

Surviving but not alone

There are some parish organizations that have a social basis. They gather together people of like faith and core beliefs, to interact in activities of common interest. Others are strictly geared to spiritual growth and outreach.

Surviving Spouses encompasses both. Its mission statement proclaims: “We are committed to providing spiritual and social support to those who have lost a spouse.”

The ministry, started in 2006, is headed by co-chairmen Ruth Ann Struglinski and Betty Regan. While there is a roster of members—about 30 strong—the organization is rather informal and does not hold regular meetings. Ruth Ann says, however, that members are encouraged to “give suggestions and help organize events.” And a surviving spouse doesn’t have to be an official member of the group in order to participate in its activities.

For the most part, Ruth Ann says, “we are reaching out to one another with compassion, encouragement and understanding.”

The ministry has several books—on grieving, handling one’s new life circumstances and surviving the holidays without a spouse—available for loan. They are offered to the newly widowed after a spouse’s funeral or can be requested by a simple call to one of the co-chairmen.

On the spiritual side, a Morning of Reflection is held twice a year. Each starts with a Mass offered for the surviving spouses’ intentions and is followed by breakfast and a presentation by Deacon Terry Peacock.

On the social side, some past activities have been game nights, Salad Suppers and an annual Pasta Night at Fairlawn Country Club. Summer outings might include events at Port House Theater or Blossom Music Center. Invitations to these events are announced in the church bulletin.

Ruth Ann adds that the ministry encourages participation in parish events. Their next event as a group will be attending Lessons and Carols on Dec. 14, with dinner to follow.

No matter what the event, Ruth Ann says, “All our gatherings are in the spirit of prayer, fun and fellowship.” She emphasizes that activities are open to all widows and widowers in the area, not only in the parish.

For anyone who is interested in the group, its resources and activities Ruth Ann Struglinski can be reached at 330-867-3479 or rstrug@aol.com. Betty Regan can be reached at 330-864-8019 or bettyregan@sbcglobal.net.

