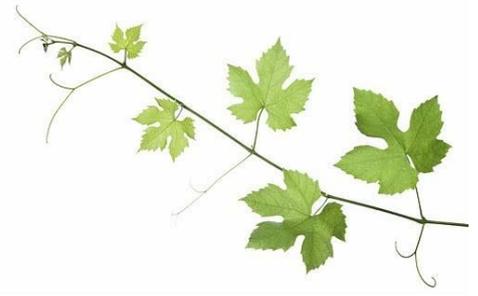


# Remembering the Shortest Lives on the Shortest Day



The middle of June in New Zealand, marks the shortest day of the year and for some, a time to remember the most inexplicable sadness that can happen within a family – the death of an infant or the loss of a pregnancy.

In recent years groups which offer support and counselling for those who experience bereavement in pregnancy or early childhood, have organised memorial services to gather together and remember these ‘shortest lives on the shortest day.’ For some, the bleak mid-winter can be harsh and bring up difficult memories.

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It can be particularly difficult to mourn the loss of a life ended in pregnancy through miscarriage or elective abortion. Not everyone carries a deep sense of grief from miscarriage, and abortion might not seem such a terrible option for someone who is reassured by medical professionals and the silence of others. Implicit in the process of abortion, is the distancing of participants from the humanity of the child conceived, through careful language and medical euphemisms. There is, however, no time limit on grief and often women and men find themselves on a long and emotional journey of very complex sadness as the reality of their child conceived but not brought to birth, becomes clear.

Recognising the hidden sorrow from pregnancy loss is not easy. Often people make maladaptations, such as over working or over-parenting subsequent children in order to survive a traumatic event.

‘Disenfranchised’ is the term used to describe a grief that is not recognised by society. It describes a grief without the social support and emotional structures which allows a person to move through the process of recognising and reconciling themselves to a profound loss, in a healthy way.

So how then are those among us to be loved and supported in this personal mid-winter? Memorial services are one way to mark the reality of ‘the shortest lives’ and over time, people will find their own ways to respectfully honour the memory of their child. An ornament on a mantle-piece, a card or picture, a piece of jewellery, a tree or returning to a special place may be part of a person’s remembrance rituals and can help with adjusting to life as it now is. No matter the circumstances, the mid-winter is a good time to journey from deep grief to hope.

Loss, grief and  
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Prayer and practical support is the key. Greenstone Doors based in Lower Hutt invites people to make use of its counselling and its 'Wildflowers' support and information group.

From the shortest day and throughout June, the Rachel's Vineyard (NZ) Trust will be mailing parishes with information about Rachel's Vineyard Retreat weekends, offering a practical and sensitive experience to those struggling with the spiritual or emotional pain of abortion. Both *Greenstone Doors* and *Rachel's Vineyard Retreats* offer hope to those who are suffering and struggling through this time.

For more information and support, contact

Rachel's Vineyard: [www.rachelsvineyard.org.nz](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org.nz) or [rvnzretreats@gmail.com](mailto:rvnzretreats@gmail.com)

Greenstone Doors: [www.greenstonedoors.co.nz](http://www.greenstonedoors.co.nz) or [info@greenstonedoors.co.nz](mailto:info@greenstonedoors.co.nz)