

# DWELL FOREVER

*supporting young widows*



DwellForever.com



*In honor of Steven, my immeasurably more.*

*For Staci and Janice.*

# Mission:

To support young widows through Christ-centered  
encouragement, presence and rest

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*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for His name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff,  
they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.*

*Psalms 23*

# Young Widowhood

Our relationships with our spouses are often a cornerstone of our own identity; our spouse's needs, wants and dreams are intertwined with our own. Losing your spouse means losing your identity as a husband or wife and losing all of the plans you and your spouse had together.

Widowhood is difficult at any age, but young widows and widowers often find themselves especially alienated from their peers, who are in the midst of having children, buying new homes and in general building a life with their own spouses. There's also the daunting prospect of living another 30, 40 or 50 years without your spouse by your side.

For a young widow or widower, it can feel like no one understands the pain and turmoil they're experiencing. Most people under age 40 don't have anyone in their existing social circle who have experienced a similar loss.

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## Did you know?

The Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale lists the death of a spouse as the number one life change that increases susceptibility to a stress-induced health breakdown.

- 50% of widows leave their church in the first year of widowhood.
- 60% experience a serious illness within the first year.
- After the death of her spouse, a widow loses about 75% of her support system.
- Many widows experience poverty for the first time.
- One third of women, upon becoming widows, meet the criteria for clinical depression within two months (one year later one half of those are still clinically depressed).

# Dwell Boxes

Dwell Boxes are gifts of encouragement to support young widows during their first year of widowhood. It's my hope these boxes serve as reminders of God's love and presence during the early days of devastation as well as in the days of grief that follow.

## *in each box:*

- a personal note of encouragement
- a faith based book/devotional (to help her process her loss and suffering through a Biblical lens)
- items for reflection and prayer
- a gift that encourages rest/relaxation
- a remembrance gift in honor of her late husband

## *in the future . . .*

- information about opportunities for respite, and long-term care and discipleship
- small gifts and resources for her children

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## *A total of four boxes will be sent:*

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| - 1st Box | Within her first month of loss  |
| - 2nd Box | Three months  |
| - 3rd Box | Six months  |
| - 4th Box | Eleven months (just before the 1 year anniversary of her husband's passing) |

*\$300 sponsors a widow for her first year of widowhood*  
this includes gifts, supplies, and shipping

# *Presence + Care*

A deep and painful isolation often accompanies unexpected loss, and the weight of grief can be too much to bear if left to carry alone.

*in the future . . .*

- create opportunities to walk alongside young widows by providing care and support through one on one connections and small group discipleship  
(Plans to begin a Young Widow Support Group in Fall 2024 or Winter 2025)
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*helping young widows see God's presence  
in their dark valley and Trust that  
His goodness and love  
has not left them*

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James 1 makes it clear that caring for widows and the fatherless is an assignment of God's Church. Oftentimes, a widow's community longs to walk with her, but doesn't know how.

*in the future . . .*

- share resources and practical tips on how to care and walk with young widows  
(see 'What you can do?' on the next page)

# What can you do?

1. Sit with her in church. The reminders of all that was and all that is no more are never more poignant than when we follow our old routines without our partner by our side. She sees everyone else sitting where they always sat and she feels very, very alone. Change things up and physically surround her for that hour at church. You get to go home with your person. She doesn't.
2. Call or visit during the week. Six days can feel endless when they are filled with emptiness. Whether she admits it or not, she needs you.
3. Don't judge or condemn. Grief is hard enough without feeling like she has to hide her agony for your sake.
4. Talk about him. Say his name. Let her share memories. Better yet, share some of your memories of him with her.
5. Let her cry if she needs to. Bring tissues and cry with her.
6. Don't be afraid of her pain. She may be angry for a season. Don't abandon her. Press in! She needs unconditional love now, more than ever.
7. Try to meet her practical needs. This doesn't always mean money. It may look like a genuine hug (many widows go weeks or months at a time without any physical touch), fixing a leaky toilet, or going with her to a difficult appointment. She probably won't ask, so you'll have to ask the Spirit to show you what you can do. Even a heartfelt card in the mail or a small gift on her doorstep can make a huge difference.
8. Pray for her, but also pray with her. She lost her prayer partner and needs to hear her name spoken to God once again. You may be surprised to find that her newfound reliance upon God has made her a powerful prayer warrior and you will greatly benefit from her prayers as well.
9. If she decides to leave her church, don't take it personally and don't give up on her. Help her find a new church where she can find a new normal. So many churchgoers "ghost" people who leave, but that is not what Christ expects from His body. Church is not a place. WE are the Church!

Creating space for rest and respite is essential to anyone experiencing the devastation and sorrow of loss, but especially for the young widow who is thrown into this unwanted new life, assuming many of the roles and responsibilities of her late husband.

## Retreats

*in the future . . .*

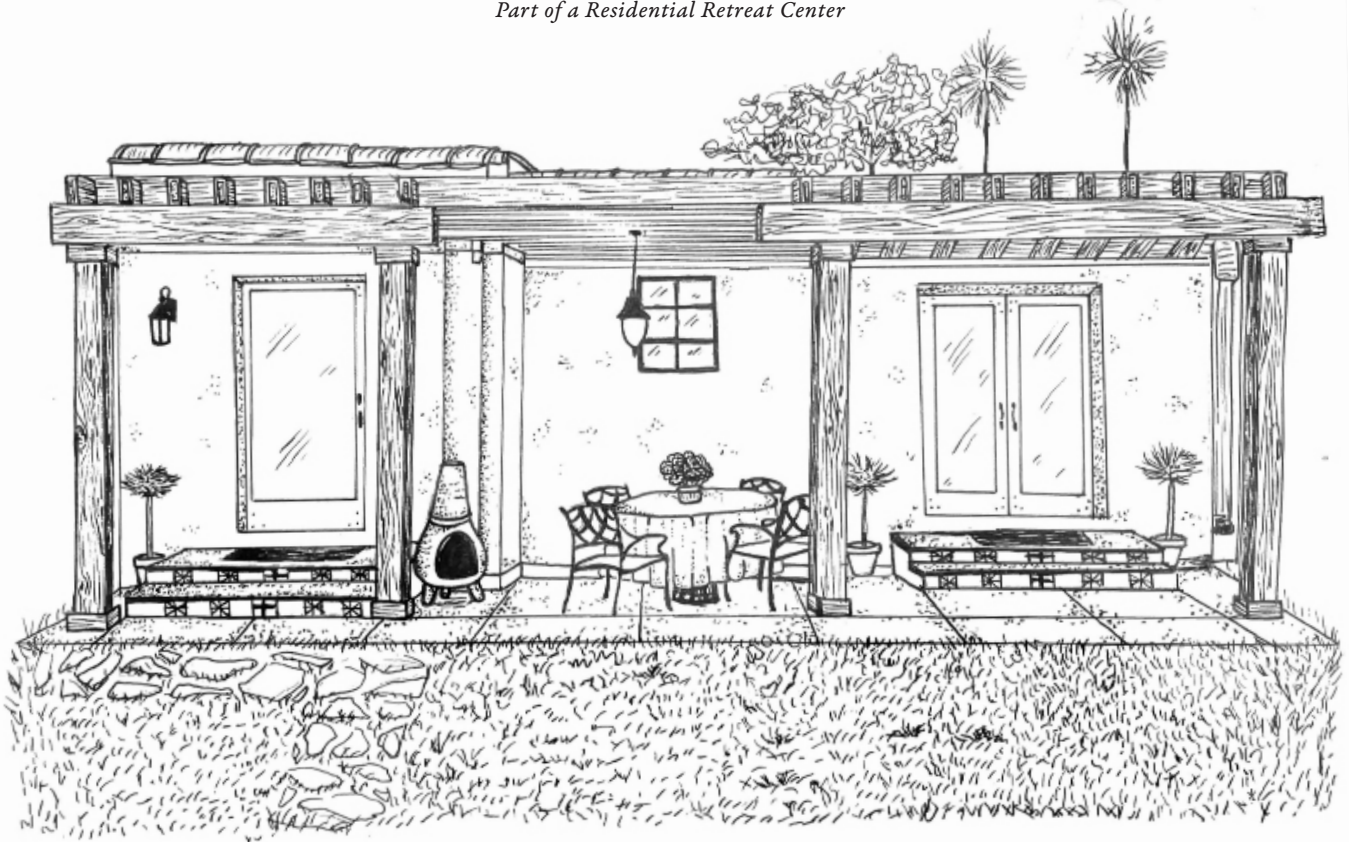
- host weekend retreats for young widows that offer hope, provide space for reflection, rest, and fun amongst other widows who have walked a similar path

## Respite

*in the far future . . .*

- provide hospitality and lodging for young widows (and their children) to experience respite getaways

*A Dwelling Unit Mock-up  
Part of a Residential Retreat Center*



*Illustrated by Ella F.  
Former Student of Steven Yoder*



*Steven G. Yoder*  
*June 21, 1982 - August 9, 2020*



*I remember his kindness and thoughtfulness*  
*I remember his passion for truth*  
*I remember his dedication to the Lord*  
  
*I remember his legacy for you and me . . .*  
*to live forever trusting Him*