

A Publication of the National Black Chaplains Association

The Capsule

AUGUST 2018 | Volume 1 Issue 4

Diversity and Inclusion

Making the Choice:
Palliative or Hospice Care

Compassion
Fatigue

Join
the NBCA

The Power
of "It"!

Dealing with Military
Sexual Trauma

From the Desk of the President

Again, on behalf of the President and Executive Board we thank those of you who were able to share in the life-changing event during our recent conference in San Diego, California. Although a few months have elapsed, we continue to receive comments and reflections on the experience of our time together. We have witnessed the positive impact of the Navigator's Initiative Program and our new members are pursuing chaplain positions across the country. Navigating with well-prepared resumes, improving interview techniques and networking with leaders of the Association have been pivotal to the success of our recruitment efforts. Our newsletter continues to provide a wealth of information and affords the membership an opportunity to develop and share their literary skills. It has also created new interest in Association membership.

I am pleased to announce the 29th annual training conference to be held at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hotel Washington, D.C., July 10-13, 2019. By design we are strategically located near of the nation's capital to facilitate our ability to connect to our congressional leaders and for them to connect with us. Expanding collaborative partnerships with the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus is providing the Association with forward momentum.

We are expecting everyone to join us in what promises to be a conscious raising experience next year. This is your conference and our goal is to ensure that you will receive what you need to perform at the optimal level at your respective places of employment. If you have topics or suggestions, please forward those topics to the following email address: marvin.mills@va.gov. Every effort will be made to confer with leaders and organizations in Washington, DC to make the conference as meaningful and memorable as possible.

Lastly, I personally encourage each member to seek out sponsors who are interested in supporting the vision and mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs National Black Chaplains Association. We accept donations and those contributions will enable the organization to expand the quality of our meetings, maintain our newsletter, select presenters and serve our Veterans in the manner they should be served. Please join us in expanding our operations.

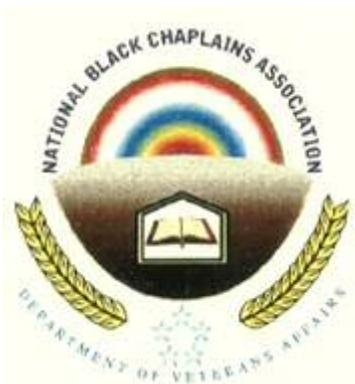


Chaplain Marvin L. Mills, Sr.
President, NBCA

Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill - July 10 -13, 2019



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FROM MY HEART TO YOUR HEART

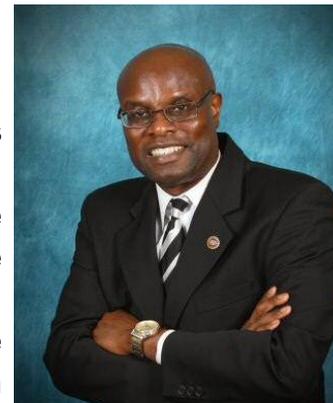
We are in the midst of summer which can be a fun time for some and a busy time for others. Summertime is a time for vacation, cook outs, making new friends, cleaning around the house, and outdoor activities. As we enjoy summer, there are a host of things we can be thankful for. We can be thankful for the life that God blesses us to experience every day. We can also be thankful for the ability to share our gifts and talents with others. As we share with our global readership in this newsletter, we are grateful for the opportunity to encourage you and your loved ones with the publication known as **The Capsule**. If you swallow the pill (*the information*), it is our hope and prayer that you will be blessed.

This issue will feature articles from a diverse field of writers. The writers are not limited to Black Chaplains. God made all people, and this is one of the reasons we have a multicultural newsletter which is distributed to a multicultural readership. Some of our featured articles are: Whole Health Initiative, Legislative Initiative, Health Insurance, Finances, Women's Equality Day, Military Sexual Trauma, Spiritual Aspects of Addiction, and Compassion Fatigue. Other articles that may spark your interest are Empowered by Faith, Moral Injury, a Special Kind of Support Group for Vietnam Veterans in the VAMC in Martinez, California, and those aspiring to become a CPE Supervisor.

Lastly, if this newsletter is beneficial to you, we have set up ways that you can **donate** to our organization so that we can reach more people like you. Furthermore, if you want to **advertise** in this newsletter, please contact me at alfray.thomas2@va.gov. In addition, we are seeking **new members (known as Assistant Members)** from all races, cultures, and religious persuasions. You do not need to be a chaplain. You can be a civilian, relative of a member, part of our readership, or other professional that would like to share your area of expertise.

As you begin to read through this newsletter, take your time and enjoy the articles. As you reflect on each article, ask yourself – how can this article help me to reach my goals in life or help me to make a contribution in the lives of others?

“No man (male/female) is an island; we need each other.”



Chaplain Rev. Dr.
Alfray Thomas, Jr.
Editor-in-Chief

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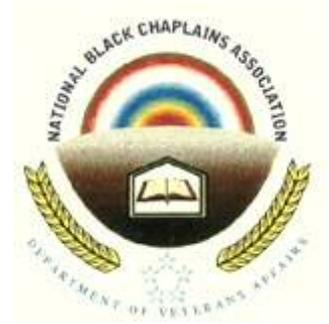
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MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Who Can Join? – We are looking for diversity and a multicultural atmosphere that is open to all. It does not matter your culture, ethnicity, or religious background.

Why Join? – To strengthen our membership spiritually, naturally, multiculturally, clinically, administratively, and financially. To become writers and contributors with a voice and a perspective. To enhance, edify, and educate our global readership and learn from each other.

The Benefits of Membership – To improve the quality and quantity of life for veterans and their families. To receive discount hotel rates for the VA National Black Chaplains Association conferences. To be eligible to become a writer, facilitator, moderator, or key note speaker/presenter at various conferences.



Membership Levels:

- ▶ **General (Regular) Membership (\$50 annually)** is available to any African American Chaplain employed by the DVA.
- ▶ **Associate Membership (\$35 annually)** is available to all other chaplains employed by or retired from the DVA and clergy spouses of chaplains who qualify for membership. It is also extended to Minority Chaplains from other federal institutions including Military, Prison, CPE Residents, Endorsers and other Allied Professionals.
- ▶ **Board Membership (\$75 annually)** is extended to all persons holding office, committee chairpersons, past presidents, and active and retired African American chaplain executives.
- ▶ **Assistant Members (\$25 annually)** non-voting members who serve as advocates or recruiters for the organization that will contribute to and support the vision of NBCA.

Join us today! Membership forms available at <https://vablackchaplains.org/join>

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INFORMATION YOU CAN USE

HOW TO SELECT A HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

by Rev. Anna J. Thomas

It's the most wonderful time of the year. It is not back to school time. It is not time for Christmas. It is time to start thinking about our health insurance for next year. Of course, I am joking about it being a wonderful time. In actuality, it is a time that many of us dread. Premiums are increasing, and benefits are decreasing. Many of us are concerned that we won't be able to meet our out-of-pocket expenses. There are some things that we can do to make a selection that will be more beneficial and to prepare for our share.

I approach making a health plan selection like preparing a budget. In other words, I review the past to assist me in making a more realistic plan for the future. This requires evaluating how the family has used health benefits in the past. It takes some time and effort, but it is worth it. We can start by asking some questions: Is there a chronic illness that requires me or a family member to see a primary care physician or specialist on a regular basis? Am I or a family member taking prescription medication? Have I been delaying a non-life threatening procedure for myself or a family member? Am I still making payments for medical care received this year?

It can also be helpful to review the current plan Explanation of Benefits to determine how claims were processed, and review receipts for prescriptions. When making a health plan selection, the premium should not be the only criteria used. Many people just choose the one that costs less. Well, you get what you pay for. If we consider the above-mentioned questions, it might be more beneficial to pay a higher premium based on our family's usage. It is often easier to pay a little more over time than to pay a lump sum that we are not prepared for. Many providers request the deductible (the amount you owe before the plan pays during a coverage period, usually one year) prior to rendering the service. Some will even ask for the coinsurance (your share of the cost calculated by a percentage, such as 20%). The good news is that most employers have websites that will provide side-by-side comparisons of plans in addition to Human Resources support.

Once a health plan is selected, it is time to consider how to cover out-of-pocket expenses. A Flexible Spending Account (also known as a flexible spending arrangement) can assist in more ways than one. A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) is a special account that allows you to contribute money to pay for eligible out-of-pocket expenses. The money is contributed into your account by payroll deduction. Money contributed into your FSA is deducted before taxes, thereby reducing your tax liability. Human Resources can assist you in getting your account set up. There is one caveat. You must use, or you will lose the money in your FSA within the plan year (usually a calendar year). The employer can offer one of two options as an exception: 1) a grace period of up to 2 ½ months to use the money or 2) a carry-over of up to \$500. The employer can offer only one of these exceptions but is not required to offer either. If you are a federal employee, additional information can be found on OPM.GOV.

Rev. Thomas has 35 years of employment experience in group insurance administration. Prior to leaving the Washington, DC area, she held the position of Assistant Vice President at Seabury & Smith (a Marsh & McLennan Company)

PROPOSED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM BENEFIT CUTS

by *Chaplain Rev. Dr. Gary Roundtree Sr., Chaplain, Baltimore, MD*

Jeff T. H. Pon, the 11th Director of the United States OPM, wrote a letter to House Speaker Paul Ryan requesting legislative changes that would cut retirement benefits for federal workers. The request, according to Pon, would save taxpayers \$143.5 billion over the next decade. This statement comes on the eve which the White House's planned to introduce a \$15 billion in spending cuts as part of a recession package.

The New OPM Director Jeff Pon has, some plans, which are a laundry list of previously proposed cuts to federal employee retirement programs, would bring federal benefits more in line with the private sector. OPM Director Pon wrote that the proposed changes reflect the move by private sector business away from defined-benefit pensions in recent years. In summary, the employee retirement landscape continues to evolve as private companies are providing less compensation in the form of retirement benefits, the OPM chief stated.

"The shift away from defined-benefit programs and cost-of-living adjustments for annuitants is part of that evolution." Included in the proposals are plans to eliminate Federal Employees' Retirement System supplements. Specifically, the proposal applies to employees who retire before Social Security kicks in at age 62, going forward; change the basis of a retiree's defined benefit annuity payments from their highest three years of salary to their highest five years; and increase the amount federal employees contribute to FERS by one percentage point per year until they reach an overall contribution level of 7.25 percent, matching government's contribution.

OPM Director Jeff Pon wrote that after agencies and employees reach contribution parity, employee contributions to FERS should fluctuate on a year-by-year basis to maintain the 50-50 cost sharing. OPM also proposed the elimination of cost-of-living adjustments for FERS retirees---both current and future---and the reduction of Civil Service Retirement System Cost of Living (CSRS COLA) Allowances (COLAs) by 0.5 percent. Director Pon also recommended eliminating a provision of the law that requires FERS disability annuities to be reduced by the recipient's "assumed disability insurance benefit" through Social Security, instead of basing the reduction on the individual's actual Social Security benefits.

"The assumed disability insurance benefit differs from the annuitants actual Social Security disability insurance benefit because the assumed disability insurance benefit is based on the SSDI benefit amount increased by FERS COLAs, whereas the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases update the actual Social Security Disability Insurance Benefit (SSDI)," Director Pon wrote. With the elimination of FERS COLAs, the reduction for SSDI would be based on the actual amount of SSDI benefit.



Jeff T.H. Pon, Director of the
US OPM

Reference notes taken from Government Executive Federal Times News Radio Federal Times NARFE (March 2018)



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY - AUGUST 26TH, 2018

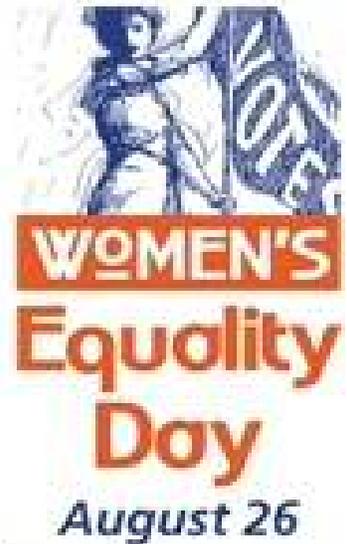
by *Chaplain Rev. Amy C. Blevins, Boston, MA*

I confess I had never heard of *Women's Equality Day* before writing this article. How is it that I, a woman, was not aware of a day which celebrates women? Herein lies the answer. The communities in which I have lived have not celebrated, marked, or remembered this day. People remember and celebrate what they value or have knowledge of; it is sad commentary the little knowledge and value placed on women's equality in some communities. In 1973, Congress designated August 26th "*Women's Equality Day*." This day of celebration commemorates the 1920 adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote. This right to vote, born out of a dream of equality for women, was the culmination of a 72-year peaceful civil rights movement. Many women courageously worked hard to achieve this right through determined efforts...Is it worth remembering?

It is worthwhile not only to remember, but to celebrate a good step, a momentous step, in the right direction. A step made by the hard work of many who were following a dream of equality and respect; a step made despite opposition and the complacency of those comfortable with the way things were. Has the dream of equality for women been fully realized? No. Women know it has not. Anybody who is willing to see and listen knows more change is needed. Consider the recent *Me Too* movement of women sharing the painful experiences of sexual harassment at work. These ladies have brought increased awareness to the need for further steps in the right direction of women's equality.

The statistics on women who experience domestic violence and sexual assault are discouraging. Even if the assault and harassment stopped, that would not be enough for equality. Stopping disrespect and abuse, while good and necessary, is not the same as starting respect and guaranteeing equal opportunity. I have suffered disrespect and unequal treatment from fellow clergymen, fellow male Chaplains. My fellow women in uniform have suffered discrimination, harassment, assaults, painful betrayals of their values and dignity. Equality for women is a must not an option. One day is not sufficient. However, *Women's Equality Day* helps us to shine a light of remembrance on our past, the hard work and progress made, while also looking to the future, and taking the necessary steps for justice and equality.

There is more to be done for the dream of equality to be realized. I am encouraged when men and women listen to women speak about their experiences. I am encouraged when others join by word and actions to seek respect and equality for women. Good change happens when people say, "I see the suffering, and I work with you to relieve it." That is how this beautiful dream of equality will become present reality. In the company of suffragists and many dedicated, courageous women, I refuse to accept the present conditions for our future. Until there is a total realization of women's equality, it is my hope everyone becomes aware of the painful existence in which we live and embraces our power to change it.



FATHER'S DAY

by *Chaplain Elder Mario D. Morning, Cleveland, Ohio*

Annually, on the 3rd Sunday in June America sets aside time to honor fathers on the day titled Father's Day. Father's Day, recognizes men who have been caregivers, providers, leaders, and protectors of their homes and children. It's a day which expressions of gratitude are on display for all good deeds done by fathers. This day brings to mind thoughts of fathers no longer with us either by death, separation, divorce, or simply unidentified.

Growing up in Fairfield, AL Father's Day was for me a day of honor and heartbreak. A day of honor because I had the benefit of having more than one father not only was there my birth father but men of the church who served as father figures when my father was nowhere to be found. They were deacons who showed up to my high school football games in my father's absence. These men had families and children of their own but took time to show me how to shoot a basketball, how to study the Bible and who showed me the love of God. For this I am grateful. Most of these surrogate fathers have stepped behind death's curtain to each I give honor (Mr. Barry Williams, Sr., the late Deacon. Robert Carson, Sr., the late Deacon. Cornelius Thomas, Sr., and the late Mr. Moses Clark, Sr.). Each provided me through their lives a physical portrait of manhood which I now model for others. From their model and wisdom, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to settle unfinished business with my father before his death.

Father's Day is also a day of heartbreak. I cannot remember a Father's Day where I was with my father in person apart from the three and a half years when neither my mother or I knew his whereabouts. It saddens me that I've traveled the world preaching and teaching the timely message of Christ and he was not there to hear me. It's disappointing, to say the least, that as I traveled to Israel and traced the footsteps of Jesus and he was not there to experience my joy. Any father would delight in the day of his son's high school or college graduation. But, I studied and walked the

halls of Oxford University in England, and he was not there.

My heart breaks because Dad never knew me as a minister...his son, his youngest grandbaby, and he will not know the one to be born soon. I cry, I weep, but I forgive because I was fortunate enough to re-establish a relationship with him. I can still remember our last conversation so vividly. I can remember how he wept and expressed the dreams and visions God had given him for his life and his children. I am discovering things daily that he taught me consciously and sub-consciously., The result of his lack of presence has had lasting effects on me. They are both positive and negative. I now desire to be for others what he wasn't for me...*present*.

Today my passion is to be present for broken families, victims of substance abuse, and individuals incarcerated. Above all, I desire to be present for my family leaving a legacy of impeccable things far beyond their imagination—present every day, especially on Father's Day. Happy Father's Day to all fathers!



Fathers, do not exasperate your children;
instead, bring them up in the training
and instruction of the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:4



PASTOR'S EXPERIENCE FROM THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH TO THE MULTICULTURAL SETTING OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PART TWO

by *Pastor Jeffery A. Stallworth, Jackson, MS*

But, I was willing to make a move to United Methodist, when I found out that after seminary if you did not raise all of the money that was asked of you by conference, a check would come in the mail from the conference that you would have a minimum salary if you finished school and not make more than the law of minimum salary. The United Methodist Church has what was called a minimum salary if you finished seminary. In other words, you couldn't make under \$20,000 if that was the threshold amount. On the other hand, you didn't eat in the A.M.E. church if you did not raise that money. If you did raise it, you were supposed to share it with the authority of the A.M.E. church.



What made the above process even more different was there might be eight meetings a year from the Sunday School Convention, to district conferences, and to annual conferences that had at least seven conferences within one state and to all of them you were expected to bring pieces of money to show your support of the authority. This kept you broke all the time and the church burdened all the time! On the other hand, when it came to money in the United Methodist church, a multicultural church, the ministry of money was a whole different paradigm shift. You were encouraged to give whatever was your fair share of your conference apportionment at one annual meeting and that was it. You did not meet to give these pieces of money or travel up and down the road. You mailed the money in by twelfths, so that at the end of the year, you had paid your fair share. You could do this if the conference provided you

as a young theologian with a house or a housing allowance. It paid life insurance, health insurance, and pension. Who would not go over to the United Methodist church? Imagine several schools going to one class and hearing what the different churches got. I had to drive all the way to Atlanta from Meridian, Mississippi and back to Jackson, Mississippi with a United Methodist minister who said, "You dummy. We are going to the same school. They come here and bring me a check and you have to pay to get here." What would you think?

In a multicultural church, they called you by your first name and you called the Bishop by his first name. He answered the phone by saying, "This is Bob Morgan." He had something good to say to you.

I must say that with the problems in these episcopal churches and connections with authority coming from the top, the congregational churches had a different problem as the authority came mainly from the congregation, the deacons, and up to the pastor. In the Baptist church, the authority lies in an autonomous congregation, then their deacons, and then they who call their own pastor and also decide when the time is up for the pastor.

I want to close by saying that I am sure if all things were equal financially, most churches that I talked about in this article would have similar influence on its ministers and members. The next article I will talk about what does it mean to have an image as a pastor in a multicultural church.



Devotional

EMPOWERED BY FAITH: YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

by Rev. Dr. Pablo R. Diaz, Danbury, CT
(Guideposts - Vice President – Ministries)

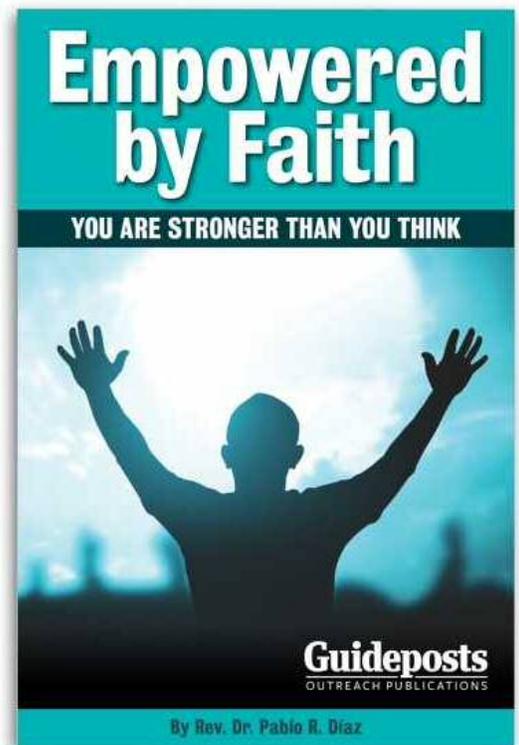
I was born and raised in a public housing development on the Lower East Side of New York City. _ We were blessed to have parents who prayed and worked hard to ensure my two siblings and I lived to our fullest potential. They taught us to have faith in God, ourselves and a hopeful future. As a family, we attended church services several times a week; prayer and the Bible were essential to our daily living.

During my teen years, there were two defining moments that shaped my life. First, at the age of fourteen, I committed my life to the Lord. This was a life changing decision that made faith central to all I did and continue to do. Secondly, the following year, I joined the Evangelism Youth Group and preached my first sermon at the age of fifteen on the streets of New York City. During this defining moment, I felt empowered by faith. I came alive for the first time and began on my journey to help others feel the same.

Fast forward a few years later, I was a young dad waiting for my second child to be born. I was excited, I couldn't wait to hold my baby boy for the first time. Little did I know, he would be born with only a fifty percent chance of survival. During the first year of his life, our son underwent five surgeries. It was faith that empowered us through those difficult times and God who saved our baby boy. Though we made it through the storm, many years later, my family once again turned to prayer for a safe surgery and a speedy recovery. However, this time it was for me.

Recently, while preparing a sermon, I began experiencing chest pains. At first, I thought it would pass, However, later that night, the pains worsened and I ended up in the Emergency Room. After running a few tests, the doctors confirmed I had suffered a mild heart attack and surgery was needed to insert a stent. Thanks to God, the surgery went well and I have not suffered anymore due to this.

It is incidents like these that encouraged me to write a booklet to help others find or keep their faith as they face real-life problems. The 31-day booklet titled, *Empowered by Faith: You Are Stronger Than You Think* consist of short devotionals meant to help the reader refuel on God's love and power after facing a difficult time. Early on, I learned that life isn't always easy. But with each challenge, my faith has empowered me to trust that all things are possible through hope and prayer. No matter what we face, our faith empowers us to get through it.



To receive a free copy of *Empowered by Faith*, e-mail outreach@guideposts.org or download a digital copy by visiting <https://www.guideposts.org/how-we-help/outreach-publications/free-ebooks>



THE CATHOLIC FAITH

by *Chief Chaplain Father Tony Mensah, Bronx, NY*

As a matter of personal opinion, the Catholic faith is a visible society of baptized Christians professing the same faith under the authority of the invisible head (Christ) and the authority of the visible head (the Pope and the bishops in communion with him).

Catholics believe in one God who has revealed himself to humanity in three modes: God as a Father in the Old Testament; God as obedient Son in the person of Jesus who loved us so much as to sacrifice his life for us on the Cross on Calvary for us; God as the Spirit who dwells in our hearts and moves us to worship God in the Sacraments. One God in three Divine persons. Whereas there is no appreciable difference in common usage, Roman Catholic Church and Catholic Church are generally interchangeable even when used by the church.

Again, in my opinion, the Catholic Church is made up of two categories of people: A) the ordained or the clergy who are specially called and chosen by the Church and ordained through the laying on of hands and prayer of consecration to preach the Gospel and to celebrate the Sacraments. In this group we have three categories: deacons, priests and Bishops. B) the laity or the non-ordained. The college of bishops constitutes the 'magisterium'- the teaching office of the Church who are officially mandated to transmit and teach the Catholic faith as handed to us from the Apostolic church. The Pope is one of them as bishop of Rome. He is 'primus inter pares' just as Peter was the first among the twelve. In practical terms, he is the

teacher of the Apostolic faith in its purity. He does this in Collegiality with all the bishops across all cultures and by extension, priests who represent the bishops in all Catholic parishes and institutions around the World. So the Pope represents the sense of faith of the entire Catholic Church in my life and in the life of every Catholic.

Ever since the close of World War I, America has been threatened by the so-called political heresies commonly known today as the "Ism" movement whose purpose was to destroy Christianity. Pope Pius XI warned the world against the dreadful disaster and danger of this "Ism" movement. Incidentally, up until this time the Catholic Church in America had, strictly speaking, no militant veterans organization made up of men and women who had served their country in time of war. To see the significance of the Catholic faith and its role in the VA and America is to cut through the blindness of this "Ism" movement and be confronted with a world given over to the foundation of The Knight Of Columbus (K OF C) and its eventual commissioning by the US government; the Catholic War Veterans which was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York on May 19, 1935; and above all, the establishment of The Archdiocese for the Military Service (AMS) created by Saint John Paul II to provide the Catholic Church's full range of pastoral ministries and spiritual services to those in the U S Armed Forces. This includes more than 220 installations in 29 countries, patients in 153 V.A. Medical

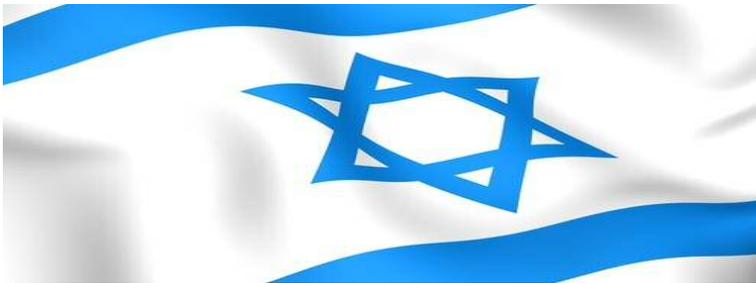


Centers, and federal employees serving outside the boundaries of the USA in 134 countries. Numerically, the AMS is responsible for more than 1.8 million men, women and children. It also serves as the sole endorser (certifier) of Roman Catholic Chaplains to the United States government. In my position as priest-Chaplain, I have been ordained, through no merits of mine, to serve the people of God “to be a member of each family yet belonging to none; to heal all wounds; to go from men to God and offer him their prayers, to return from God to men to bring pardon and hope; What a life, oh priest of Jesus Christ”(Lacordaire). And this is why the Catholic faith is important to me.

THE JEWISH FAITH

by Chaplain Rabbi Deborah Schloss, Houston, TX

It's not easy to briefly describe the Jewish faith. Let me try by sharing three different entries to Judaism. First, there is a Talmudic story about a potential and impatient convert to Judaism who approached Hillel, a famous rabbi and asked to be taught entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Hillel graciously replied: “That which is hateful unto you do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole of the Torah; the rest is commentary. Go forth and study.”



Second, when I applied to rabbinical school, I shared in one of my admissions essays that as a rabbi, I hope to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. This phrase has been attributed to Finley Peter Dunne, but all these years later, I still find it one of the best descriptions of what Judaism hopes to provide to its adherents. Regarding comforting the disturbed, Judaism holds in utmost importance visiting the sick, so the ill don't feel isolated from the

community during this time of potential vulnerability. And after someone dies, Judaism has specific guidelines for what we can do to comfort and support mourners.

Elie Wiesel shared that indifference is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Therefore, I'm grateful for the opportunities that Judaism provides to “disturb the comfortable.” For those that wish to engage it, Judaism has a challenging theology. And since it can be easier to stand idly by than to get involved, Judaism provides many opportunities, 613 to be exact, to get involved. We have 613 commandments. This brings me to the third entry to Judaism.

In Judaism, an integral way of connecting to G-d is through following the commandments, the laws in the Torah (also known as the 5 Books of Moses, it is the first and most holy of three parts of the Jewish Bible). The Hebrew word for law is halacha, which translates as “way.” Our laws are ways in which we can strengthen our relationship to G-d and one another. There are two types of commandments in Judaism- ritual commandments such as keeping kosher and rationally based commandments like honoring your parents. The ritual commandments, called *hukim* in Hebrew, are a path to enable us to strengthen our relationship with G-d and the rationally based commandments, called *mishpatim*, help us live respectfully and in harmony with one another. By following these laws, also known as *mitzvot*, or good deeds, we can contribute to making our world a better place. *Tikkun olam*, which translates as repairing the world, is an important idea for all Jews, from Orthodox to secular.

I'd like to end with a story from the Talmud. A man named Honi was walking and saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him, “How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?” The man replied, “70 years.” Honi then inquired, “Do you think you will live another 70 years?” The man answered, “Probably not, but when I was young, I found many carob trees planted by my father and grandfather. Just as they planted trees for me, I am planting trees for my children and grandchildren, so they will be able to eat the fruit of

these trees.” This is a beautiful example of helping make our world a better place. May we do what we can to repair our world. A generous amount of work is yet available for us all.

THE ISLAMIC FAITH

by *Chaplain Mohammed M. Hossain,*
Washington, DC

‘Islam’ is an Abrahamic faith. An estimated 3.45 million Americans observe the Islamic faith. It is the third largest religion in America, and the second largest in the world. There are many US military and veterans who practice Islam. It is not too late to focus on the significance of Islam because it has been misunderstood and is a focal point in America’s history regarding the marginalization of groups of people. Its significance is furthered by the fact that the American media has purposely chosen to continuously portray the faith incorrectly, and as a result, Muslim Americans are subjected to heavy prejudice and stereotypes.

Muslim Americans contribute to America just as other citizens do, and many are found in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Despite living normal lives, American politics have brought about many hate groups and legislation, which leads to lack of perceived tolerance for Islam. Islam is not tolerated due to the fact that it is misperceived as foreign and invasive.

However, Islam is not new to America; rather it has been present in America ever since enslaved Africans were brought to this country, almost 400 years ago. Islam quietly grew in numbers and was left untouched until September 11, 2001. That single day, a group of terrorists transformed the entire narrative fueled by American media regarding the Muslim faith. The American media bears heavy responsibility for the lack of tolerance that Muslim Americans face. Constant news broadcasts that misinformed the public have plagued America for more than 17 years now.

Many Americans are led to believe that Islam is not a religion of peace. Hate groups have formed along with a fear that Muslims are an alien presence with un-American cultures and values. Ironically, every religion

in America has rules and laws that the general public finds awkward or restricting, but only when looking at Islam do Americans highlight the rules that create cultural clashes.

Holy Quran says, “*There is no compulsion in religion*”[*Surah Al-Baqarah, ayah 256*] but hate mongers use different broadcasting channels misinterpreting” Jihad, Islamist, Muslim terrorist and other connotations that Islam is a war mongering and a violent faith! In reality, Islam is not a forceful way of life filled with oppression, nor is the faith revolved around conquering lands and spreading “Sharia” (Islamic canonical law). There is no place for oppression and injustice in Islam, and as long as you are not forced to compromise your religion, “sharia” law actually states that you need to follow the laws of the land in which you reside.

Islam is a faith with more than billion citizens around the world, who want nothing more than to live, love and laugh along with their neighbors. Islam is a faith, which encourages doing good deeds and preaching against evil.

Islam is as normal and unobtrusive as any other faith, and yet it’s subjected to being misconstrued and targeted, just like every other minority group in America.

Islam is my complete way of life. I bear my responsibility in failing to help others understand the real Islam. Muslims in America do not need to choose between being a good Muslim or a good American because both identities require good morals. Islam’s importance goes beyond that of just the Muslim community. The non-Muslim community in America relies on different cultures and groups of people being able to come together for a stronger country overall. This faith is important to everyone because its integration into American culture.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

by *Chaplain Rev. Dr. Priscilla Mondt, Ph. D, Fayetteville, AR*

Foster care training has an exercise that explores diversity. Each person is given a cup with multicolored beads and another cup to place beads. The exercise begins “take a bead from your cup that represents the color of those within your house and place it in the empty cup”. The exercise continues with neighbors, co-workers, supervisor, physician, bank teller, etc. At the time of the exercise I was in the military. My cup was multi-colored. I looked around the room and found all the other cups in the room filled with white beads.

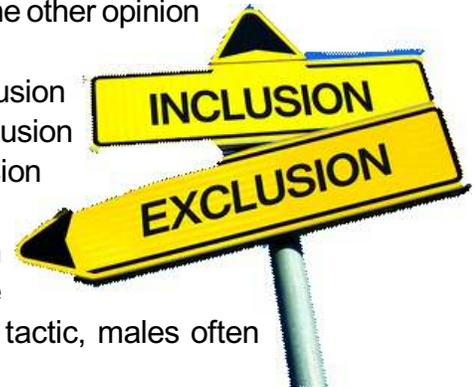
Groups tend to migrate toward those that look and think like themselves. It is comfortable to be with those of our own tribe (veterans migrate toward one another), who understand our language, our culture and journey. In our migration toward comfort we may unintentionally exclude ourselves or others (refer to earlier article on multiculturalism and microaggressions). While multiculturalism seeks to understand, Diversity celebrates our differences and Inclusion addresses who is missing from the conversation and consciously seeks to include that group.

Diversity brings strength to a group or organization allowing varying opinions and perspectives resulting in best solutions. In diversity, differences are valued. However, differences also present challenges without conscious movement toward understanding. Diversity brings people to the metaphorical (or literal) table while Inclusion gets people involved in the conversation or activity. Diversity alone may mean that people are working side by side but not engaged with one another; both are needed. For example, American culture talks of kiddie tables versus grown-up tables, a visible sign of exclusion in a belief that young voices are not as valued as adult voices. When there is disagreement in perspectives it is easy to metaphorically relegate the other opinion to the kiddie table rather than include their voice.

Inclusion is as subtle as exclusion. There are positive feelings when Inclusion happens and no one seems to notice. We sometimes fail to celebrate Inclusion because of the comfortable place it brings. On the other hand, when exclusion happens, those that are excluded may respond internally with negative feelings. When those who are excluded raise their voices, tensions build. In the days when women did not participate in sports, for example, males sometimes turned the conversation to sports to exclude women. When a woman called men on this tactic, males often responded by shaming the woman, deflecting the responsibility onto her.

A principle of inclusion is that it is never done at the expense of another group. Such as, Hispanics may lapse into Spanish and exclude non-Spanish speaking from the conversation. While this is inclusive of Hispanics, it excludes non-Spanish speaking and violates an Inclusion principle. Systems sometimes unknowingly promote exclusion in the name of Inclusion. Such as, in this scenario, requiring English speaking individuals to learn Spanish under the guise that Hispanics would feel included. Social justice (systems) will be addressed in separate article.

I went to an Army leadership conference with eight women chaplains. Migrating toward those that looked like us and had similar journeys, we sat together. One of the 300 males inquired why “all the women are sitting together” rather than integrating. A female chaplain responded, “Why are all the men sitting together?” The gentle confrontation was effective for the short term. We remained sitting together and comfortable unchallenged. We had segregated ourselves out of comfort and camaraderie while the better solution was to integrate and influence our male colleagues. Furthermore, we had unintentionally sat ourselves at the kiddie table where our voices would not be heard. The variety of Diversity and Inclusion principles are represented in this story along with the recognition that sometimes we inadvertently create our own exclusion. The best choirs use every voice, with full ranges, blended together in harmony.





Clinical Perspective

COMPASSION FATIGUE

by *Chaplain Rev. Latoya Smith, Leavenworth, KS*

Once I begin doing research on compassionate fatigue, I realized it goes beyond just being there for family and friends, while their loved one die or are actively dying. This does not have to go to that extreme, but just know when someone requires a lot of your attention and time, you could eventually become compassionate fatigue.

Compassion Fatigue can go as far as taking on too many tasks or becoming overwhelmed with tasks that seem to go beyond your scope of expertise, but you are determined to go that extra mile. Below is Webster's definition of Compassion Fatigue, which I feel summed it up from a medical perspective. "The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time."

I will share an account that I experienced, which I did not know at the time was compassion fatigue. There was a patient who was terminally ill and from another country. His family had sent him to the United States for treatment. They hired a young caregiver, who appeared to be involved, but had his own concerns with his family, which I later found out. The patient's son, who was his only child, traveled to the United States to visit with his father because he had been informed that his father was in the final stages of his illness. I was asked to visit the patient before the son arrived. The son arrived two days into my visits with his father. When he arrived, his father could barely formulate a sentence because he was so weak. The son begins to ask me questions such as, "was he talking before I got here, what was he saying, did I write all of what he said down?"

I told him I wrote it all down in my head, but some things I could not share with him. That made him upset with me because he was keeping a diary on his father and wanted to incorporate his father's words into the book his father started before he passed away. The son stated he would respect my patient to chaplain confidentiality. I thought that was the end of all his questions, but he asked me did I think he was a bad son because he sent his father to the United States and left him here and now he is dying. Then he started telling me how he was angry with his father because he knew he was very ill and did not tell the family how ill he really was. I understood the dynamics of emotions and I understood he was just trying to process all that was going on, so I just listened.

The next two days his mother arrived and she appeared to be very distant and in denial as well as the son. This is my fourth day visiting the patient and his family. Once the patient's wife came into the room, the son turned to me and pretty much tried to get me to coerce the patient into asking for forgiveness for all the people he had hurt. I kindly asked him, "does he need to be forgiven of the people who he hurt, who have hurt him, or do you want him to say he's sorry for hurting you as well?" He looked at me with a look of disbelief and said, "yes". I asked which one? Is it him, them, you, or all of the above. Then I asked what made him think he had not

already done this?” At this point I started regretting coming into this room because I felt I was no longer able to focus on the patient, who was still alive, because I had most of my attention on the son.

The son then asked that I meet him in the conference room to talk about a few other things concerning family members who would not come to visit his father in the hospital because of family quarrels concerning his mother. After I finished talking to him, I felt like a gigantic rock was sitting on my shoulders and the only way I could get it off was throw it back on him, but I honestly was afraid to do so, because of some of the things he shared with me about their culture. To make matters a little more



complicating, the caregiver stated she was quitting because she was having family issues and needed to take care of her own family. The son started yelling and talking down to her and threaten not to pay her for her services. The caregiver looked at me with glassy eyes and asked if she could talk to me privately. The son walked away and stated he did not want to see the caregiver again. While she's talking, I'm thinking, "did I sign up for all of this?" I realized I went from caring for one to caring for all of them including the caregiver. I know this is how it is supposed to be, but I know I took on too many of his personal concerns as well.

At this point the caregiver leaves and goes home and the son is still upset with her. I asked if we could redirect our attention back to his father, he agreed. I left to go back to my office for some self-care time, once I got to my office, my phone rang, it was the son. He called and said, "I wasn't there!" I asked him what he meant. After calming him down, the son explained that his father passed away and he was out in the hallway on his phone. He stated that his mother attempted to call him several times, but he did not answer her call because he did not think it was urgent. The son asked me to come back to the room and when I came into the room he was standing at the foot of his father's bed. He looked over at me with bloodshot eyes and said, "I was not there, why was I not there. She tried to call me, why was I not there?" Then he begins to have convulsions. I contacted the medical staff and they checked him and he recovered not long after.

Once the son calmed down he wanted me to help make the funeral arrangements, burial arrangements, get him information on how to fly the body back to their country, and help them find money because they did not have insurance. For me it was a lot, but I agreed to do whatever, because I felt I was there for them to the end. Honestly, I just wanted to get it over with.

For all who are wondering, yes, I was asked to attend the funeral, and yes, I did attend the funeral. Rookie mistakes, I know, but I felt obligated. I will stop the story here, but this caused me to have restless nights until it was all over. All I could think about was, what else could I do, or what could I have done differently. During this time, I noticed I wasn't as involved with other patients and family members as I was this family. I avoided showing emotions because I did not want any other family members to pull me in like this son did. After reading about compassion fatigue, I realized I became a part of the statistic of those who overdid it when it comes to caring. Though I still care, now I make sure I practice good self-care to avoid being burnout from compassion fatigue.

Check out this youtube video on Compassion Fatigue: <https://youtu.be/b1sEEOFthM0>

ASPIRING TO BE A CPE SUPERVISOR

by Chaplain Ruben D. Williams, ACPE Certified Educator Student, Pittsburgh, PA

A CPE Supervisor is a person who is responsible for the education and training of others who desire to learn the art of spiritual care. The CPE Supervisor is also responsible for the administrative functioning of a CPE program. Last year there was a change in the designation of supervisors and the certification process. ACPE Full Supervisors are now be referred to as ACPE Certified Educators. The change in name was implemented in May of 2017 and the change in the certification process in January of 2018. The new designation as Educator has not significantly changed what we all have known a Supervisor to do. However, in my opinion, it does shift the emphasis of pastoral training from supervision to education. ACPE describes an Educator as a person who is academically prepared and authorized by a recognized faith group to combine perspectives from theology and the behavioral sciences in conducting accredited programs of clinically supervised ministry education.

Becoming a Certified Educator (CE) is a very laborious and tedious process. This is because of the extensive and intensive requirements. As an CE, one must demonstrate significant understanding of group dynamics, pastoral care skills, intrapersonal relationships, educational, personality and theological theories. These are a few of the major subjects in which one must be fluent. The educator process is lengthy, typically taking 3-5 years to complete. It is about progress and process rather than checking off boxes to demonstrate competence. It is estimated that about 50% of prospective educators complete the process. There are varying reasons why one would not complete the process to include the level of commitment from the individual who enters the process.

Everyone who enters this process will have different challenges because of the personal nature of the process. The inner exploration and integration has been one of my main struggles, but the benefit is realizing that understanding myself and my story will allow me to help others do the same. In my current journey, I have faced setbacks and struggles. These setbacks and struggles at times have felt devastating and brought out feelings of anger and sadness within me. However, these perceived difficulties are for my growth and development and ultimately for my benefit. My resilience and determination are an aspect of my personality that have brought me to this point in my life and the CPE process. I am determined to continue and finish what I have started. Although I suspect there will be more challenges as I progress in my journey, I trust in God, and I trust the process. I'm reminded of Paul's words to the church at Philippi that "[h]e who hath begun a good work in you will perform it" (Phil 1:6).

Anyone who is considering entering the certified educator process should consider why he or she is motivated to do this type of work and education. Becoming certified is attainable but it will not be without hardship. I would encourage anyone who is seriously considering this process to understand what it is about and most importantly understand themselves. One of the most important things that we possess is our stories, and our story is what we take with us in every human encounter. Our stories are what shapes us into who we are today; they can be a source of inspiration and a testimony to others when we truly accept them and learn how to use them when we encounter others

PALLIATIVE AND HOSPICE CARE – CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTION

by Rev. Dr. Phillip D. Williams, San Antonio, TX

Millions of Americans of all ages live with a chronic illness and face options of Palliative or Hospice Care. However, the distinction between the two has contributed to the rejection of one and the untimely reception of the other. Since the 1960's when Dr. Cicely Saunders began the modern hospice movement to offer hospice care to those with serious or chronic illness, the decision by prospective recipients on whether to choose hospice or palliative care incites trepidation and confusion.

Some people suggest palliative care is cruel treatment of patients, and hospice is the quick way to medicate a patient to death. These opinions or beliefs stem from lack of education or misinformation on the type of care provided. For instance, some assume palliative care and hospice care are the same and use the terms interchangeably, thus never exploring their unique benefits.

Palliative care is offered to patients treated for serious illness or disease. The aim is to provide relief and comfort, whether the patient's condition is terminal or not. Another benefit of palliative care is an alternative to patients who reject curative treatments when all evidence indicates no cure. In such cases, only the symptoms (pain, nausea, etc.) receive treatment; there is no search for a cure.

Hospice care like palliative care also provides relief and comforts. In the case of hospice care, the patient has six months or less to live; there is no cure for the illness or disease, therapy stops due to non-responsiveness. A fact to remember, *hospice care is always palliative care*, but palliative care is not always hospice care. (A follow-up article *Untangling the Myths* in the next issue).

Important Facts to Know:

- ▶ One can receive palliative care with either a short or a long-term illness.
- ▶ To receive palliative care, one does not have to have a major injury or terminal illness to qualify.
- ▶ Hospice care is only available for those needing end-of-life care.
- ▶ Hospice care requires two doctors to attest the patient is expected to live another six months or less
- ▶ Hospice patients can outlive their prognosis and continue to receive treatment if they continue to meet hospice care qualifications.

WHOLE HEALTH INITIATIVE

by Chaplain Elder Sherri L. Headen, Indianapolis, IN

A few months ago, I was given the opportunity to attend the Whole Health 101 for Clinicians in Indianapolis, Indiana VISN 10. I was not sure what to expect, however the name Whole Health itself denotes a holistic approach. The training was held for eight hours and I was tremendously impressed. Not because I learned a completely new concept but the training aligned to my calling, education and experience as a Clinical Chaplain. One of the cores of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), the foundational training process for clinical Chaplains, is to understand the holistic nature of each person; mind, body and spirit. From the earliest known healthcare chaplains until present day, our hallmark understanding of patients involves recognizing the needs in each facet

of their being. The patient (Veteran) is more than their injury or illness. The Veteran is more than her/his disease process. Everyone has multiple parts of their being that makes the whole and each part is extremely important.

When I enter the hospital room to provide support for Palliative Care (PC) Veterans, I realize many things. Their life expectancy may be limited by their disease process. They may be taking a whole handful of medications



morning, noon and night to assist in providing symptom management. Some may have engaged in anxiety inducing goals of care and advanced directives discussions with members of the PC interdisciplinary team. Many experience anticipatory grief as they grapple with their mortality and unfinished business. Others entertain the fearful and heavy thoughts about their ability to survive, and to see their loved one arrive from out of state or out of the country. Many experience the peaks and valleys of their pain on a scale from 1 – 10. Some wonder if they will ever be able to return to their gardening or enjoy the beauty of nature on their favorite hiking trail. Many experience hopelessness and depression as they reflect on their unrealized dreams and estranged relationships from loved ones. It is interesting that I have encountered some who will try to cement the faces of their

spouse, children and grandchildren in their minds, because they do not know if they will see their faces again. Some experience shame and guilt from emotional scars that have not been healed and realize they may never experience peace provided by healing. Many are angry with God due to being unable to reconcile the carnage, aggression and trauma of war with the existence of a compassionate God. Some have endured injustice, downright evil and heinous acts by family members and others throughout their lives and are challenged in reconciling this reality with a peaceful and loving God.

The Veteran is being assessed by his/her physicians to derive a treatment plan that addresses their injury, illness or disease process, however there are other plans of care that need to be incorporated to provide maximum holistic healthcare, such as spiritual care. Clinical studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between optimal whole health (injury/illness prevention, recovery and symptom management) as a result of whole health practices. As I write future articles on this subject matter, I will incorporate some of these studies. In the Whole Health 101 for Clinicians training, the areas of whole health include, Working Your Body, Power of the Mind, Spirit & Soul, Family, Friends & Coworkers, Recharge, Food & Drink, Personal Development and Surroundings. In future Capsule issues, I will focus on these areas as well as the specific emphasis of Spirit & Soul.

A DOSE OF MENTAL HEALTH

by Chaplain Rev. Gretchen Hulse, Pittsburgh, PA

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, mental health encompasses one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being (2017). Mental wellness is a state of good psychological health that involves the pursuit of our true potential to live a healthier life. Mental health is an important topic for me because my primary duty as a chaplain in Behavioral Health is to care for Veterans who are struggling to pursue good mental health to help them lead fuller, happier lives.

regretted the day he was born. Wishing his birth never happened (Job 3:1-26), Job requested that God destroy him and cut off his life (6:9). His grief and calamity were greater in weight than all of the sand of the sea. The arrows of the Almighty were within him, the poison on God's arrows drink up his spirit, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against him" (6:1-4). Job's lament in chapters 6 and 7 reflects a sense of despair common among those with suicidal ideations, though success can also be linked to suicidal ideation.

Jonah's desire to die came after a great success, the turning of a city of 120,000 people to God. He knew of God's grace, mercy, patience, and kindness but got upset that God showed mercy to an enemy of his country. Jonah said, "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (4:2-3, 8). Likewise, Elijah performed a great miracle when his sacrifice was consumed by the fire of God on Mt. Carmel. He then killed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves at the Brook of Kishon (1 Kings 18:19, 40). When Queen Jezebel promised to kill him within the next 24 hours, Elijah ran in fear to the wilderness, sat under a juniper tree and prayed, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life..." (19:4).

How did God deal with these men who wished to die? **First, He took care of their physical needs.** God spared Job's life and gave him a double portion, provided Jonah a gourd leaf to shade him (Jonah 4:6), and gave Elijah rest, food and drink (1 Kings 19:5-8). **Second, God listened to their complaints fully before responding.** Like God, we as helpers can listen to our veterans' complaints and not interrupt as soon as we hear the suicide ideation. Proverbs 18:13 calls it folly and shame to answer a matter before you hear the whole thing.

Third, God gave them a purpose/something to do. Job was asked to consider where he was when God did everything in the past. Jonah was asked about his priorities, and Elijah was sent to anoint two men to be kings and a man to replace him as prophet (1 Kings 19:15-17). In summary, we can like God, **1) Take care of veterans' basic needs 2) Listen without interrupting, and 3) Help those with suicidal ideations to discover their purpose or something meaningful to do with their lives.**

A MORAL INJURY

by Chaplain Rev. Dr. Jeff Lee, San Diego, CA

February 2018's cover of *The American Legion Magazine* features a 100-year-old photo of black soldiers marching to destinations unknown during World War I. While many things can change in 100-years, some things will not. War and rumors of war are unwavering features of life. However, understanding the phenomenology (or one's conscious experience) of war will shape and change the chaplain's caregiver role. Moral Injury (MI) is a case in point.

The MI construct is a relatively new subject of study though similar themes exist in ancient literature. Considering MI's development, associated symptoms, and its level of empirical support, MI can now be verifiably recognized as a *syndrome*. As such, the following new definition is proposed: Phenomenologically, MI represents a particular trauma syndrome including psychological, existential, behavioral, and interpersonal issues that emerge following perceived violations of deep moral beliefs by oneself or trusted individuals (Jinkerson, 2016).

Basic differences between MI and PTSD are that their etiologies are dissimilar. PTSD is largely a physiological disorder coupled with an often incorrect assessment of fear after a life-threatening event (Litz, 2016). Conversely, MI results from a moral discontinuity produced by one's acts of omission, commission, or acts from others which violate one's moral code.

Sufferers of MI may demonstrate *core* symptomatic traits like: guilt, shame spiritual- existential conflict, and or loss of trust in self, others and God. *Secondary* symptomatic features include: depression, anxiety, anger, re-experiencing the moral conflict, and self-harm. The line of troops on *The American Legion Magazine* cover would likely exhibit such symptoms. How chaplains can deliver outcome oriented care is the subject of part 2 in the next edition of *The Capsule*.

VIETNAM VETERANS – A SPECIAL KIND OF SUPPORT GROUP

by *Chaplain Rev. Fred Tittle, Martinez, CA*

Having served in Vietnam with the Marine Corps as an Infantryman, I experienced combat and some of the traumas associated with combat up close and personal. And if it had not been for the grace of God and support systems, I'm not sure I would have survived, this is true for many who served in Vietnam as combatant. Below is a very brief narrative of a Support Group that have changed and saved the lives of many who've learned and utilized useful skills and tools within their lives.

I became aware of this *Special Kind of Support Group* in 2005 while working with a Vet Center in Redwood City, CA., however the group was developed within Palo Alto VA in 1999 and moved to the Vet Center in early 2000. The group was moved in part because of the topics being discussed, Prostrate Cancer, PTSD and Spirituality, some members believe that it was not supported because the members were all African Americans. The members of the group were not attempting to exclude anyone, however many felt that there was a critical need for group where African American males could speak about issues they'd been struggling with for years. Many of the group members had already involved themselves in activities and behaviors that were quite destructive within their lives, as well as those they interacted with and cared about. Several of the members had and were experiencing substance abuse, as well as issues with PTSD when they joined the group.

During 1999 the need for a group of this nature was questioned and there were discussions about disbanding the group. However, as the result of the work of group members and VA staff the group prevailed and continue today, that *Special Kind of Support Group* is still very alive and well! Additionally, several of the original members are still very active with the group and many strong and healthy relationships have been formed.

As with any ongoing organization or group there will be changes, this group is no exception. While the group continue to have an African American focus, it is very open to all Veterans and has welcomed Veterans of all eras and ethnicity.

BLACK FEMALE CHAPLAIN SERVING WOMEN OF MST: AN ACT OF EMPOWERMENT

by *Chaplain Rev. Jarda Alexander, San Diego, CA*

Recently, the VA launched a national End Harassment Campaign focused on establishing a safer, more respectful environment by which women veterans could meet their healthcare needs without fear or aggravation of sexual assault or harassment. This campaign started in response to women veterans voicing their discomfort in receiving cat calls, stares, or unwanted sexual attention from their male veteran counterparts while seeking medical care at various VA Medical Centers. Sexual harassment in the VA could be a triggering experience or traumatic event for some women veterans that could hinder women from accessing the care they need.

Military Sexual Trauma, or MST, is broadly defined as an act of sexual assault or harassment that took place during one's time of military service. The act ranges from unwanted touching, cat calls or jokes, to being taken advantage of while inebriated, drugged, or asleep or feeling pressured or threatened into providing sexual favors for better work conditions. National data reports that one in four women veterans have affirmed an



experience of Military Sexual Trauma on healthcare screenings compared to one in 100 men, and that there's a correlation between sexual trauma and increased shame, rate of suicide, substance abuse, and mental psychosis among women survivors of MST. So, for women who actually reported "yes" to MST, and for those who choose not to report, the national campaign is a not just a matter of mental health and patient-centered care, but also of social justice.

Although women comprise the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. veterans, they are still a targeted minority and may tolerate devaluation without knowledge of exploitation. Underlying harassment is an oppressive paradigm of male dominance and gender inequality that violates and potentially hurts one's personhood and relationships. This relational dynamic is a spiritual issue.

As a black woman and chaplain, I locate myself among the womanist theologians such as Jacqueline Grant who posits that Jesus Christ is a black woman because he liberates and embraces the outcast. In society, [black] women are considered "the least of these" and find our liberative power in the Biblical narrative as one who is seen by God and reclaimed as daughter. I do claim myself as an adopted daughter of God and disciple of Christ called to those who are still suffering, to see them and help them see themselves as God sees them—whole, redeemed, and loved. Thus, I support Grant's theory that salvation becomes the reconciliation of relationships, that is, "how we relate to God and one another; it is a sharing of power and the process of challenging the status quo and demanding quality and inclusion."

In closing, I'm grateful to be part of an organization that acknowledges and advocates nationally for women survivors of MST. Recovery from sexual trauma cannot be fully achieved in isolation, and the End Harassment Campaign brings light to women's needs. My role as a black female chaplain who stands in proxy for a Christian God, is to advocate for and empower the voiceless, reconcile relationships empathically and ethically, educate those who may be unaware, and aid in emotional and spiritual healing of survivors of MST. I allow survivors free expression of anger and blame, challenge their negative images with more relatable ones, and empower them to author their own transformation, reclaim their humanity, and hopefully decide to access the healthcare services available to them without the fear or aggravation of harassment.

THE SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF ADDICTION - 1 Timothy 1:18-19

by Chaplain Rev. Dr. Forrest L. Kirk, Ph.D, Muskogee, OK

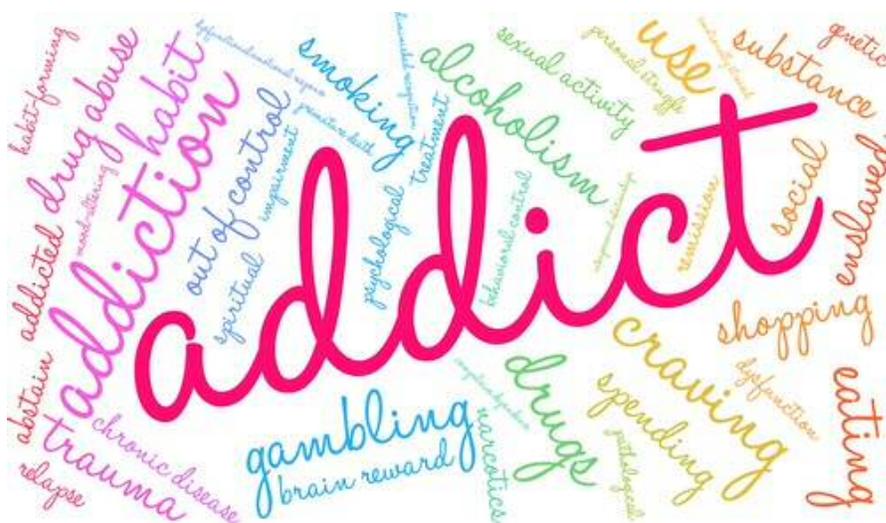
Addiction, regarding the human condition, has its etiology in the sinful nature which (by association) places it in the moral/spiritual realm or strata of reality. On the other hand, the secular approach to addiction is to associate addiction with abnormal psychology, as an obsessive compulsion, and establishes its etiology in a disease model. The secular approach removes the "stigma" of responsibility from an individual's immoral choice and places the responsibility for addiction on involuntary or uncontrolled chemical changes in the brain. The Center on Addiction defines addiction, as follows:

Addiction is a complex disease of the brain and body that involves compulsive use of one or more substances, despite serious health or social consequences. Addiction disrupts regions of the brain that are responsible for reward, motivation, learning, judgment, and memory. It damages various body systems as well as families, relationships, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

The Center on Addiction defends the disease model and ignores or mitigates moral choice. A chaplain could/may concur with the disease model as a description of addiction, but must refine, redefine, and contrast

a soul disease model with a physical disease model. A soul disease, as with other diseases, affects a person holistically; however, the primary elements, cause and sustainment of a soul disease process, is moral. Guilt, shame, grief, anger, fear, resentment and boredom are moral components associated with addiction. Generally, moral components are not primary concerns of measles, mumps, scarlet fever, diabetes, cancer, etc. The moral components associated with most diseases are linked to the patient's compliance or noncompliance with the treatment plan/regimen, which are not components of the disease process. For example, one may be depressed because he or she is lamenting the imposition of the disease, on other priorities and plans. By contrast, persons with the soul disease of addiction actively participates to sustain the maladaptive and/or destructive condition. On the other hand, persons with other physical diseases are passive hosts to the process and progression of the malady.

Regardless of the secular emphasis on using a physical disease model to define and treat addiction, the fact remains that addiction has moral/spiritual components that must be addressed. These components must be addressed, if a client/patient is going to effectively manage and/or resolve his or her internal compulsions (secret desires). Therefore, it is recommended that a chaplain use a "both/and" approach to addiction which acknowledges addiction as a co-occurring malady of the moral/spiritual, and organic/physical. However, it is the chaplain's responsibility to approach with emphasis on the moral/spiritual aspects. A chaplain should not ignore or mitigate the organic/physical aspects of addiction and neither should other members of the interdisciplinary team ignore or mitigate the moral/spiritual aspect of addiction.



Addiction encompasses a person holistically. As alluded to above, a soul disease such as addiction, is different from other organic/physical diseases. The etiology of a soul disease is "a priori" moral/spiritual condition with "ancillary" organic/physical aspects. The organic/physical aspects are usually the results of a moral/spiritual dysfunction. Therefore, the treatment of addiction should reflect the understanding that "moral medicine" should be an integral part of the treatment plan/regimen.

1 Timothy 1:19 intimates that rejecting a "good conscience" has deleterious moral and spiritual effects. Most Christian chaplains acknowledge the existence of Satan and demonic beings whose primary purpose, mission and motive is to violate one's conscience by inducement, enticement, or suborning a person to reject one's good conscience.

Satanic influence uses discontentment as a primary tool/weapon to violate one's conscience. Discontentment is the foundation and root cause of all moral/spiritual failure. For example, Satan was able to animate discontentment in Adam and Eve, which led to the fall of humankind. Latent discontentment is the reason a person, as Paul describes it in Romans 7, does what he or she does not want to do and does not do what he or she wants to do – Paul called it sin living inside also known as besetting sin. Thus, sin is a moral/spiritual soul disease; discontentment is a moral/spiritual bacteria/virus that causes sin. Discontentment is defined as a besetting root of bitterness (toxic guilt/shame, pernicious envy/jealousy, traumatic grief/loss and/or destabilizing fear) with one's place, situation, or circumstances coupled with the impetus (secret desire) to mollify it by any means serves as a catalyst that stimulates and/or animates all forms of unrighteousness.

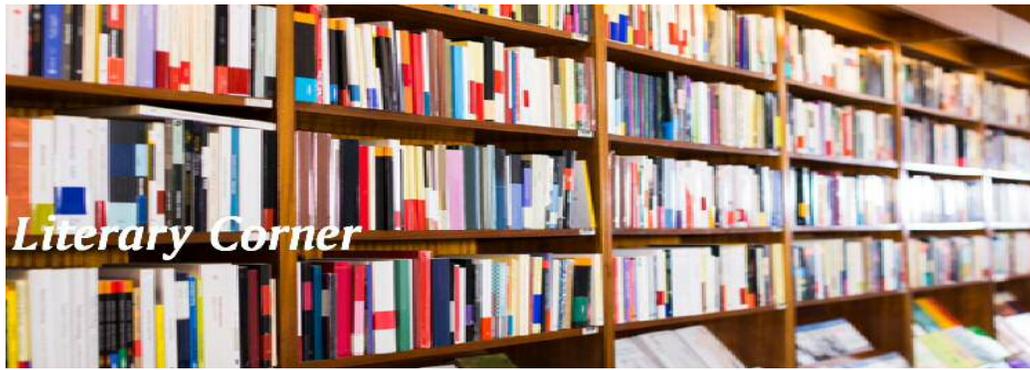
A biblical description of a metaphorical anatomy of addiction is contained in the context of 2 Kings 17:7-23, specifically verses 16-17. The moral/spiritual model must be accounted for primarily. The etiology of addiction is that it begins as a volitional act that involves a moral choice. The physical disease model excuses or diminishes this component of personal responsibility, intimating “natural curiosity” as the mitigating factor. The conjecture is that no one experiments with the notion of bad outcomes, one simply wants to know. This surmises the notion that “experience is the best teacher.” Experience is a teacher, but not necessarily the best teacher. One could argue that God did not/does not want humankind to learn about evil through experience, but through discernment, by simply believing God. Natural curiosity is at the foundation of the human fall from grace, because Adam and Eve did not believe God and opted to “know good and evil” by experience which exceeded their known limitation. On the other hand, when Abraham believed God, it was counted to him as righteousness. And, every Christian is called to have the faith of Abraham.

Ironically, most, if not all persons, are aware of the warnings against virtually all unrighteous activities, but proceed to do it, anyway, for a wide variety of irrational reasons. Although a person may not account for or expect ultimate consequences, most are aware that he or she are exceeding, exaggerating or ignoring righteous limitations which violates the conscience. No matter how a person attempts to mask it, guilt/shame is roused when the conscience has been violated; because, a moral/spiritual miscue is a sin (aka, missing the mark). Paradoxically, there is no such thing as an accidental sin. All sin is willful.

So then, addiction is a result of discontentment (the making of idols), as in taking what lies dormant in the soul (one’s secret desire) and bringing the object into tangible reality. As applied to addiction, a person makes a choice then uses a substance (alcohol, cocaine, etc.); images (pornography); cravings (greed, gambling); etc., as a means to that reality. In other words, a person attempts to achieve the personal end of contentment: peace, purpose, comradery power, riches, pleasure, etc., through a short cut or an artificial means (an idol).

So then, addiction is wanting and worshipping one’s secret desire (an idol). This process usually begins with natural curiosity but can be involuntarily thrust upon a person by his or her response to the unrighteous acts of others. Either way, a chain of events is set in motion as a slippery slope to destruction. Eventually, a person spends more and more time with his or her idol (the means to one’s hope); but, inevitably the means fails and then becomes an end unto itself for the person. The moral violation of the conscience, usually starting with natural curiosity, is the catalyst that animates, stimulates, triggers, and, in some cases, exacerbates discontentment. Again, the idol (the means) becomes the object (the ends); or, as it states in Scripture, faith (coping, resilience) is shipwrecked. A shipwrecked faith is the mission that the Satanic and demonic forces seize upon to subjugate a person. After all, addiction leads to servitude. In 2 Kings 17:16, the Hebrew word for “serve” does not mean a positive form of service, but to be in bondage or enslaved.

The moral/spiritual goal of a chaplain is to assist others in achieving wellness (contentment and peace). Contentment and peace are the essence of godliness. However, Satan’s goal, as the Father of lies, is to thwart, prohibit or diminish God’s spiritual goal by promoting chaos and confusion. Satan’s primary tool in violating one’s conscience is discontentment. Therefore, addiction is a disease of the soul and the must include the administration of moral medicine.



PROSE by *Chaplain Rev. Dr. Robert J. Thomas, Sacramento, CA*

ABC'S OF SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

When people ask me how I'm doing,
I respond with a godly truth,
by telling the enquirer, "I'm..."

Too **A**nointed to be Disappointed...
 Too **B**lessed to be Stressed...
 Too **C**onsecrated to be Agitated...
 Too **D**edicated to be Fabricated...
 Too **E**dified to be Crucified...
 Too **F**orgiven to be Backslidden...
 Too **G**lad to be Mad...
 Too **H**ealed to be Concealed...
 Too **I**nspired to be Tired...
 Too **J**ustified to be Nullified...
 Too **K**ept to be Inept...
 Too **L**ifted to be Downshifted...
 Too **M**anifested to be Detested...
 Too **N**orthward to be Downward...
 Too **O**rdained to be Profaned...
 Too **P**roficient to be Deficient...
 Too **Q**uickened to be Sickened...
 Too **R**edeemed to be Steamed...
 Too **S**anctified to be Mortified...
 Too **T**ransformed to be Conformed to this world...
 Too **U**nited to be Divided...
 Too **V**indicated to be Repudiated...
 Too **W**onderfully-Made to be Dismayed...
 Too **E**Xhilarated to be Humiliated...
 Too **Y**ielded to be Coldblooded...
 Too **Z**ealous to be Jealous

JUNETEENTH

Let us never forget this day,
The reason why they made it a holiday;
It was émanicipation from slavery,
Freedom from everything unsavory;
That made slavery so brutal, inhuman and callous,
Let us never forget this heartless malice;

Daily it feels like the present administration
is trying to take us back,
Because of the ugly ways of a megalomaniac;
Do not let this day go by,
Take a moment and personally identify;
Think about what you must do,
to keep freedom present and true,
Think about what your ancestors had to go through;

No more beatings, no more lynchings,
no more running to get free,
No more fighting, because somebody
treats you like a nobody;
No more separation of husband and wife,
No more family splitting that causes strife;
We must stand up and tell others slavery is over and done,
For any and everyone;

Do your part, and set the captive free,
Start with self, and clean up your personal debris;
Clear out the clutter, break the chains that bind you,
Set a new path of enlightened, empowered review;
Never forget "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice
everywhere".
Treat every day like Juneteenth freedom is not far away,
We must pray, write and always convey;

That those days of bondage leads to moral decay,
We cannot sit back in naïveté;
I will do my part to ignite, because "No weapon formed
against me shall prosper",
I pray my brothers and sisters will concur!

THE HUMAN FAMILY

by *Chaplain Elder Sherri L. Headen, Indianapolis, IN*

One of my favorite poems is by the late, great Maya Angelou. Especially given the day and time we exist in right now, there continues to be civil unrest, racial disparities, challenging gender issues and class distinctions. There continues to be political influences, policies and laws that affect human rights and dignity, no matter if you stand on the right, left or somewhere in between.

We continue to engage in forums, protests and rhetoric that can take us on a whirlwind of misunderstanding one another's convictions and motives. We continue to take one another's lives in warfare and criminal acts. Whatever happened to treat others as you want to be treated? Whatever happened to the two greatest Commandments, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself? We are living in a world and dare I say it has been this way for centuries on end, where we continue to grapple with the apparent "differences" between us. However, I wonder, are we really all that different?

If you take Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs into account, all humanity has the same basic needs. Our context can change the particulars of our needs, however we are more alike my friends that we are unlike. At the end of the day, we are all God's created children. Each one of us represents one small piece in a multi-billion piece puzzle called "Humanity". When one piece of the puzzle has been marred or is missing due to the mistreatment, abuse and hate inflicted on it, the puzzle will never be completed. Here the words of Maya Angelou:

**I note the obvious differences
in the human family.
Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.**

**Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.**

**The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.**

**I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world
not yet one common man.**

**I know ten thousand women
called Jane and Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same.**

**Mirror twins are different
although their features jibe,
and lovers think quite different thoughts
while lying side by side.**

**We love and lose in China,
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.**

**We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.**

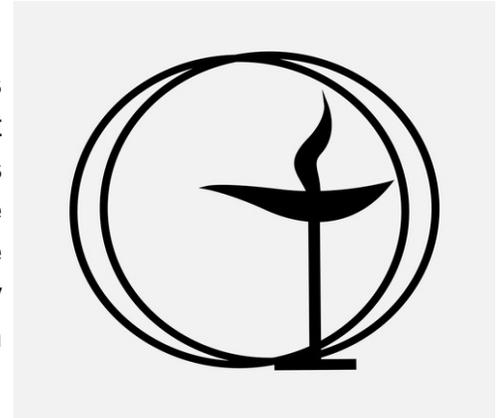
**I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.**

**We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.
We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.**

SPIRIT OF LIFE: A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HYMN OF PRAYER

by *Chaplain Rev. Beth Putnam, New York Harbor, New York, NY*

It is a great pleasure to share the story of Spirit of Life, a hymn that is beloved in my tradition, Unitarian Universalism. I am a Unitarian Universalist minister, but I rarely talk about my own faith tradition within the VA, so this is a great joy for me. Unitarian Universalism is a tradition that values the free search for truth and meaning, so our congregational life embraces a wide range of worship materials. New worship materials are written, and every once in a while, one of these becomes beloved. Spirit of Life is one such hymn. Here are the lyrics for Spirit of Life:



Spirit of Life, come unto me.
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

These words were written by Carolyn McDade in the early 1980's, after she had been working as part of a social activist group, and she and a friend had been driving home. She told her friend she felt like dried up cardboard, and her friend just held her and comforted her. She went into her house, sat down at her piano and played her prayer for herself, which was Spirit of Life.

And that prayer, once she shared it, proved to capture the hearts and minds of Unitarian Universalists all over the country. By the time I began attending a Unitarian Universalist congregation almost 20 years ago, Spirit of Life was the defector official song of the tradition. Whenever there was a major gathering, especially for our national General Assembly of Congregations, we sing Spirit of Life. I remember one particular day, at the General Assembly held in Boston, MA, being part of a crowd of 10,000 Unitarian Universalists as we filled Boston Garden with the sound of our voices joined in Spirit of Life. It was an amazing moment of feeling connection not only to the Spirit of Life, but to so many people, all sharing the same hopes and prayers. It was moving beyond words.

Here are links to a longer essay about Carolyn McDade and Spirit of Life from the UU World magazine, <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/carolyn-mcdades-spirit-life>

The second is a link to a video by the Orange County Unitarian Universalist Choir. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcFZ32EHexY>



Sermonette - Mark 8:27-36

FOLLOW THE LEADER

by Rev. Ty'Ann A. Brown, Danbury, CT

James E. Faust stated, "Obedience brings peace in decision making. If we have firmly made up our minds to follow the commandments, we will not have to re-decide which path to take when temptation comes our way." Life is filled with crossroads of decision-making. However, the best decisions are made, when we truly learn to follow the Lord.

"Follow me" appears several times in the gospels, which simply means to follow the one that precedes. It also means to become a disciple, one who is teachable, willing to learn and grow in the things of God. A growing relationship with God will always result in His prompting for you to follow Him. The challenge is, many of us treat "follow me" as a suggestion when it is a command. When we compromise this, we must ask ourselves, have we redefined Christianity by making the Jesus of the Bible a comfortable one to fit our own agenda?

We live in a religious pluralistic world that holds many opinions about Jesus, but Jesus challenges us by asking "who do you say that I am?" You can find yourself in church week after week, but if you don't truly "know" Jesus, you can't follow anyone you haven't had an authentic encounter with.

If we are a people to follow after God, the Lord requires us to first deny ourselves. German Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated, "We have to practice strictest daily discipline; only so can the flesh learn the painful lesson that it has no rights of its own". All too often, we give our body too much power. When you deny yourself, you are trusting that although I would like to self-indulge in my own wants and desires, I must refrain because what God has for me is much greater.

Secondly, Jesus encourages us to take up our cross. Scholars purport that the Patibulum, which was normally carried by a prisoner, was approximately 80 pounds. For many of us that's difficult to bear, but the reality is if you're carrying your cross but not feeling the weight of sacrifice, you've got to revisit your level of sacrifice, because it's got to cost you something to truly follow Christ.

Lastly, Jesus instructs us to follow Him. Luke 6:46 says, "why do you call me Lord, if you don't do what I say?" When you truly follow Jesus, you move from religion to relationship and from legalism to love when you open your ears to hear His voice, as he calls his sheep by name. You open your eyes to reading His Word daily, for it is a lamp unto your feet and light to your path giving clear direction for you to walk in obedience while singing, "I have decided to follow Jesus...no turning back, no turning back...the cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back, no turning back..."

Rev. Ty'Ann A. Brown is the Guideposts Director of Video Content Development.

Sermon Reference: <https://youtu.be/Zn8IPoM-J1U>

Follow Rev. Brown on Social Media at @IAMTYANN (FB, IG, Twitter)

SUMMER – YOUR TIME OF ASPIRATION TO BE AN INSPIRATION BEFORE YOUR EXPIRATION

by Chaplain Rev. Louis Tillman, Hampton, VA

In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Proverbs 16:9

Summer is a season in which many strive for vacation, to make new experiences and achieve rest. It's also a time in which we see God's creations of nature come to life and show their seasonal beauty. As nature's seasons, so do the seasons of the human life. Different in the seasonal human change unlike nature, especially summer when all things appear new again, our bodies age. Hopefully, our minds are renewed each season to the point of maturity revealing the beauty of Godly wisdom. Focusing on nature's seasonal changes identify your current season of human life. What elements of the summer's seasonal beauty and newness are on display in your current season of life? In this season, what your life's *aspiration*? Are you *inspired* for the next season? Who are you inspiring in their season? Have you accepted the fact that the human life seasons will *expire*? What's your plan and how in each season are you ordering your steps toward your end?



Summer in the life of man is a gateway season which allows one to maximize their flexibility and capitalize on the simultaneously aligning opportunities for kingdom existence, for building and final transitioning. Proverbs 16:9 reminds us that we could work and try to do everything on our time (*chronos*), but the Lord only provides in Lords time (*Kairos*). Some events and opportunities that occur in winter, spring or fall may seem overwhelming and intimidating because of climate and mobility limitations. I suggest summer is a time where we can let go and allow God to guide our hearts to best fit into His plan of action. Allowing God to plan removes the obstacles of time, stress, failure and other limitations which

transcend into opportunities for peace, restoration, and understanding.

Incorporating the meaning of the quote "**Your Time of Aspiration to be an Inspiration Before Your Expiration**" into whatever season of life can identify pain, the need for power, and hope for promises fulfilled. There is recognizing the pain experienced in past seasons to become the person God created you to be. Then comes the pain of anticipated trauma and dilemmas that are in store and unknown of that one must go through to move to the next season. I the power of how our testimonies lie changed who we are as servants changed for the work of the risen Savior. Then there's the best part – the promise, the promise(s) fulfilled from a lifetime of holding on to God's unchanging hand amid both chaos and celebrations. When living out the true existentialism of this quote, we can see how only God can transform our pain into power and always deliver us promises within a *Kairos* moment.

In our current season, we should endeavor to *aspire* for the ambitions the Lord has placed on our hearts. This season is a time where we live without any regrets of prolonged ambitions but to walk by faith filling the goals thought unimaginable. The season is now to *inspire* generations where patience is lacking, to leave experiences, insights, and wisdom with African Descent communities capable of producing some of the world's greatest thinkers and servants of God. Your contributions could potentially be a step in the right direction to dismantle existing generation gap and to build a bridge of hope to produce a stronger community fighting for the common good.

All of this is what we could try to do before the time that we leave this season. However, this is not germane and or limited to only this season, but for a lifetime. Imagine what we could do as a powerful group of people when we serve the kingdom with the mindset to *aspire* to *inspire* before we *expire*.

*Financial Principle #1***THE POWER OF “IT”***by Rev. Rhonda Neal, Danbury, CT*

Many people struggle financially for a variety of reason: lack of education, resources, discipline, etc. What is uncanny about the community of faith is our willingness to trust someone like a financial advisor, a resource over God who is The Source. In His infinite wisdom, God foreknew that managing money would be a challenge so He made provisions throughout scriptures to help us align our finances to bring peace, discipline, generosity and abundance. As matter of fact, money is mentioned over 2,000 times in the New Testament, yet most folks never turn to the Bible as a viable means of financial guidance. For those who are serious about getting their financial house in order, one of the first principals we must embrace is giving.

Paul says it this way in Luke 6:38:

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

The act of giving is fundamental and essential to God’s plan for managing resources, however if we are honest, we know that giving is a stumbling block for those in and outside the faith. On one hand we are tempted to keep everything we make, hoarding money like a squirrel preparing for winter or on the other hand, we spend every last cent until we end up in debt.

If giving throws you off, viewing Luke 6:38 from a different angel may help you. Paul says, “Give and It will be given to you.” Simply stated, whatever we are looking to receive, the “it” should be the very thing we give away. If we are looking for peace, then we have to be peace makers. The law of “sowing and reaping” applies to anything and everything we are trying to experience or acquire, including money. A farmer can pray over his crop, tithe, read his bible, and help out neighbors, but if he never plants a seed, meaning giving seed over to the ground which is the source, he will never reap a harvest. God as our source requires the same thing. When Jesus fed the multitudes, it required the act of giving. The little boy gave two sardines and five crackers. Jesus blessed it and before it was all said and done, the multitude was feasting on Moby Dick sandwiches. Not only does God give big, He gives in excess. More than 5,000 ate till they were satisfied and the disciples picked up 12 baskets full of broken pieces that were left over.

To receive we must have something, the “it” to give. Spending all of our money prevents us from having a seed to sow. Hoarding money doesn’t work either because how can you receive anything with a closed pocketbook? In order to have victory over our finances we have to do it God’s way. If giving is a struggle, focus on the “it,” then give and watch God amplify your blessing. Amen.



**GIVE,
AND
IT
WILL
BE
GIVEN
TO
YOU**

Luke 6:38

Rev. Neal is the Manager of Outreach Services-Guidepost for Kids



BREAD OF LIFE - A NEW RECIPE

by *Chaplain Rev. Karen Sinclair, Tulsa, Ok*

Within the last year I started to utilize the services of a functional medicine doctor in my area as opposed to a doctor who practices conventional or traditional medicine. Why functional medicine you may ask? I have been a patient of conventional doctors for many years and became fundamentally weary with many of the outcomes. I was not seeing or experiencing healing. Instead, I was seeing and experiencing the management of disease symptoms. So what then is the difference between functional medicine and conventional medicine? In a nutshell, doctors who practice functional medicine “center appointments around the patient’s individual need. It is not a one size fits all approach. Appointments are longer due to in depth assessment. They seek the root cause of disease – one of which is through very comprehensive blood work. They measure labs based on “optimal” levels.

Functional medicine physicians understand that health is much more than just the absence of disease. Instead, they consider how the entire body functions as a single organism. Disruption of any single component always affects something else. These changes cannot happen in isolation. Functional medicine considers the individual genetic makeup along with internal (mind, body, and spirit) and external (physical and social environment) factors that affect total body function” (Dr. Chad Edwards).

Traditional doctors on the other hand “treat dis-ease in isolation from the rest of the biological system – usually with surgery or synthetic chemical drugs”– many of which have debilitating side effects. “Patient visits are a lot shorter as dictated by insurance re-imburements. The primary focus is on managing” and masking the disease. “Lab values are measured on “normal” or “abnormal” ranges and the approach is that of, “one size fits all.”

Based on my own lab results I was diagnosed as high risk for celiac disease. “Celiac disease is a disease in which the small intestine is hypersensitive to gluten (a protein found in wheat, barley and rye), leading to difficulty in digesting food.” As a result of this diagnosis my doctor has instructed me to eliminate gluten from my diet. I therefor make my favorite gluten free bread. The proportions laid out in this recipe make two loaves at one time and is great for those who battle blood sugar issues.

Dry ingredients: 4 cups almond flour, 4 cups tapioca flour, 1 1/3 cups coconut flour, 3 teaspoons pink Himalayan sea salt, 6 tablespoons ground chia seeds, 8 tablespoons psyllium husk powder, 8 teaspoons active dry yeast;

Wet Ingredients: 5 cups water, 8 teaspoons maple syrup, 1 egg

Wisk together the almond, tapioca, coconut flours and salt. Heat water to 105 to 110 degrees F. Add 8 teaspoons of maple syrup and stir. Add the yeast to water and let stand for 10 minutes. The yeast should bubble or foam. Stir in chia seeds and psyllium husks into the yeast mixture. Let it stand for 1 minute to thicken. Pour thickened yeast chia seed mixture into the dry ingredients. Stir/knead until fully combined. Cover kneaded dough with a damp cloth in a warm spot (to rise) for 1 hour. Pre heat oven to 425 degrees F. Place baking sheet in oven to preheat. Separate dough into equal rectangles (like store bought bread). You may need to flour your hands and the working area. Brush with egg wash if desired. Place the rectangular dough on parchment paper on the cooking sheet. Bake for 35-40 minutes. Check for doneness by sticking loaves with a knife. Let bread cool. Slice and enjoy with your favorite spread or filling.



WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN THE VA NATIONAL BLACK CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION?

by *Chaplain Elder Gerard L. Miller, Prescott, AZ*

A person should strive to be a part of the of the National Black Chaplain’s Association because they will get to see how others who walked before, them interacted and survived in this pluralistic society we live in. Additionally, they will get to be among people of his own color and learn from them. There is this old but priceless saying, “Come while you’re young so the old can show you the way”. Being a part of this organization will enhance members experience and networking with other black chaplain members that will also help the member know he has help when he needs it. He will also have guidance from more experienced members who have great wisdom. Joining the National Black Chaplain Association meant making and getting spiritual connections, advice, and mentorship, with fellow believers, from different faith groups and denominations across this great nation. These are benefits, which sometimes cost additional money, but are free with VANBCA membership.

What gifts and talents can a new member bring to VA-NBCA this August? Matthew 25:14-30 speaks of everyone having a talent. It will not be wasted by joining this organization. Hebrews 10:25 states, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” This means everybody should come together of color, to enrich this great organization. Everybody has something to give that will help all people, of all colors from this organization. We are to learn from one another and help one another until Jesus Christ returns.



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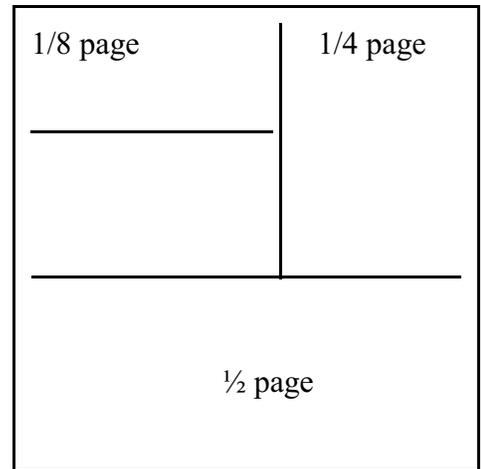
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P.O. Box 3059
Hampton, VA 23663**

Your tax-deductible donation will benefit the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs National Black Chaplains Association; to strengthen the effectiveness of not only African American chaplains, but to all other chaplains of ethnic groups, to assist in the recruitment and retention not only of African American chaplains but to all other chaplains of ethnic groups, and to foster the education, growth and development of all federally employed chaplains and professional allies.

Why Donate to the NBCA?

- ▶ To help bridge the gap and celebrate all race relationships.
- ▶ To heal one's view of self, others, and how we are uniquely tied to each other no matter our family of origins.
- ▶ To appreciate and celebrate cultural diversity.
- ▶ To recruit writers and new members from every sector of the globe.
- ▶ To inspire patients, veterans, families, chaplains, and all others with hope, love, and joy and a determination to make a difference and a contribution in the earth.

The Purpose of Donations

- ▶ To broaden the multicultural perspective because everyone is important and has something beneficial to offer.
- ▶ To support the upward mobility efforts of all Chaplains.
- ▶ To strengthen the Executive Board and their committees to plan, organize, train, teach, and host Annual Conferences.

How Will Donations Be Used?

- ▶ To develop training for Chaplains and non-Chaplains to effectively tackle issues together such as the Opioid crisis, MST, women's issues, and medical and health issues that impact everyone.
- ▶ To educate and network with churches and other organizations or professionals that desire to work with the NBCA to make their communities better, especially those with veterans.
- ▶ To sponsor those individuals who have a financial hardship to conferences hosted by the NBCA.

What is the Impact of Donation?

- ▶ The ability to change lives through knowledge and by example.
- ▶ The ability to *learn* from others and even better oneself in the process.