

The University of Dublin

**Suicide Survivors and Pastoral Care;**

How can clergy in the Church of Ireland in the Republic better understand and support those who have been bereaved by suicide and at the same time care for themselves?

being a dissertation submitted for a degree of Master in Theology in the University of Dublin

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

For every one suicide, a multitude of victims is left behind. These include family, friends, the wider community, schools, clubs, parishes, professional and community carers and clergy. The purpose of this research is to find out what resources and pastoral care, if any, are available within the Church of Ireland in the Republic of Ireland for clergy and suicide survivors.

### **Method**

This research was carried out by extensive reading, a detailed search for books, support groups, counselling services, government funded agencies, community and church organisations, and a series of interviews with suicide survivors, carers and clergy.

To gain foundational insights and understandings on the subject of suicide, I conducted a detailed examination of the Biblical examples of suicide. This revealed that the Biblical writers neither condemn nor condone suicide, and that the word suicide or its equivalents never appear in the Bible.

In examining Church thinking, I found that suicide recurs throughout history, raising different ethical questions and opinions.

The interviews show the importance of pastoral care for the survivors and the carers. The research concentrated particularly on the Church of Ireland in the Republic of Ireland and examined what resources are available to clergy and whether there are support systems in place for them as carers.

### **Findings**

The Church of Ireland in the Republic, in comparison with other organisations and Churches is behind in addressing the needs of the survivor and the clergy. This dissertation recommends that the Church of Ireland increases its information and training programmes, provides guidelines for funerals and appoints and equips pastoral-care persons or teams for clergy.

A resource pack has been collated during this research and can be adapted for survivors and clergy. It accompanies this dissertation on CD and is detailed in Appendix 2.

### **Conclusion**

Many questions about suicide remain unanswered. However, improving the pastoral care of suicide survivors can be addressed. So this research seeks to begin that process.

**Key words;** Suicide Survivors, Biblical, Unforgivable Sin, Historical, Prayer Book, Pastoral Care, the Suicidal Mind, Resources.