

Understanding MAiD in Alberta: Compassionate Choices at End of Life

It is likely that you, a loved one, or someone you know has been directly affected by MAiD. We would like to help people make informed, compassionate choices as they or their loved ones consider end-of-life decisions—or live in the aftermath of those who have undertaken a MAiD procedure.

We will gather not to debate, but to discern and broaden our understanding. MAiD invites us into a space where compassion, autonomy, suffering and ethics intersect.

We invite you to join us as we walk with those in suffering.

I. Framing the Conversation

Nearly one in twenty deaths in Canada, just over 15,000 people, resulted from MAiD in 2023, the latest year in which statistics are available ([Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2023](#)). Given these statistics, discussions on MAiD seem timely and important. Our view at St. Andrew's is that we serve both our congregation and weave ourselves into the larger community by providing public-service forums where we can listen and learn.

The church's perspective is this: *"We are called to walk with those in suffering—not to rush, not to abandon, but to accompany."* *"In life and in death, we belong to God."* — *Living Faith*, Presbyterian Church in Canada. As hosts in a public event, we acknowledge and welcome other perspectives. Seeking understanding and wishing to share openly from our hearts' deepest places, let us listen deeply and speak honestly and with care for one another.

Date: September 30, 2025, 7:00-8:30 pm

Location: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 730 Heritage Drive SE

Facilitator: Rev. Geoffrey Simmins, Spiritual Care Minister, St. Andrew's
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Key Terms

- **MAiD:** Medical Assistance in Dying, a legal medical procedure in Canada since 2016
- **Personal Directive:** A legal document naming a substitute decision-maker
- **Goals of Care:** Medical preferences for treatment and intervention
- **Bill C-14 / Bill C-7:** Federal legislation governing MAiD

■ II. MAiD's positive side: individuals can choose

Themes:

- Free choice and empowerment
- Using medical means to end suffering

Discussion Questions:

- What does “a good death” mean to you?
- What does a “bad death” mean to you?
- Can MAiD be an act of compassion?

Supporting Voices:

- *Dying with Dignity Canada*: Advocacy for advance requests and equitable access

■ III. MAiD's less positive side: Ethical and societal factors

Themes:

- Risk of coercion or desperation due to poverty, isolation, or lack of care
- Inadequate safeguards for vulnerable populations, and concern about rushed approval steps
- Few professionals are allowed to provide the procedure. Is this a concern?
- Moral distress among clinicians and spiritual caregivers

Discussion Questions:

- What safeguards should be in place to protect the vulnerable?
- How do we discern between suffering that is irreversible and suffering that is neglected?
- How are faith communities advocating for holistic care? (Are they doing enough? Too much?)
- What is the broader community's role in advocating for holistic care?

Supporting Voices:

- *Macdonald-Laurier Institute*: Legislative and practice gaps in MAiD
- Concerns around expanding eligibility to mental illness (2027)

■ IV. Seeing both perspectives

- Can you see one insight from each side of the conversation?
- Where do you feel tension? Where do you feel clarity?
- Optional discussions in small groups, and sharing with the wider group, supported by later journaling, shared discussions, and/or silent reflection

■ V. Grief and Grieving before and after a MAiD procedure

- A person who undertakes MAiD can focus over-much on the procedure, and overlook practical things they still need to do, such as a will, and saying goodbyes.
- Those who are left behind often experience “complex grief”: MAiD makes normal grieving difficult
- Crafting and accessing rituals and healing gestures becomes important both for the person accessing the procedure and those who are left behind. What rituals, and who, might be helpful?
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■ VI. Closing & Next Steps

- Can you name one helpful insight from this discussion?
- Can you name one remaining concern or question?
- Do you feel better equipped to access information that will enable you or a loved one to make an informed decision?
- If you have experienced a loss because of MAiD, do you feel equipped to seek resources for healing and grief?

Closing Blessing: *"May the God of compassion guide our discernment, soften our judgments, and strengthen our care."*

Resources:

Alberta Contacts

- **Alberta MAiD Care Team:** maid.careteam@ahs.ca / 📞 811
- **Dying With Dignity Canada:** www.dyingwithdignity.ca, especially their document, [Advance Care Planning Kit](#)
- **Bridge C-14:** Peer support for families and caregivers [Bridge C-14 | Support Through the MAiD Journey | Canada](#)

Broader Canadian Resources

- [Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2023 - Canada.ca](#)
- [From Mercy to Morality: Canada's MAiD Debate and the Ethics of Choices – IMMPress Magazine](#) From that article, these additional resources are cited:
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-services-benefits/medical-assistance-dying.html>
 - <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/ad-am/bk-di.html>
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2022.html#highlights>
 - MAiD patient interview: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6135118/>
 - Ethical considerations: <https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/bioethics/2021-v4-n2-bioethics06607/1084456ar.pdf>
 - Conscientious objection: <https://bmcomedethics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12910-020-00486-2>
 - *The Spectator*: <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/most-read-2022-why-is-canada-euthanising-the-poor/>
 - MAiD and mental health: <https://bmcomedethics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12910-023-00971-4#Sec3>
 - <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5788138/>