit down to discuss . . . for whom it brought up lots of issues, that then needed, there and then, before they walked out of the door, to have somebody talk to them about. And in addition . . . there was people who came to us a week or two afterwards, and said, "That GraveTalk has made me think about X Y and Z, and then needed some sort of pastoral follow-up

I ran a second session for a secular group and I put some adverts round the village . . . and it was so gratifying that some people who were not churchgoers actually picked up the idea and ran with it. My church opened it up to the whole community, and our take-up was very poor

The cake was very appreciated! . . . You have to have some sort of a welcoming thing. And we found . . . especially the non-churchgoers found that very very good.

When I was going round to people [in the church] inviting them I would say that it was a café to talk about death, dying and . . you know . . . and the response I was getting was sort of, "Oh, I can't think of anything worse!". But the people who came said that they'd found it helpful. It's just a matter of getting people to come, when you tell them what the topic is.

Although it's saying 'café', they wasn't expecting it. And it's a nice homely, warm feeling . . . and they all said, "We felt nervous when we came in, but we don't now".

Strangely enough, I think if you explained exactly what was going to happen, it wouldn't be very appealing. And yet it worked. It's a very simple process.

The questions were good and helpful, but I'm not sure this is transferable to the wider community . . . you can do things in a closed group . . . but what happens when you ditch your closed groups?

What we have to do is to help build our churches up to be much involved with the communities and able to talk with the people . . . to be able to take what we pick up from this and take it out to be less of a taboo subject for people

Conversation Card Feedback

Facilitators were asked to provide feedback on the usefulness of the individual cards used at the GraveTalk events. Their responses were scored on a 5-point scale (1=irrelevant/unhelpful, 2=needs revision, 3=ok, but not particularly useful, 4=Good, but may be improved, 5=very good). As indicated in Table 2, the majority of cards received positive comments from the facilitators. Some comments by facilitators were marked as invalid, and not included in analysis, as they answered the question posed rather reporting on its usefulness.

	Irrelevant/unhelpful	Need revision	Ok	Good	Very good
Number of cards	5	9	5	11	19

Table 2 Number of cards for each score on usefulness scale

Some of the questions, for example *What should happen to someone's effects if they die without leaving a Will?,* attracted positive comments centring on practicalities: that 'it made people think' and 'reiterated the importance of planning' involved with death and funerals. The majority of questions scoring highly received all positive comments from facilitators. At least four of these were specifically commented on as being 'good starter' questions: *What is your earliest memory of death?, How old would you like to be when you die?, What do you value most in life?* and *Would you take a child to a funeral?* This raises the question whether it would be useful to introduce a sequencing of cards.

Some of the questions receiving an overall positive score had led to a mix of feedback. For example, *Have you been to a funeral?,* was seen as unhelpful by some facilitators, whereas others felt it had potential and offered amendment along the lines of *"…and if so, what were your impressions of it?"* This feedback around questions 'opening up discussion' suggests there was a good understanding of the purpose of event as conversations rather than didactic tools.

The majority of cards receiving negative feedback from the facilitators were focused on the irrelevance/unhelpfulness of the questions. In particular, *Do you have a favourite poem about death?,* was deemed meaningless without a collection of poems to consult. As GraveTalk may be the first instance where participants have actively engaged in discussion around death, dying and funerals, they may not be able to answer such specific questions. Other questions needed further explanation for them to be useful in initiating conversation. Closed questions, such as *Would you prefer to be buried or cremated?,* were rejected as closing down conversation rather than facilitating it.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The GraveTalk project in the Diocese of Lichfield was a small enterprise, limited in both generalizability and scope. In interpreting the data, it needs to be remembered that the parishes and groups of Churches that volunteered were a self-selecting sample, who might be expected therefore to respond positively to the challenge; and that at this stage no attempt was made to extend GraveTalk to the wider community. The 'user voice' was represented by only one interviewee from each event, who was again largely self-selecting, and the interview data (while consistent) do not show the necessary signs of 'saturation': in other words, further interviews would yield further insights.

These limitations are serious, but need to be set against the equally restricted scope of the project. This was not attempting to analyse the range of reactions to GraveTalk or the social psychology behind them, but only to 'road-test' the idea in principle: to discover whether a café-based interaction, based on the use of conversation cards, could help congregations to talk about matters of life and death.

Reviewing the data as a whole, there can be little doubt that for most participants consulted, GraveTalk was welcome and useful. It seems equally clear that the basic strategy, of training Facilitators and Hosts to stage an event through an induction day, providing them with a model but then encouraging them to adapt it, proved valuable as a way of both providing a supportive structure and leaving enough to individual discretion to allow the Facilitators and Hosts to 'own' the process. Finally, the primary tool supplied, the Conversation Cards, seems to have had a major contribution to the success of the project.

Analysing the data in finer detail, the following general points stand out:

1. Taken as a whole, GraveTalk has been a clear success and far exceeded the expectations of its organisers. For both facilitators and participants, it has generally been a rewarding experience and one they would like to repeat or develop further. Concerns that it may raise feelings of deep distress that the facilitators would be unprepared for, or develop into a bereavement counselling event, turn out to have been exaggerated. Although 'there were tears', facilitators seem to have been able to distinguish them from signs of deep distress, and none of the interviewees reported a lasting negative feeling when reflecting on the event. There are good reasons, therefore, for confidence in the overall value of GraveTalk.

2. The most consistently positive comments by both facilitators and interviewees related to the atmosphere or social environment, including the cake! Participants repeatedly referred to the relaxed, organised and often humorous context within which the conversation took place, and linked it to the ease with which difficult subjects could be discussed. It seems clear that the strength of GraveTalk lies

principally in its 'sense of occasion': as pastors of all descriptions know well, people are most likely to risk a conversation about matters of deep concern in a context which appears to be organised and well-ordered, in which they feel safe, thought-about and cared-for. Cake, comfort and calm efficiency seem to be clear measures of these qualities.

3. In turn, it seems clear that Facilitators and Hosts were helped to provide this sort of environment by their experience of the preparation and support provided by the Diocese and the Church of England as a whole, along with the advice and resources prepared for them. Although it would clearly have been more helpful to many to have experience of a GraveTalk evening before the Facilitator Training Day, the experience of both was a positive preparation for most facilitators. Continuing support provided on the BaseCamp platform and from the parish clergy was also appreciated by some.

4. Both the café concept and the use of conversation cards seem to have contributed decisively to a model which could be reproduced by facilitators across the Church of England. Notwithstanding comments about certain details (e.g. the questions on particular cards, or the arrangement of people into appropriate groups at tables) the provision of a format in which momentum was maintained by the interlocutors themselves rather than being dependent on a central figure appears to have been highly successful.

Within these broad parameters, a number of issues have been raised which would repay further thought and possible development:

1. Feedback from facilitators and Focus Groups suggested that some would advocate a more complex structure for the events: a facilitator at each table, perhaps; and/or a plenary session at the end. There is room for further deliberation here, although there is an argument for maintaining as simple a structure as possible to enable facilitators to adapt it to their purposes.

2. A number of facilitators and interviewees reported that they would have liked further resources. Several suggested a follow-up event to discuss practicalities such as finance, funeral planning and Advance Care Plans. One open question is whether this should be included as part of the continuation of GraveTalk, or left for individual parishes to organise in the way most appropriate for their context and to fit local demand.

3. There was some unease about the appropriateness of the name, and also a question about the value of advertising. The existing data on why people participate implies that this sort of activity would be pointless, since most people participate

because of personal contacts and/or personal experience of death; but this may be begging the question, since without publicity there is no other clear route by which people may have been drawn to participate. This suggests that there is a need for a decision in principle about whether Gravetalk should be advertised widely, or spread by word of mouth.

4. In addition, some attendees seem to have arrived with expectations of a different sort of event, such as a workshop or lecture. This issue may be linked to the previous one, in that the way GraveTalk is 'branded' will help to set prospective participants' expectations. If the intention is to advertise it widely, then some further explanation of the nature and scope of these events may be necessary in order to manage these expectations appropriately.

5. Particular question cards need to be revised or replaced. In addition, there is the repeated suggestion that some cards should be set apart as 'conversation starters', and that others would be better for introduction later in the conversation. Finally, a few commented on the fact that each table had different cards, and that some conversations seemed to run better than others. These last two comments raise the question of whether an undifferentiated pack of cards is the best use of the resource, or whether a set of say 10 cards should be constructed in a clear order, from 'conversation starters' onwards.

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Appendix A – Support materials for Facilitators

GraveTalk Conversation Card titles

1. What is your favourite possession, and who are you leaving it to?
2. What should happen to someone's effects if they die without leaving a Will?
3. What music would you like to have played or sung at your funeral?
4. Have you experienced a NBS?
5. Have you experienced the death of a pet?
6. How do you react when you see flowers at a funeral?
7. What was your first experience of grief?
8. Have you been to a funeral?
9. Would you take a child to a funeral?
10. If you could ask one question of someone .you love who has died, what would it be?
11. What was the best funeral you have been to?
12. What is the reason for a funeral?
13. If you were planning your funeral, what would you include?
14. What does a roadside shrine mean to you?
15. Would you show dead bodies on the news?
16. How would you explain death to a 5 year old?
17. What would you like to do before you die?
18. Where is your Will?
19. What life experience have you valued most?
20. Who has really inspired you in your life?
21. Would you prefer to be buried or cremated?
22. What do you value most in life?
23. Where were you when Diana . . .
24. How old would you like to be when you die?
25. What does it mean to die with dignity?
26. Where would you like your remains to be disposed of?
27. What does it mean to have a 'good death'?
28. What is your most memorable death in a film or book?
29. If you knew this was the last day of your life, what would you do?
30. Would you want to know if you were terminally ill?
31. Do you have a favourite poem about death?
32. What would you like your lasting legacy to be?
33. If you knew you were dying, what would you change about your life?
34. Should people talk more about death & dying?
35. Do you believe in life after death?
36. Do we 'recover' from grief?
37. What is your earliest memory of death?

38. How would you like to be remembered?
39. What would your epitaph be?
40. What is heaven?
41. What was helpful when you were grieving?
42. Have you seen a dead body?
43. How is grief portrayed in the media?
44. What is your favourite place?
45. How would you help a grieving friend?
46. What is your greatest achievement?
47. What has been most important to you in life?
48. How do you feel about being asked to wear bright colours at a funeral?
49. If you could choose, where would you like to die?
50. Data missing

Specimen screen from BaseCamp

Advertising materials

GRAVETALK

A CAFE SPACE TO TALK ABOUT DEATH, DYING AND FUNERALS

THERE WILL BE TEA AND CAKE.
THERE WILL BE TALK.
THERE WILL BE QUESTIONS.

The truth is we are all going to die. But nobody wants to say anything. GraveTalk is a chance to talk about death, think about your funeral, ask questions, air your thoughts. For people of all faiths and doubts.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Extracts from the GraveTalk Resource Pack

Contents

Appendix B – Participating parishes and their events

Parish Name	Event date	Participants
Bicton Holy Trinity	11.01.14	21
Chell St Michael	14.01.14	12
Littleworth St John	20.01.14 11.03.14	14+9
NewcastleUL St Barnabas	21.01.14	17+3 infant
Coven St Pauls	23.01.14 23.01.14	7 +10
Knutton St Marys	25.01.14	15
Wolverhampton St Stephen	27.01.14	7
Tamworth St Peters	27.01.14	6+5
Longdon St James	28.01.14	24
Meole Brace Trinity	29.01.14	30
Bayston Hill Christ Church	29.01.14 29.01.14	34+22
Werrington and Wetley Rocks	30.01.14	23
Stafford St Bertelins	01.02.14	14
Penn Fields	02.02.14	32
Wolverhampton St Martin	03.02.14	6
Staffordshire Border Group	05.02.14	2+1
Cheswardine	05.02.14	24
Acton Trussel and Bednall	17.02.14	13
Halescott	18.02.14	22
Pattingham St Chads	19.02.14	24
Streetly All Saints	25.02.14	22
Trysull All Saints	25.02.14	12
Tettenhall Regis	27.02.14	20
Milton	13.02.14	14+12

Appendix C - Guidance (from resource pack) on the conduct of a typical event

General guidance on how to run your event

You will need to decide for yourself the best way to run an event in your specific context. But if you would like a structure to work to, then we suggest something similar to this:

1900	Arrive, mingle, coffee
1930	Convene. Opening Welcome and Prayer. Explanation from facilitator of the shape of the evening.
1945	Break into groups of 3 or 4. Turn over one of the cards provided and each to speak to it in turn. Make sure all have opportunity to talk, then if desired move on to another. As facilitator, ensure that conversation doesn't get ''stuck' on one individual or one topic.
2045	Gathering for a period of shared reflection using the sheet (see next section), then a closing prayer or short act of worship

Postcard images are provided for participants to take away for further reflection. Include a sheet (see next section) at back of event for people to put their personal details, if they'd like follow-up information and if they would be prepared to answer some questions on their experience

For an **opening prayer**, we suggest something like this:

As your local parish Church, we have organised this session of GraveTalk so that people of all faiths or none can take part in an open conversation about death, dying and funerals. This is my prayer for our time together, to which you are welcome, if you wish, to add your amen.
"Almighty God, you raised your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead. In His earthly life, He wept at the death of His friend, Lazarus. Open our hearts this morning/afternoon/evening that we might listen to one another in compassion and hope, as we explore our lives in the context of death. In His name, we pray, Amen"

We suggest that you also give some advice about the nature of the conversation, along these lines:

We are meeting for an open conversation about death, dying and funerals. People may wish to share personal thoughts and feelings, ask questions and draw on their experience of life. Please respect the trust that we place in one-another for the duration of this time, and afterwards, if you do refer back to the contribution that anyone else made, do so in a generalised manner that does not identify of the person.

At the **close of the session**, we suggest you thank people for their participation, and drawn their attention to the follow-up sheet. You may then wish to provide a very brief concluding act of worship. This may include a period of silence, during which people may reflect on their personal thoughts, both private and spoken. You may wish to lead with a prayer, similar to the one below. Finally, we suggest that, as people come to leave, they have the opportunity to come forward to central spot, for an activity such as to light a candle, leave a prayer request, and/or collect a post-card.

As we conclude our time together, let us be silent for a couple of minutes, following which I will lead in a prayer, to which, if you wish, you are welcome to add your amen.
"Heavenly Father, creator of all life, we bless you for the mystery of life and death, and for the promise of everlasting life, through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amongst those who have died, we thank you in particular for all those whom we have loved, and who have loved us. Reflecting on their lives, grant us courage and wisdom to follow the way of Jesus Christ, who came that we might have life, and have it abundantly. In His name we pray, Amen."

Appendix D – Research materials

Information forms

1. Facilitators

Research title: Evaluation of the GraveTalk Pilot Project
As a GraveTalk Facilitator, you have agreed to run an event, to write a report for the Church and to participate in a Feedback Day where you will contribute to the discussions in a Focus Group. We would like your permission to use the information in your report and the comments made during the focus group to help us to write an 'Evaluation' for the national Church of England, and possibly to contribute to one or more Journal articles.
Please note that **your participation is confidential**. Whatever you write in your report will be 'anonymised' – your name will be taken off any written material – and the recording from your Focus Group will not be heard by anybody but the project organisers and the research team. Any information we gather will be stored securely, in such a way that your individual contribution cannot be traced. We will keep it for ten years and then destroy it.
If we publish anything, we will make sure it does not include information that could lead to the identification of any individual. If we quote you, we will identify you with a reference number, not by your name.
In addition, **your participation is voluntary.** If you don't want us to use your contribution, we won't use it and you don't have to give us a reason. If you give us permission to use your information now, but change your mind at any later point, then you can let us know and we'll remove it.

What happens next

You have been given this information sheet to **help you decide** whether or not you wish to take part in this study.
If you choose to take part, **please complete the participation form attached to this information sheet.** You may then **leave it in the box at the exit** or **return it in the SAE** we will give you**.** Please take this information form away with you for reference.
If you do not want to take part, then you do not need to take any further action. If we don't hear from you in the next 7 days, we will assume that you do not want to take part in the evaluation. You are still very welcome to fill out your report and to participate in the Feedback Day, but we will make sure that we don't use your information.
If you need additional support or advice, then we suggest you contact one of the following in the first instance

- The Director for Transforming Communities, Rev David Primrose
  Telephone: 07975644044 (mobile); 01922 707864 (office)
  Email: david.primrose@lichfield.anglican.org

- The leader of the evaluation of this project, Dr Peter Kevern
  Telephone: 07765500948 (mobile); 01785 353762 (office)
  Email: p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk

- Your Church ministers or lay pastoral workers

-
- The support organisations listed in detail in the Resource Pack

If you change your mind, or have any further questions, or would like a summary of the report sent to you later then please get in touch with the lead researcher on this project.

Lead Researcher
Peter Kevern,
Staffordshire University,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Blackheath Lane,
Stafford ST18-0AD
Tel: 01785 353762
Email: p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk

2. Participants

Research title: Evaluation of the GraveTalk Pilot Project
We would like to hear from you about your experience so that we can use the feedback to develop and improve the next version of 'GraveTalk'.
We are therefore asking if you would be prepared to be contacted at some time in the next four weeks for a short telephone interview about your impressions of today's event. The interview will take no longer than 15 minutes, and you would be free to terminate the call at any time. We would then use the feedback you give, anonymously, in a report to the Church of England about this project. We may also use it to write some research papers for publication.
If you agree to participate, **your participation is confidential**. Although we will need your name and contact details in order to get in touch with you, any notes of the interview will be identified by a reference number. Notes from the interviews will be stored securely, without names, in such a way that your individual contribution cannot be traced. We will keep them for ten years and then destroy them.
If we publish anything, we will make sure it does not include information that could lead to the identification of any individual. If we quote you, we will identify you with a reference number, not by your name.
In addition, **your participation is voluntary.** If you don't want us to use your contribution, we won't use it and you don't have to give us a reason. If you give us permission to use your information now, but change your mind at any later point, then you can let us know and we'll remove it.

What happens next

You have been given this information sheet to **help you decide** whether or not you wish to take part in this study.
If you choose to take part, **please tick the** box on the sign-in sheet at the door, where it says, 'I have read the information sheet and agree to being interviewed for the study'. Then add your telephone number. Please remember to take this information form away with you for reference.
If you do not want to take part, then you should not tick the box.
If you need additional support or advice, then we suggest you contact one of the following in the first instance:

- The Director for Transforming Communities, Rev David Primrose. Telephone: 07975644044 (mobile); 01922 707864 (office) Email: David.primrose@lichfield.anglican.org
- The leader of the evaluation of this project, Dr Peter Kevern Telephone: 07765500948 (mobile); 01785 353762 (office) Email: p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk
- Your Church ministers or lay pastoral workers

If you change your mind, or have any further questions, or would like a summary of the report sent to you later then please get in touch with the lead researcher on this project:
Peter Kevern,
Staffordshire University,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Blackheath Lane,
Stafford ST18-0AD
Tel: 01785 353762
Email: p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk

Facilitator Report

Name (to be detached on receipt)

Code number (to be supplied on receipt)

Date report received

About you:
Which Age band are you in? (21-25, 26-30, 31-35 . . . .)
Male or Female?
Which parish or congregation|?

About your event:
When (date and time) was it held?
Where was it held?
Including yourself, how many people were there?
Did you stick to the suggested framework for event (Y/N)

- If you answered 'No', how did you change it to fit the local situation?
- What prompted you to make these changes?

About the participants:
Overall, do you think people found the event valuable?
Do you think anybody found it distressing or upsetting?

Reflecting upon your event:
Can you name up to five things which *went well* during the event?
Can you name up to five things which were *difficult or disappointing* about the event?
Are there any changes you would make to :

- the initial training materials
- the training day
- the support offered to facilitators

Would you run an event like this again? If so

- What changes would you make?
- How often would you run it, and in what format?

Interview Schedule

Telephone Interview outline – some of the questions we may ask you

Are you still willing to be interviewed? Is this a convenient time?
Do you have any questions before we continue?
Could you give your name, age (within 5 years) and parish? What date was the GraveTalk event in your parish?
What were your overall impressions?
Why did you go?
What did you enjoy/find useful?
What did you find unpleasant or difficult?
What did you take away?
Any questions or issues you would still like to follow up?
Would you go to another event like this?
How do you *feel* now?
Any support needed?

Focus Group Question

From your experience, if some-one else was considering running GraveTalk, what reasons would you give to recommend running GraveTalk, and what advice would you give to address potential problems?

Appendix E – Summary of results from feedback on the Conversation Cards

Question	Number of valid responses	Rating[1]	Additional comments
1. What is your favourite possession, and who are you leaving it to?	5	3	
2. What should happen to someone's effects if they die without leaving a Will?	10	4	Made people think, reiterated importance of planning
3. What music would you like to have played or sung at your funeral?	11	5	Strong positive response
4. Have you experienced a NBS?	10	2	Respondents said that people were unclear of the nature of an NBS or did not know they existed. May be more useful as NBSs become more 'mainstream'
5. Have you experienced the death of a pet?	11	2	Most didn't find relevant or helpful, but one acknowledged that others did benefit from it
6. How do you react when you see flowers at a funeral?	9	1	Mostly viewed as irrelevant
7. What was your first experience of grief?	4	5	
8. Have you been to a funeral?	10	4	Several thought this was unhelpful, as inviting a one-word answer, but others saw it's potential. Two suggested an amendment along the lines of ". . . and if so, what were your impressions of it?"
9. Would you take a child to a funeral?	10	5	Despite being potentially a closed question, this attracted a favourable response
10. If you could ask one question of someone .you love who has died,	9	4	Generally favourable, two found it 'too speculative'

[1] Rating is calculated on a 5-point scale from 1 (Irrelevant/Unhelpful); 2 (Needs revision); 3 (OK, but not particularly useful) 4 (Good, but may be improved) 5 (Very good)

what would it be?			
11. What was the best funeral you have been to?	8	2	The adjective 'best' seems to have been the sticking-point here.
12. What is the reason for a funeral?	7	4	One suggested, "What *are* . . ."
13. If you were planning your funeral, what would you include?	10	5	
14. What does a roadside shrine mean to you?	6	2	Seen as irrelevant by some, appreciated by others
15. Would you show dead bodies on the news?	8	2	Question of relevance
16. How would you explain death to a 5 year old?	9	4	Mostly positive, but one found it too broad and in need of definition/clarification
17. What would you like to do before you die?	7	5	
18. Where is your Will?	11	5	10/11 found this practical and helpful
19. What life experience have you valued most?	3	5	NB low response
20. Who has really inspired you in your life?	4	3	Evenly divided between those who found this a good question, and those who found it irrelevant
21. Would you prefer to be buried or cremated?	8	1	All rejected this as a closed question
22. What do you value most in life?	9	5	
23. Where were you when Diana . . .	11	1	Most saw this as irrelevant or outdated
24. How old would you like to be when you die?	9	5	
25. What does it mean to die with dignity?	10	4	Overall, 'difficult, but useful'
26. Where would you like your remains to be disposed of?	8	5	
27. What does it mean to have a 'good death'?	9	4	Two thought the question needed more explanation
28. What is your most memorable death in a film or book?	3	4	
29. If you knew this was	7	5	

the last day of your life, what would you do?			
30. Would you want to know if you were terminally ill?	7	5	
31. Do you have a favourite poem about death?	9	2	Found this meaningless without a selection of poems, so could not be answered usefully in the GraveTalk format
32. What would you like your lasting legacy to be?	10	3	Evenly divided between those who found it a good question and those who found it difficult/unimportant/unclear
33. If you knew you were dying, what would you change about your life?	7	4	Divided between those who found it good and those who found it hard or better as a one-to-one question for later
34. Should people talk more about death & dying?	9	5	All positive; but this is a self-selecting group
35. Do you believe in life after death?	8	4	Some found this a closed question
36. Do we 'recover' from grief?	4	5	
37. What is your earliest memory of death?	11	5	A number named this as a particularly good opening question
38. How would you like to be remembered?	8	5	
39. What would your epitaph be?	10	2	'Epitaph' needed explaining
40. What is heaven?	6	2	Possibly too difficult/broad
41. What was helpful when you were grieving?	9	5	
42. Have you seen a dead body?	11	1	Closed question; difficult opener; potentially distressing
43. How is grief portrayed in the media?	7	3	Possibly too broad/abstract
44. What is your favourite place?	11	1	Seen as irrelevant
45. How would you help a grieving friend?	3	5	
46. What is your greatest achievement?	8	2	Seen as irrelevant

47. What has been most important to you in life?	**6**	**3**	
48. How do you feel about being asked to wear bright colours at a funeral?	**6**	**4**	
49. If you could choose, where would you like to die?	**7**	**5**	
50. Data missing	**-**	**-**	

Rating is calculated on a 5-point scale from 1 (Irrelevant/Unhelpful); 2 (Needs revision); 3 (OK, but not particularly useful) 4 (Good, but may be improved) 5 (Very good)

The number of respondents varied for each question, as participants were asked to concentrate on those questions of which they had personal experience.

Many volunteered information about what would be good 'Opening Questions' or 'Conversation Starters', as opposed to others that would need introducing later in the session. This raises the question of whether it would be useful to introduce some kind of order or sequencing of cards.

Responses marked as 'invalid' were those which answered the question, rather than reported on the cards themselves.

'Good' response was typically explained as 'provoked much discussion', or occasionally, 'opened new perspectives'. There was thus a good understanding of the purpose of the events as conversations rather than didactic tools.

Appendix F - Short biographies of project leads

Dr Peter Kevern

Peter is an Associate Professor at Staffordshire University, where much of his research focusses on the importance of spirituality and religion to people at times of crisis. He led the evaluation of the pilot.
Email: p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk

Revd Dr Sandra Millar

Sandra is Head of Projects and Development for the Archbishop's Council. She was responsible for completing the work on the Council's Weddings Projects, and is now coordinating a similar project on Death, Bereavement and Funerals. This pilot is one part of that project. Sandra commissioned the pilot and hopes to use the lessons learned in a national initiative.
Email: Sandra.millar@Churchofengland.org

Manjula Patel

Manjula Patel has been with Murray Hall Community Trust for the last twelve years and manages services to support people with end of life care needs. She has been involved with the development of Compassionate Communities since 2009 and has found it successfully accepted by communities, organisations, groups and individuals. Currently she is also working on a doctoral research programme at Warwick University. Email: Manjulapatel@nhs.net

Rev David Primrose

David is Director of Transforming Communities for the Diocese of Lichfield, currently prioritising ministry with older people, tackling poverty, and environmental issues. As a former parish priest, conversations about death and dying have always been important. He has recently submitted his thesis for a doctorate in psychology of religion. Email david.primrose@lichfield.anglican.org

Miss Jennifer Sanders

Jennifer is a lecturer in Health Studies at Staffordshire University. She was responsible for gathering and analysing much of the data for the GraveTalk pilot and was co-author of the current report. Email: Jennifer.sanders@staffs.ac.uk

Appendix G – List of material available for scrutiny on accompanying CD-ROM

Ethical Approval application
PDF of the Facilitator Resource Pack

NB. If CD-ROM is not included with this edition, these documents can be obtained by email from p.kevern@staffs.ac.uk