

Testimony by B. Farrow for Widow 2 Widow, Inc. — March 2002

Nearly two years ago when I lost my husband, Ed, I thought I would not be able to survive life without him and did not know if I really wanted to. When I was contacted about Widow 2 Widow, Inc. I knew that I needed to check this out. I was searching for help and needed to be able to talk to someone who was going through the same situation I was going through. I needed to share my feelings with someone outside of my family and be able to cry if I wanted to. With Widow 2 Widow, Inc. I have found that comfort and there is so much love within this group of ladies. I can say what is on my heart and they understand and know exactly what I'm dealing with. I had not wanted to cry in front of my three sons for fear of upsetting them. But I've learned at Widow 2 Widow, Inc. it is okay to cry in front of your family and friends. At each meeting there is always someone who comes up and gives you a hug at just the right time you need it most or you get a phone call during the week from someone in the group who just calls to say they were thinking of you. This means so much. I really look forward to the meetings each month to share in the fellowship with my new friends. Sometimes when we do not have a speaker and we just sit and talk and share with the group that has truly blessed me. When I leave the meeting I feel I can go home and face life better because of this group of ladies who are praying for me, and I always meet someone at the meetings who needs a special prayer that day or the weeks ahead and I am able to share in that. Widow 2 Widow, Inc. has brought me a long way since our first meeting in February 2001.

But, I could not talk about Widow 2 Widow, Inc. without talking about you, Elaine. God put you in my life at a time when I did not want to live without Ed, but you talked to me and shared with me because you were experiencing the same sorrow I was in the loss of your husband. Your cards each week were so uplifting and for several weeks you called me weekly. I began to look forward to your call. I can remember one week I had not heard from you and I realized I had really missed your call. Then that very night, you called and said just the right words I needed to hear. God has and is using you in such a wonderful way and you will never know how much you have helped me. I just feel and have felt for a long time that God has something greater in Widow 2 Widow, Inc. for you because you always seem to have just the words we as a group of widows need to hear. God has given you a gift and I hope I get to share in Widow 2 Widow, Inc. with you for a long time.

God Bless you and I love you,
B Farrow

Testimony by L. Lucht for Widow 2 Widow, Inc. — March 2003

One year after my husband and I moved to Tennessee, he suddenly became ill. By the end of our second year, he had gone home to be with the Lord. Our church family was the most loving and caring people we had ever known. The pastor, deacons, lay people and the entire church were there to help during his illness.

When I began my new life as a widow at the age of forty-nine, my desperate need was to find a widow support group. I needed to be with others who had walked in my shoes, and it was something that my church did not have.

Some 17 years later, I attended the first Widow 2 Widow, Inc. meeting at my church. I asked myself why I was attending after all of these years. I soon realized this was what I had prayed for and could not find when I was new to this journey. It was all in God's timing and by His Grace that this ministry began. I have yet attended any of these meetings without someone's touch or something being said that I didn't need to help me get through that day. We help one another through talking about our struggles, or maybe just listening to another widow on her journey and knowing that I am not alone in how I feel. I enjoy the laughter shared among these ladies and some of my best friends have been made through this Widow 2 Widow, Inc. ministry. There is a real need for this ministry in every community across our country.

I Praise God for Elaine and for her obedience to His call to start this wonderful and beautiful ministry.
Lucht

Testimony by L. Fieldson for Widow 2 Widow, Inc. — July 2003

August of 2002 I moved from Pittsburgh, PA to Franklin, TN. The reason for the move was to be closer to my son and his family. I lost my husband Feb 6, 2000 due to heart failure. We were married for 50 years.

Only a person who has been through the loss of a loved one can understand the pain and life adjustments that come from a loss. My move to Franklin was to help deal with this life adjustment.

My son Jeffrey suggested that I visit his church. I did, and went to a new Sunday school class. All the ladies were very warm and friendly. After class, a lady asked if she could give my name to a lady who had a group of ladies called Widow 2 Widow, Inc. I went and the caring and love I felt from Elaine was just unbelievable. She was just what I needed. Elaine and all the ladies understood. You could talk to them. They too knew the pain.

Elaine Cook and the Widow 2 Widow, Inc. group have helped me build a new life. The church and Widow 2 Widow, Inc. have given me the will to keep going. This is such a great group and a great leader in Elaine Cook, and they really help people like me.

I love Widow 2 Widow, Inc. and Elaine for the love and understanding she has shown to me and to all the others.

Wonderful Widow 2 Widow, Inc.

Widow 2 Widow, Inc.

*a ministry
to women
by women*



Praise be to the Lord and

Thank you for your testimony

and the Lord's comfort, who

comforts us in all our tribulation

and who is with us to the end

of our lives

and who will be with us to the end

of our lives

A Ministry to Women by Women

A 501(c) 3 Non-Profit Organization

Mission Statement

Our mission is to offer a ministry of encouragement, comfort, support and guidance to women who are dealing with the loss of their husbands.

What can you expect from Widow 2 Widow, Inc. ?

A network of caring and compassionate friends
Ongoing support, encouragement and inspiration
Monthly meetings addressing relevant issues and topics

Contact Information:

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*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."
2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

Welcome to the Widow 2 Widow, Inc. Ministry

This booklet is designed to aide the church in how to minister to the needs of women who are traveling the road of Widowhood. In James 1:27, we are commanded to care for the widows and the fatherless children. This is not a difficult task to obey once churches are aware that there are resources available to guide them to adopt this ministry.

Many churches come to the aide of new widows immediately following the death of their husbands, but how do you reach these hearts on a long-term basis? Being compassionate to widows goes beyond sending them a card or bringing them a meal to eat. It takes a ministry to reach out to their hearts and help them through the healing process by allowing them to be with other women in their various stages of the journey.

Widow2Widow, Inc. is a result of how God used this young widow's experience to reach out to others by sharing her story and offering hope that there is life after this journey; it is just different. God will equip your church with all that it needs to make His ministry available to your community.

The goal for Widow2Widow, Inc. is not to grow in numbers, but have a ministry that welcomes ladies in your community of all ages, race and religious affiliation. We encourage you to go beyond the normal expectations and apply these concepts to change how you reach out to others.

Widow2Widow, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization organized to minister to the needs of widows and to assist churches in helping widows of all ages, races, and religious backgrounds to overcome problems in their life's journey. To this end, W2W, Inc. will provide support to widows through organized support groups and conferences to help them understand and cope with their problems and concerns which they experience in their daily life. W2W, Inc. will establish, extend and promote seminars, workshops and conferences for widows and those who are leading support groups using the Bible and Christian principles. The organization plans to create inspirational material and guides to further its goal to help widows to adjust to the change in their lives.

This curriculum has been made available for those churches or individuals that feel the calling to start such a support group. If you need additional help and guidance in forming this ministry, you may use the contact information and Elaine would love the opportunity to speak with you further and perhaps to even come to your area to help you plan and/or to speak to a group about what this ministry is about, explain the vision and how God can use individuals and their experience to aide others in their own journey.

These are only a few of the topics, but your group will have varied needs. Keep your meetings inspirational, encouraging and informative. If someone needs to cry, then cry. Always include lots of laughter in your meetings. Laughter is okay during time of sorrow and pain. We share enough sadness in our journey that laughter is good medicine for the broken-hearted.

Pray about who you wish to be the Guest Speaker. Pray in all things in this ministry because this is God's vision to reach out to those that are hurting. We are Servants to His call.

Ideas for themes for meetings could include any of the following plus anything festive that you are committed to:

Luau (decorate in style - coconuts, palm trees, grass skirts, shells...)
Fiesta
English Tea (tea, scones, china)
Christmas celebration (idea: have ladies cook favorite Christmas dish & bring recipe for a cookbook later on)
Easter (basket, bunnies)
Seasons (fall, winter, spring, summer)
Holidays (4th of July, Thanksgiving, etc.)
Bloom Where God Plants You

Consider something festive for meetings around the holidays.

Curriculum for Meetings

(Example meeting - Approximately two hours)

Have a greeter at the door to welcome each woman before they actually walk in - hugs are always welcomed. This is very important because some ladies will come by themselves and feel intimidated and nervous in this venture.

Have name tags available. Some churches have laminated name tags so the women can use it each month, and if you RSVP for the meeting more than likely you will know what ladies are coming in order to have a name tag ready even if it's their first visit.

Have refreshments ready. Hot Water for tea is always a nice addition to your beverages. This meeting may be a luncheon. Depending on whether a luncheon or refreshments only depends on when you want the ladies to prepare their plates, etc. in the program. This is where the food committee is so helpful!

Begin the meeting by welcoming everyone and if making any special announcements.

Ask for prayer requests or praises to be shared. Some ladies would prefer to write these things down than to voice them. This is where you can bring your Prayer Captain(s) in to pass out the request cards that will be kept confidential.

Pray over the requests, etc. and of course, bless the meeting etc.

Introduce the Guest Speaker and give info about them that you received in advance. If you do not have a guest speaker, perhaps this meeting would be a good time to discuss among the widows what is difficult for them, get them to open up and let others know that they are not alone.

Guest Speaker (or discussion) usually has 20-40 minutes.

Thank the speaker and then move on to discuss any ministry news such as upcoming meetings, etc. Give handouts concerning future dates, etc.

Fellowship time. This can just be a time of visiting for the women to get to know one another, or have a devotion or testimony.

Positions available within the ministry for other widows to become involved:

Facilitator – Someone to organize and be the contact person and to delegate to other areas.

Prayer Captains (2) – To pray during meetings and to be available for any widow who needs individual prayer that they can call on.

Food Coordinator – Whether to use other resources within the church or to coordinate a food committee.

Decorating Coordinator – To have decorations for tables, etc to coordinate with the theme or topic for the month.

Secretary – To help church staff with mailings and to keep updated information on all widows.

Mentors – Widows are needed to help the facilitator call members regularly and to call on new widows. Encourage others to call on someone particularly hurting that day. Encourage others to be prayer warriors or to get out and have lunch.

Rewards of ministry

Being obedient to the demands of caring for widows and the fatherless children - James 1:27 ...to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

Gain membership from new ladies coming to meetings and finding a new place to worship.

Bring non-Christians into an environment to enrich their lives by finding Jesus Christ to help share the load.

Suggested Topics for meetings

****Find someone with knowledge to be a guest speaker****

Nutrition (how to cook for one, eating sensibly and appropriately)

Home and Personal Safety

Finances

Prayer

Legal Issues

Insurance

Fear

Self Esteem

Dealing with anger and sense of loss

Singleness

Devotionals

Finding your Spiritual Gifts

Organization 101

Social Security & Estate Planning

Grief and Recovery

Spiritual growth

Missions

How to Grow Beyond the Pain and Sorrow

Finding and Experiencing Joy

Have share time of testimonies by some of the ladies chosen in advance

About the Author and how Widow 2 Widow, Inc. Began



Elaine Cook is not a stranger to experiencing loss. By the time she was 38, she had already become a widow, single mom and experienced the loss of both parents as well as a child.

Elaine's life began to change in January 2000 when during their move to Tennessee, her husband Stan suffered a massive heart attack and died in the arms of their 11-year old son, Tyler. Elaine was still out of state when she received the phone call in the middle of the night. The authorities would not confirm the death, but she knew in her heart what the news would be by the time she got to TN. During the several hour trip to TN Elaine just prayed, not for the outcome of what she suspected, but for her son who was being taken care of by police and hospital officials until she arrived.

Within a few weeks of this incident and the Lord answering many prayers, including where they were to reside, Elaine knew starting a ministry for widows was her calling. Her new church family had shared love and compassion and ministered to them to a point that she understood why she was to experience the journey of widowhood. Later in that year, Elaine worked with the Family Life Minister and formed what is now a very successful ministry.

Elaine's life has been altered in many ways, but she knows God never left her side and has carried her through many dark moments. Elaine was blessed when the Lord sent her another wonderful and compassionate man and in October 2001, she wed as her son walked her down the aisle, gave her away and then stood (as best man) beside the man that would assume the new role of his Dad, Larry Cook. Larry does not replace the memory of her first love, but believes that the Lord planted this new family from a seed out of faithfulness, which has bloomed into a beautiful testimony of God's love.

This ministry has evolved because it is the Lord's ministry. Widow 2 Widow, Inc. has become a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and has expanded to other churches because Elaine has felt that showing these churches how to make this ministry grow is the key. Sharing her story has proven over and over again that there can be hope on that journey and you can find joy again, if you allow the Lord to equip you with what you need.

Letter from Gayle Haywood, Small Group Minister at Brentwood Baptist Church

Widow 2 Widow, Inc. is a living testimony of how God can turn tragedy into triumph. When I first met Elaine Knight Cook, in the immediate aftermath of her husband Stan's death, I would never have dreamed how God would transform her life and use her and this crisis for greater good.

Over lunch one day, not many weeks after Stan's death, Elaine told me she felt God was leading her to use her loss to help other women who were dealing with the loss of their husbands.

We began to talk about her vision. We talked and dreamed about how this group could be structured, who would be involved, when we would meet and what we would do at the meetings.

However, before we officially got the ministry off the ground, Elaine was put into action. A prominent member of our church was tragically killed in a car accident. Elaine began to send cards and notes to his widow. Without deliberate intent, we had our first Widow 2 Widow, Inc. member.

Women began to hear about our plans. They called and offered their help. They baked cakes and sweet breads. They offered their homes. They donated money. One of Elaine's bosses even offered his luxurious home for our first meeting, a Valentine's brunch.

In many ways it has been an effortless ministry. It has by far been the easiest ministry I've ever helped develop. I'm convinced it was all by God's design. Everything just flowed together.

Currently we have over one hundred women on our mailing list. They are not all Brentwood Baptist women; they come from surrounding areas, counties and towns. They tell their friends and neighbors and they tell others.

The beauty of it all is to see how God literally used a willing, listening and obedient heart and created a ministry that had far-reaching impact and effect on others, and the incredible thing is we know God's not finished with Elaine or this ministry, yet.

Best wishes to you as you seek God's guidance in developing a similar ministry in your church. I can guarantee it will be a blessing to you, your church and to everyone whose life is touched by this ministry.