

Keith Dow, *Manager of Organizational and Spiritual Life*

January’s Reflection on our 2025 organizational theme, ‘Celebrate Every Journey,’ reminded us that life’s journeys, whether accompanied by grief and challenges or marked by joy and success, are all worth celebrating. Dean remembered his friend’s celebration of life, saying “A bunch of us got together and talked about what our friend has done, how we all met him, and his life and death.”

It’s meaningful and important to celebrate the lives of people who have died. Over the years, I have participated in many celebrations of life. I’m always moved by the impact people have had on their community. It’s significant for their friends and loved ones to come together to remember them. Grief is not something to be “solved,” and we may never find complete closure after loss. Grief doesn’t always go away, but our relationship to it changes with time.

As we learn to celebrate every journey, let’s put as much effort into celebrating everybody’s life as we do into celebrations of life.

Penny is someone we supported in the Kingston area. Before she passed away in the fall of 2024, her friends and support team did everything they could to celebrate her *before* she died. In February 2025, I spoke with Sandra (Program Manager) and Lorie (Penny’s friend) from Kingston about how they celebrated Penny’s life while she was still with them. As per our policy (B 7.5 ON, B 14.5 SK), they then worked closely with Penny and her family to make decisions around palliative care and consulted with their Area Manager and Executive Director to ensure palliative care at home was a desired and realistic option.

I hope you’ll take a few minutes to watch [this video](#). Consider how you might celebrate someone’s life in the next month, whether or not their health is declining.

In Psalm 19:12 (NIV), the Psalmist prays, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” We don’t know how many days we have ahead. Remembering that life is a journey with a beginning and an earthly end helps us make the most of the time we have left. What better way to share this time than to celebrate the lives we have been given!

Making the Connection

What’s the best celebration you have been a part of? What were you celebrating? What made it special?

For those who provide direct support: Have you talked with people about their choices for the end of their life? If so, how did these conversations go? If not, why not?

What did you like or appreciate about the way Sandra, Lorrie, and Penny’s community celebrated her life while she was alive? How do you like to be “celebrated?”