* the ability to help people to arrange the funeral service (e.g. hymns, etc.)
* knowledge of local support networks (e.g. Rainbows and Cruse)
* the ability to know when to pass on concerns to professionals
* an understanding of the necessity of confidentiality
* good communication with liturgy group and parish priest
* a willingness to be trained
* a willingness to support each other by regular contact
* a willingness to meet together as a group every few months

**Moving on…** In light of this reflection, the example and the checklist, how do you react to the actions taken by the parishioners and what action can you take as a parish community in these changed times.

You may find the generic *“Action Planning Profoma*” helpful as you plan for the future………………………..

##### *(Please insert your own parish name here before copying for parish use)*

##### *Parishes of Hope*

*Celebrating, consolidating and securing the Mission of the Church in Doncaster Deanery; - an opportunity to deepen the faith of our Parish communities in changing times*

***“Gratitude for the past, enthusiasm for the present, hope for the future” (John Paul ll)***

##### *Parish Bereavement Support*

##### *Diocese of Hallam*

##### *Doncaster Deanery (St Charles Borromeo)*

***Dean: Rev Augustine O’Reilly V.F.***

*Our Lady of Sorrows & St Francis, Armthorpe; Blessed English Martyrs, Askern; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Bentley; St Alban’s, Denaby Main; Our Lady of Mount Carmel Intake; Sacred Heart, Balby; St Paul’s, Cantley; St Peter in Chains, Doncaster: St Mary’s, Edlington; English Martyrs, Mexborough; St Joseph & St Nicholas, Moorends; Christ the King, Rossington; Our Lady of the Assumption, Stainforth; St Joseph & St Teresa, Woodlands.*

**Thinking about Parish Bereavement Support:**

**Reflection** … If you are thinking of reviewing or planning support for those bereaved in the parish on a structured basis, then it may be appropriate to establish a ‘bereavement support group’

One of our deanery parishes, currently without a resident priest recently held a “Bereavement Meeting”. To allow as many people as possible to attend, the meeting was held in the parish meeting room at 4.30pm prior to the parish weekend Mass at 6pm. The only ‘expertise’ people were asked to bring were sensitivity and care – no one was excluded.

Six people attended the meeting, they had an excellent discussion, decided that some planning and specific action was really needed, some resources needed to be ordered, checklists prepared, other parishioners needed to know what was happening and there needed to be another meeting.

The following notice was inserted into the following week’s bulletin:

***BEREAVEMENT MEETING:*** *Many thanks to Mary and Judith, Amy and Joan, John and Pete for coming to the meeting last Saturday and to those who sent apologies. We had a really good meeting and will be coming together again at 4.30pm on Saturday 25th Feb. We would love others to join us—all you need to bring is sensitivity and care. (names have been changed)*

Two more people came to the next meeting and each member of the group received a copy of *“Into Your Hands: planning a Catholic funeral*” and *“A Catholic Funeral: a Guide for the Family.”*

Time was spent becoming familiar with the books and responding to questions. One important issue clarified was that a funeral outside Mass, like a wedding outside Mass, is a full Catholic liturgy, not something second rate.

The next time a death occurred in the parish community the parishioners were better able to react. Three members of the bereavement group made direct contact with the bereaved; one informed other group members that she would be the first point of contact both before the funeral and afterwards; one member of the group made a visit with the visiting priest; one member prepared a service booklet and one member made arrangements for an organist, checked the heating was timed for the service, the toilet clean for any visitors and that the kettle was on for visitors travelling long distances. All members of the bereavement group rooted their actions in prayer, held each other in prayer, attended the funeral if at all possible and continue to hold the bereaved in prayer. Finally, the name of the deceased was entered into the parish book of remembrance and the bulletin team were asked to ensure appropriate words of comfort and support were printed.

That parish found the following checklist useful too:

As a parish do we have people in our bereavement group who have:-

* the ability to listen
* the ability to empathise
* a commitment to regular support
* a willingness to arrange practicalities (if necessary)
* a knowledge of the grieving process
* the ability to answer questions about funeral arrangements (e.g. do we follow coffin into church or will it be there already?)