The Book Project: Victory Over Death

In July of 2020, Arrington Funeral Directors, Jackson, Tennessee published a book entitled *Victory Over Death: Funeral Messages of Hope & Healing*. Bob Arrington, president/founder of Arrington Funeral Directors and NFDA past president, had a dream of providing a practical ministry tool to those new to the ministry. Knowing that ministers receive very little training in conducting a funeral in their Bible college or seminary education, a retired pastor of 25+ years, Rev. Ron Hale was added to the staff as Minister of Church Outreach to help launch the book project.

Experienced local pastors from various denominations were invited to submit funeral messages for the book. Funeral home staff wrote chapters on: Death and Grief, The Pastor's Response When a Church Member Dies, and Advice from a Funeral Director to those Leading the Funeral Service. These chapters give step-by-step instructions to the pastor/lay leader in working with the Funeral Director and the family in planning and conducting the funeral service.

Over fifteen funeral messages were published by seasoned pastors/lay leaders. The family of Dr. Adrian Rogers (1931-2005), the longtime pastor of the 15,000 member Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, TN released two of his messages on death and dying for the book project. Dr. Logan Hampton, the president of Lane College, a historic minority college in Jackson, Tennessee submitted a funeral message. The book concludes with helpful chapters on: The Purposeful Committal Service and A Church Remembrance Service.

The book received notice in local newsprint, radio, and television outlets as well as nationally in The Director Magazine and The American Funeral Director. The area Christian bookstore hosted an event on a Saturday highlighting the release and offered a free copy to students studying for the ministry, lay leaders and pastors.

The book has also been a great way for our Minister of Church Outreach to visit with pastors with this gift and discover needs and hurts during the COVID-19 pandemic. With over 11,500 COVID-19 cases in the city of Jackson and Madison County, Tennessee and 243 related deaths, the ministry and stress of making the right decision at the right time has taken a toll on many ministers. Some have called this "decision fatigue." Therefore, the book became available at an extremely crucial moment. One pastor shared, "After you gave me the book, I was able to pull ideas from it the very next week."

Another pastor shared, "I've been a pastor of the same church for over 14 years. I have preached over 110 funerals. This book is a HUGE resource of help and ideas for specific needs. It is helpful in not repeating the same funeral message to many of the same attendees."

When evaluating the project and the dream of such a book, we can all see how *Victory Over Death* is a valuable resource for those on the frontline line of caring for the sick, dying, and grieving.

This book is dedicated to the life and legacy of Frances Arrington Harper (1926-2019), the mother of Bob and his biggest supporter. Books can be ordered through Amazon.