

Caring Connections

An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling



Pastoral Care and Healing Arts

The Purpose of Caring Connections

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written primarily by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable; solidly grounded in the practice of ministry; and theologically probing. *Caring Connections* seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries and concerned congregational pastors and laity.

Caring Connections also provides news and information about activities, events and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

Help Support Caring Connections

Funding is an ongoing challenge, even for a small professional electronic journal like *Caring Connections*. Denominational (ELCA and LCMS) financial support continues to be reduced. No board member or either of the co-editors receives any financial recompense. Lutheran Services in America, our host site, receives no financial compensation for hosting. Our only expense is for the layout of the issue itself.

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Scholarships

When the Inter Lutheran Coordinating Committee disbanded a few years ago, the money from the "Give Something Back" Scholarship Fund was divided between the ELCA and the LCMS. The ELCA has retained the name "Give Something Back" for their fund, and the LCMS calls theirs "The SPM Scholarship Endowment Fund." These endowments make a limited number of financial awards available to individuals seeking ecclesiastical endorsement and certification/credentialing in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education.

Applicants must:

- have completed one [1] unit of CPE.
- be rostered or eligible for active roster status in the ELCA or the LCMS.
- not already be receiving funds from either the ELCA or LCMS national offices.
- submit an application, including costs of the program, for committee review.

Applicants must complete the Scholarship Application forms that are available from Christopher Otten [ELCA] or Bob Zagore [LCMS]. Consideration is given to scholarship requests after each application deadline. LCMS deadlines are April 1, July 1 and November 1, with awards generally made by the end of the month. ELCA deadline is December 31. Email items to Christopher Otten at christopher.otten@elca.org and to David Ficken ESC@lcms.org.

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News, Announcements, Events: E-mail items to Christopher Otten at christopher.otten@elca.org or David Ficken ESC@lcms.org.

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Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We want to invite anyone interested in writing an article or responding to one to please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com or Bruce Hartung at hartungb@csl.edu. Please consider writing an article for us. We sincerely want to hear from you!

Issue 2021.4 will address the topic of “Thriving as a Spiritual Care Provider.” It will cover several aspects of maintaining wholeness in these challenging times. Deadline for articles is November 1, 2021. Contact Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com for more information.

And, as always, if you haven’t already done so, we hope you will subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Remember, a subscription is free! By subscribing, you are assured that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website. This also helps the editors and the editorial board to get a sense of how much interest is being generated by each issue. We are delighted that the number of those who check in is increasing with each new issue. Please visit www.lutherservices.org/newsletters#cc and click on “Click here to subscribe to the *Caring Connections Journal*.” to receive automatic notification of new issues.

Editorial

Bruce Hartung

This Issue ...

Is made possible by a generous grant from Glendale Lutheran Church, Glendale, MO. If you wish to support the ongoing publication of *Caring Connections* please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve (dkgreve@gmail.com) or Bruce Hartung (hartungb@csl.edu). Full sponsorship of an issue is \$350; any contribution of any size will be helpful to us. All editorial work and writing, as well as Editorial Board participation, is voluntary as is the sponsorship of Lutheran Services in America. Our only expense is layout and design.

THE NEXT ISSUE ...

Will focus on “Thriving as a Rostered Leader in Specialized Ministry”. If you wish to contribute an article, please contact Diane Greve (dkgreve@gmail.com). This is an opportunity to share with others what helps you thrive, especially in these turbulent COVID-19 times.

AND FOR FUTURE ISSUES ...

Themes for future issues are currently being chosen. If you have ideas for an article you wish to write or want to suggest a theme for an upcoming issue, please contact us. *Caring Connections* seeks to do what its title says: in caring ways connect people who are in specialized ministry, such as chaplains, counselors and educators, with each other as well as with others who support and embrace this ministry. In doing so we offer the opportunity to share best practices and useful thinking about ministry in contexts other than the congregation, e.g. prisons, social service agencies, hospices, armed services and counseling centers, to name a few spots where this kind of ministry occurs.

IN THIS CURRENT ISSUE ...

The reader will find articles that focus on the theme “Pastoral Care and Healing Arts”, with special attention to the use of music and of art. Attributed to Ludwig Beethoven: “Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life.” Attributed to Thomas Merton: “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.” No wonder that music and art have been used to reach the deepest levels of the experience of humankind and also offer the rich transcendence of that which is above and beyond our own human experience. No wonder that music and art have been intimate partners for us in many of our ministries and on our personal

journeys. In this current issue we have an abundance of writers who take us into this marvelous world.

- **Bill Dexheimer-Pharris** leads off with a beginning sentence: “Music has been key to my chaplaincy practice from the beginning.” From there he shows us how it has done so. It is a rich unpacking of his use of music. This is a longer-than-usual article for this journal. It allows Bill to deeply unpack his ministry and offer a wonderful set of resources.
- **Loren Goodman** takes us into her world of music therapy at the same time that she generously shares her faith pilgrimage as it has developed and how her faith “affects my work every day”.
- **Corey Grunklee** states the purpose of his article: “I want to help. I want to keep healing. I want others to heal too. ... I want to show how songwriting has helped me in my daily recovery from addiction and aided me in my walk with Jesus.” He richly fulfills his purpose.
- **Nick Shults** shares the results of his conversation with two inmates in the prison where he is a chaplain. These men “have also shown me, again, the power of music, for even in prison the power of music is undeniable.”

From music this issue turns to art.

- **Chuck Weinrich** offers two articles. The first takes us into his ministry-as-a-chaplain world as he learned how to “draw my feelings” and, in turning to 8 children’s crayons, discovered the reality of Merton’s observation above, “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.” The second takes us into his ACPE-educator world as he unpacks his goal “to find ways to integrate art activities within the units of CPE I supervised”.
- **Travis Ferguson** turns our attention to what I always used to call “tattoos” but now have learned to appreciate as “body art”. “Art points us to the Divine. Art brings light into people’s darkness – even art that’s canvas is the skin,” Travis writes as he shares his story, his body art and his ministry as an Air Force reserve chaplain.
- **Anna Speiser** shares concerning her use of a handprint of a person given as gift to the family of one who is deceased. “For many of us our loved one’s hands are a tender representation of our loved ones as a whole.”

The last two articles take us down other specific healing arts paths.

- **David Wurster** sees “serendipity and the intersections of pastoral ministry and the healing arts” as being something of a life-long process. His article is reflective, descriptive and provocative writing and reading.
- **Lorinda Schwarz** calls attention to two assessments, the Enneagram and the Spiritual Health Assessment, as helpful tools, and to the use of guided imagery and mandalas. In these ways “various spiritual practices can fit into finding peace and grace within one’s own doctrine and belief system”.

MY RESPONSE ...

Was and is to be unexpectedly moved. Editing is, at times, a distant activity. I work a bit with an author to encourage a direction and the actual writing and I take a manuscript and, at times, change a phrase or two, correct some grammar or check on spelling. Increasingly, though, I am prayerful about the articles and work to have the articles approach me with their message and their sharing. There is much in this issue that I found very moving. Perhaps it was just allowing me to connect with how art and music, specifically, have influenced me. Perhaps it was a deeper personal connection with some of the writers. Perhaps it was that God's Spirit wished me, even at my advanced age and with an established temperament, to grow, learn and be moved. Whatever it was or is, I am grateful to each of these authors and to their spirit and the Spirit that offers sharing and life in its fullness.

LET US KNOW ...

What are your responses. Since *Caring Connections* is an electronic journal, we do have space for responses to our articles. Let us hear from you.



Bruce Hartung is one of the two co-editors of Caring Connections. He is a retired pastoral counselor and clinical psychologist who has served at counseling centers in Syracuse, NY and Park Ridge, IL, at his denomination (LCMS) as the first Director of Ministerial Health/Health and Healing Ministries and as a seminary professor at Concordia Seminary. He currently serves as the first Vice-President of the Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association, an advocacy group for older adults in Maryland.

Called to Share a Great Treasure: Singing with All God's People

Bill Dexheimer Pharris

Music as a light in the darkness

A crowd had slowly gathered outside of Emanuel Baptist Church in a poor *barrio* of San Salvador, the capital city of El Salvador. It was an early evening in April, 1989, and the decade-long civil war that had been mostly raging in the countryside had come crashing into the city, leaving desolation and tremendous suffering in its path. I had been living and working for the previous three years among these faithful people as a volunteer with the Lutheran Church of El Salvador.

Hundreds had made their way to Emanuel Church from points near and far throughout the city: clergy and lay leaders of other Baptist congregations, Catholics, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. Church communities previously divided by doctrine were now allied in a common cause of alleviating the suffering of the mostly poor victims of war and many years of extreme social injustice.

The people were gathered in response to the brazen kidnapping, torture, and murder earlier in the day of María Cristina Gómez, a beloved grade school teacher and faithful member of Emanuel Church who had been dragged from her school by government soldiers in full view of her terrified students into a military vehicle, from which her body was tossed into the street a short time later.

By nightfall the open area surrounding the church was packed with people seeking comfort and consolation from each other. For quite some time there was no formal prayer or messages from church leaders; fear permeated the scene, hushed voices punctuated by cries of anguish.

The unspoken thought on the minds of so many gathered that evening: might I be the next one they come for?

Suddenly someone began to sing quietly these words attributed to St. Teresa of Ávila:

Nada te turbe, nada te espante
Quien a Dios tiene nada le falta
Nada te turbe, nada te espante
Solo Dios basta

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten
Those who seek God shall never go wanting
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten
God alone fills us

Text and music 1991© Les Presses de Taize (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.)

By nightfall the open area surrounding the church was packed with people seeking comfort and consolation from each other.

Another person joined in, then another, until all had joined their voices together in unison. Over and over we sang these words set to a simple melody, the chorus growing stronger and more confident with each repeat. Those of us who hadn't previously known it soon sang with confidence. Time stood still for what seemed like an eternity, but after 10 or 15 minutes of long crescendo and diminuendo the community lament came to a quiet halt.

I don't remember what happened after that, but I will never forget the words and the tune we sang together that evening — they were seared into my memory forever.

That evening I witnessed the healing power of music in a very deep and special way.

That evening I witnessed the healing power of music in a very deep and special way. A shared song brought consolation and hope — a light in the darkness for a frightened people.

Music and pastoral care

Thirty years have passed and I'm still singing the song I learned that day, but in rather different context. It's now usually just me and a hospital patient, maybe also a family member or friend. I sing this Taize chant and a dozen or so other songs and hymns from memory, a basic repertoire that helps me reach people at a deeper level than I might otherwise be capable of.

Music has been key to my chaplaincy practice from the beginning. I sing with patients on a regular basis and I always encourage my colleagues and CPE students to do so.

For my chaplain colleagues who say, that's all well and good, but I can't sing, I would refer you to the work of John Bell, who has some quite insightful and challenging things to say about this in his book *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song* (GIA Publications, 2000). Bell writes (pp.95–96):

If any group of people is asked, 'How many of you cannot sing?' one in four will raise their hands to confess tone-deafness, no sense of pitch or some other music deficiency. When this quarter of the company are asked why they cannot sing, nearly all will say, 'Because someone told me.' And that 'someone' will inevitably have been a person who was in a position of authority over them or who was in close friendship or kinship with them...

...The fact must be stated straight away that there is actually a very small proportion of people who cannot replicate a melody in the right key...their difficulty is a physiological one which has to do with how hearing sound and making sound connect in their head.

For others, the reason for the 'tunelessness' or 'tone-deafness' is psychological. Yet to use the word psychological is to attach too strong or too technical a term

to the condition. Perhaps it would be preferable, though less tidy, to say that for many people their memory of being told they could not sing has had such a cataclysmic effect on them that it prevents them from believing that their voices could ever get it right.

Memories have that effect on us

Check out John Bell's book if you think you cannot sing, or contact a church musician or choir director to talk over the possibilities.

Letting go of unnecessary baggage — traveling light

My practice of singing with patients has changed drastically over the course of a relatively long chaplaincy career — now reaching, as I like to say, more than a quarter century. I gradually jettisoned all my hymnals, song sheets, and even my guitar, simplifying and streamlining my approach to a point where it is now quite limited and repetitive. Yet in this simplicity I have discovered for myself a way to use music in a more spontaneous and prayerful way. It's not a performance meant to entertain — it's an integral part of my ministry of pastoral care, bringing added depth and richness to prayer, meditation, guided imagery, and a wide array of ritual and sacramental practices.

The breakthrough for me was the simple realization that there is a major difference in approach and expectations regarding pastoral ministry in a hospital setting as opposed to the parish. My prayers for example, even when they may appear to be spontaneous, are often, to be honest, the repeating of phrases I have used again and again over time in different combinations. Like jazz riffs, they are in my memory and have been practiced repeatedly. They are summoned out by the particular experience I am encountering in the moment. What is original and creative is the way I apply them to the person whose story I have heard. Sometimes it's completely new and original, but if it is effective I find myself repeating it again in the future under similar circumstances.

My prayers for example, even when they may appear to be spontaneous, are often, to be honest, the repeating of phrases I have used again and again over time in different combinations. Like jazz riffs, they are in my memory and have been practiced repeatedly.

The same process of transformation has happened in my use of music.

Along with the aforementioned “Nada te turbe,” two songs by my friend and colleague [Bret Hesla](#) were the driver behind this transformation of my singing practice. I had sung “[Bread for the Journey](#)” and “[Lake of Mercy](#)” so many times over the years I eventually memorized them without even trying. Since these two songs were appropriate for so many different circumstances, I found myself using them over and over during times when I hadn't necessarily planned on singing with patients.

I eventually stopped carrying my songbooks with me, and even jettisoned my guitar. Without the distraction of a songbook to look at and a guitar to literally fret about, a pathway opened towards more intimate interaction with patients and families.

When I realized that this small number of memorized songs could be so useful, I decided to attempt to memorize more hymns and songs, eventually coming up with a repertoire of a dozen and a half songs that are appropriate in a very wide range of pastoral care settings.

Without the distraction of a songbook to look at and a guitar to literally fret about, a pathway opened towards more intimate interaction with patients and families.

With this virtual jukebox in my head, I can draw on the special powers of music as I pray for healing, commend to God in times of dying, offer encouragement, or elicit life stories, hopes, and dreams.

Memorization — not just a technique, but a way towards deeper human connection

There are different techniques one can use for memorizing texts and melodies. If you have experience in the theater you have certainly already thought this through. I have not studied any particular technique as such; my advice is use whatever works for you.

Looking back, I did develop a “system” of sorts that works for me: I keep at hand a typed booklet of selections I have successfully memorized and those I hope to memorize. When first starting to learn a song, I want to get the melody line fixed in my brain, so I start by listening to recordings over and over, sometimes while simultaneously reviewing the printed music, until I have the melody down. The ability to read music certainly is a plus, particularly if I want to assure I sing the melody as the composer intended it, but this process is mostly an aural one. The hymns and songs I find most appropriate tend to have simple, easily memorized melodies.

Once I have the melody firmly set, I sing the text and melody together over and over, working on one verse at a time. Then I “practice” singing from memory in my head whenever I have the opportunity: while taking the bus to work, swimming laps at the Y, walking our dog, or riding my bike to work.

In my work with patients and families, I would carry with me a printed booklet of the songs I was attempting to memorize. When I felt comfortable enough to sing from memory, I would do so, knowing I could revert to the written text if need be. Eventually I would take a leap of faith and sing from memory with patients.

Memorizing hymns and songs is hard work for most people, including me, but the benefits have been substantial. I have found that when I have successfully memorized all the verses of a song, I pay much closer attention to the meaning, the

story the author hopes to convey. There is an arc or direction the hymn takes that makes much more sense when taken as a whole. I realized I knew the first verses of many hymns, but was missing out on the more in-depth understanding of a text that comes from knowing all of it.

It's true that I could sing just about any song I could ever want to just by pulling out my phone and looking up the lyrics, but I miss something absolutely essential when I don't *see* the person with whom I sing face to face. I would miss the direct human connection that comes with looking a person in the eye, close up, just the voice, praying in song. When I sing from memory without the printed words in front of me, I am able to more closely monitor the patient's reactions, to feel and observe their breathing patterns, to notice tears I might have otherwise missed, the smile or frown on their faces.

When I sing from memory without the printed words in front of me, I am able to more closely monitor the patient's reactions, to feel and observe their breathing patterns, to notice tears I might have otherwise missed, the smile or frown on their faces.

Essentially this is about singing *with* people, rather than *to* them.

I am reminded of the testimony of Sister Leticia, a Salvadoran Catholic nun who was present that night we mourned the death of María Cristina Gómez and sang together songs of lamentation and hope. Leticia, whose community was dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor, had been asked to share her personal testimony with a visiting U.S. church delegation. During the question and answer time at the end of her talk, Leticia was asked, "what is the *charism* of your community of women?" She hesitated for a moment, clearly giving the question serious thought, then quietly responded, "our charism, our calling, is to see the face of God ... in the face of the people."

I take Leticia's words to heart when I sing "Precious Lord," or "Bread for the Journey," or "All Who Are Thirsty" again and again and again, always hoping to truly see the divinity present in the faces of all of God's people.

And so I encourage you to consider how singing with patients and families might enrich your ministry of pastoral care. From my own experience, I can say that the practice of memorizing songs and hymns, and then sharing them both intentionally and spontaneously with patients and families, has transformed my work as a chaplain.

Martin Luther is believed to have said "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." I say amen to that!

Each human being with whom I have been privileged to share this treasure is unique and special in the way they experience illness, suffering, and hope for healing in the moment we encounter each other. I am grateful for the gift of song in such sacred moments.

Some helpful resources:

- *Lake of Mercy: Songs for Healing* — a collection of songs by Bret Hesla. I recently collaborated with my friend and colleague Bret Hesla to produce a collection of 20 of Bret’s compositions that would be appropriate for use by chaplains, music therapists, and any other spiritual caregivers in clinical or parish settings.

This is what I wrote in my foreword to *Lake of Mercy: Songs for Healing*:

“In my 25 years as a hospital chaplain, there are two songs I have turned to again and again, to sing with patients of a wide variety of spiritual traditions: ‘Bread for the Journey’ and ‘Lake of Mercy,’ composed by my friend Bret Hesla. Both these songs, with simple melodies that seem to sing themselves from the first time they are heard, consistently evoke images and experiences of healing and wholeness during times when there is hope for physical healing, and just as readily in the sacred context of letting go at end of life. I have sung them hundreds of times but for me they have never become tiresome or stale, for they always seem to bring joy and strength to others at first hearing.”

- [Rise Up and Sing: Hope + change through song](#) — This website, administered by Annie Patterson and Peter Blood, is a one-stop shop for learning songs of just about any genre one could imagine. Annie and Peter are accomplished folk musician/scholars, who along with Pete Seeger compiled and edited two landmark songbooks, *Rise Up Singing* and *Rise Again*, which between them include 2400 songs with full lyrics and chords. This comprehensive website includes a “Music Box” that is searchable for teaching videos connected with all the songs of the two books.
- *Singing Our Prayer: A Companion to Holden Prayer Around the Cross — Shorter Songs for Contemplative Worship*, compiled and edited by Tom Witt, Augsburg Fortress, 2010.

This full piano score edition of 44 short, contemplative chants and hymns is a rich source of simple meditative music. Although this songbook is mostly meant for use in liturgical worship settings, many of the selections would be appropriate and useful for singing in more intimate pastoral care situations.

My Song List

What follows is my own personal list of songs and hymns that I have memorized and use in my practice of pastoral ministry. It is by no means meant to be a definitive or prescriptive list that would necessarily be useful or appropriate for others. It’s simply what I have taken into my brain over the last few decades, sometimes by design, sometimes in a completely arbitrary manner. It is circumscribed by my own limited personal identity and life experiences. The challenge for me of getting beyond my comfort zone is never ending.

I would love to hear from you, my colleagues, about your experience of singing with patients and families. What songs and hymns have you found useful and meaningful for your practice of pastoral ministry? If you'd like to be in conversation about this, you can contact me at bdpharris@gmail.com.

- “All Who Are Thirsty” (Kutless) – A Christian praise hymn that I use to open prayer for healing. Folks often join in on the repeated phrase “Come, Lord Jesus, Come”. This [cover of the song](#) by Charlie Hines is closer to the way I sing it than the hard rock feel of the original version.
- “Amazing Grace” – More than any hymn I have shared, “Amazing Grace” seems to have a special resonance with patients and families. They often sing along if they are able, but very few seem to know all of the hymn from memory, so it helps their singing to hear all the verses sung confidently.
- “Blackbird” – This lovely tune and text by Paul McCartney is easy to memorize and not too difficult to sing. It works fine sung a capella. I have used Blackbird in the context of end-of-life blessings and when there is still hope for healing. It's hard to go wrong with Beatles songs with Baby Boomers and a lot younger. Other Beatles tunes I would like to memorize: “Here Comes the Sun,” “In My Life,” and many, many more, but I'll steer clear of “Maxwell's Silver Hammer!”
- “[Bread for the Journey](#)” (Bret Hesla) – In my experience this song works in an almost infinite variety of pastoral care settings, whether in the context of the celebration of Holy Communion, at end-of-life, or any setting in which a patient is seeking support and healing. Bread as a metaphor for all things that bring nourishment and strength is about as universal a spiritual symbol as one could imagine.
- “Lead Me On to the Rock” – This setting by John Ylvisaker of Psalm 61 is sung to the plaintive English Horn melody from the second movement of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 (“From the New World”). I learned it from *Songs for a New Creation* (Augsburg Fortress), a now out of print hymnal edited by Ylvisaker in 1982. John Ylvisaker's hymnals are not easy to find in print, but you may have luck going to his website: www.ylvisaker.com In my estimation Ylvisaker was a giant of liturgical renewal in the 20th century. I especially recommend John's published articles about “worship wars” found on his website.
- “[Hinei Ma Tov](#)” (Psalm 133) – I learned this setting of verses from Psalm 133 in Prof. Jim Limburg's Hebrew class at Luther Seminary some 40 years ago and somehow it remains imprinted on my memory.
- “Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit” – (from *Compline Prayer*, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 323). I use this in the context of commendation prayers at end of life. I find this chant and others from the traditional *Liturgy of the Hours* to be particularly appropriate for pastoral ministry with patients raised in the Catholic, Anglican, or Lutheran traditions. I am painfully aware of my lack of

knowledge of the Eastern Rite and Orthodox Christian liturgical traditions. I would imagine they hold a great treasure of music for pastoral care.

- **“Lake of Mercy”** (Bret Hesla) — If I find out that the image of a *lake* is pleasant or healing for a patient—an almost universal feeling in my home state of Minnesota—then I might sing this song as a type of *guided imagery* for relaxation or meditation. It is also appropriate in the context of end-of-life.

This song is a favorite of music therapists. Becky Pansch, a Certified Music Therapist from Minneapolis, wrote this about her experience singing Lake of Mercy:

I have been using Bret Hesla’s song “Lake of Mercy” for over twenty years with my hospice patients and it always brings a sense of peace, hope and calm. I have sung it at bedsides as well as memorial services, and have incorporated it into music assisted relaxation sessions countless times. In my opinion, it is a number one “must have” song for hospice music therapists.

- **“May God’s Peace Be With You Till We Meet Again”** (Kirk Franklin) — Every worship service at Redeemer Lutheran in Minneapolis, the congregation I attend with my family, ends with the first verse of this simple hymn. Having memorized it from that setting, I started using it as part of end-of-life rituals. At Redeemer we sing “God’s peace” in place of “His peace”, and I do the same myself.
- **“May Our God Now Bless You and Keep You”** (my own unpublished paraphrase and musical setting of the priestly blessing, Numbers 6:24–26). I use this as a closing prayer or blessing. You will find my text and a recording of the melody at the YouTube video I have uploaded. Feel free to use this in your own ministry, but for permission to use in a formal worship setting, please contact me at bdpharris@gmail.com.
- I love to sing hymns and songs in Spanish, but have only memorized a few selections: **“Nada te turbe,”** a Taizé chant you can find in the songbook *Singing Our Prayer* (see the Resources section accompanying this article), and **“No hay Dios tan grande como Tú,”** a popular Spanish-language praise “corito” included in the ELCA Spanish-language hymnal, *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (#586).
- **“Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow”** (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 568) — I sing this evening hymn more in a simple chorale style than that found in contemporary hymnals such as ELW. I first learned it from a musty old copy of *The Hymnal and Order of Service* of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod 1944 which I can no longer locate; an on-line search produced [this arrangement](#) of Paul Gerhardt’s tune by J.S. Bach, I believe from the same hymn edition I once had in my possession.
- **“Precious Lord”** — This hymn by Thomas Dorsey is beloved by people in a wide array of Christian traditions, particularly the historic African-American evangelical/pentecostal churches.

- “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” — A favorite song of mine from the incredibly rich tradition of American Musical Theater, from the movie I have seen more times than any other. This song reaches people at a deep level with its themes of longing and hope.

I have been a huge fan of musical theater from a very young age. Rogers and Hart, Rogers and Hammerstein, Sondheim, Lerner and Loewe, and now the likes of Lin-Manuel and his contemporaries — I love them all. I imagine this genre is a rich source of material for music therapists in their work with patients. I would like to memorize more songs from this genre, such as “*My Favorite Things*” from *The Sound of Music*, or “*Somewhere*” from *West Side Story*. I am able to sing along with Julie Andrews on “*Do Re Mi*” by heart, but I have yet to find an opportune time to sing it with patients!

- “[Spirit of the Living God](#)” (*This Far by Faith* – Hymn 101)

I first heard this one-stanza hymn, composed by Daniel Iverson in 1926, at an ELCA Global Mission Event in the early 90s, when Pastor Barbara Lundblad taught it spontaneously to the gathered assembly before her sermon. Rev. Lundblad used the phrase “fall afresh”, while hymnals such as the ELCA’s *This Far By Faith* change it to “fall fresh”. To my ear the perhaps archaic “afresh”, which I believe was the original version, sings better. I usually alter the text slightly, changing it from the first person to the second person:

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on you.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on you.

Melt you, mold you, fill you, use you.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on you.

- “[Step by Step the Longest March](#)” (Waldemar Hills & Pete Seeger) – I learned this stirring hymn to solidarity and unity from listening to various performances by [Sweet Honey in the Rock](#), both in concert and on CD. It has a slow marching cadence to it, a wonderful marriage of text and music both serving the deep meaning of the song. This song speaks especially to the experience of folks facing long periods of rehabilitation before they can return to something like the life they had previously enjoyed.



Bill Dexheimer Pharris, an ordained ELCA pastor, has been a staff chaplain since 1995 at MHealth Fairview—University of Minnesota Medical Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has performed as a member of the Minnesota Chorale and the National Lutheran Choir. In the early 90s Bill was involved with leading music at ELCA Global Mission Events, and served on the music committee for the development of the ELCA Spanish-language hymnal, Libro de Liturgia y Cántico.

Honoring the Individual through Music Therapy

Loren Goodman

SHARON IS A CLIENT THAT I WORK WITH in a nursing facility. Recently, in what was probably our seventh visit together, Sharon sang with me for the first time. Loud and strong she sang, “one, two, three o’clock, four o’clock rock...we’re gonna rock around the clock tonight!” Then she continued singing with “Blue Suede Shoes” and “Shake Rattle and Roll.” The CNAs peeked into the room, their eyebrows raised in surprise and looked at each in shock.

Sharon struggles with a variety of physical and mental health issues. As a Board Certified Music Therapist, I use music interventions to provide Sharon with opportunities for emotional support and self-expression and to decrease her agitation, anxiety, and pain. Our sessions usually start with singing some songs. Mostly I sing and play guitar. Sharon rarely speaks more than one or two words at a time.

“How did that feel?” I asked Sharon after she sang for the first time.

“It felt good,” she said.

We went on to do some simple songwriting. We started with the John Denver song, “Sunshine on My Shoulders.”

Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy

Sunshine in my eyes can make me cry

Sunshine on the water looks so lovely

Sunshine almost always makes me high

Sharon and I talked about things that make her happy and sad, things that look lovely. Her responses were still short, but they were expressive. We talked about her family and the beauty of nature. I sang through the chorus again including her responses in place of “sunshine” in each phrase. The familiar song acted as a catalyst for conversation and our new lyrics validated the feelings that she shared.

We ended our session with some music assisted relaxation. I played my guitar and sang, matching my tempo to that of her breathing and watching her breath slow as I slowed the music. “It’s ok to close your eyes,” I said, and she did. She reported that the music helped with her anxiety that day.

My work as a Board Certified Music Therapist in private practice fills my days with creative, interactive, meaningful, and sometimes mundane challenges. Every week I lead groups of older adults in memory care in singing and instrument playing to increase their orientation, decrease agitation, and promote social interaction. I

I played my guitar and sang, matching my tempo to that of her breathing and watching her breath slow as I slowed the music.

implement musical exercises to help autistic children regulate their bodies and learn to advocate for themselves. With a young adult who has experienced a traumatic brain injury, I create instrument playing interventions that help him relearn cognitive skills, like visual tracking and letter recognition. Through creative drumming and songwriting, I provide opportunities for self-expression and emotional support for a group of adults with developmental disabilities. I also manage a team of three other music therapists and share information about music therapy in my community. In all of this, and through life, my faith in God and God's perfect creation of all people is my guide.

Music therapy is the clinical use of music to reach non-musical goals, directed by a trained music therapist. Today, music therapists around the world are using music to help autistic children communicate and to help people living with cancer to decrease pain and anxiety. Music therapy helps people living with dementia to decrease agitation and connect with memories. We are hired by behavioral health facilities, correctional facilities, schools, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, and even spas. In the United States, becoming a Board-certified Music Therapist requires a minimum of bachelor's degree in music therapy, six month clinical internship, and successful completion of an exam. Music therapists are experts in understanding how music affects the brain and body and using that understanding to create change.

Music therapists are experts in understanding how music affects the brain and body and using that understanding to create change.

I was taught by my professors and teachers a variety of theories about how my faith should or should not be part of my music therapy practice, but the consensus was that my faith should only enter our therapy space when it benefits the client. I did my undergraduate clinical training at University Hospitals in Cleveland where my supervisor was an experienced and talented music therapist and a pioneer in medical music therapy. We spent most of our time together working with adult medical patients, and she seemed to my 22-year-old self to always understand exactly what our patients needed. I remember walking out of a patient room with her as she said, "did you see how the patient was moving her feet? Could you tell that she needed to use the bathroom?" To her colleagues, my supervisor's strong, steady Christian faith was well-known, but with her patients she always appeared to know the perfect moment and degree to which to share her faith to help strengthen their connection. In a hospital room in which our little music therapy group consisted of the two of us, both Protestants, a Mormon intern, and a Jewish patient, I remember her encouraging the patient when he began to talk about his faith. She said, "I can tell you that all of us in this room are believers." With that, she gave him permission to talk about his own relationship with God.

In graduate school at MCP Hahnemann University (now part of Drexel), my creative arts therapies professors worked primarily in the mental health field and

leaned heavily on psychodynamic theory. As students, we were taught to share almost nothing about ourselves with our clients, to be a blank slate. It was a significant change from my undergraduate learning, as I became more adept at supporting clients in their emotional work. I didn't know anything about my professors' faiths, they didn't know mine, and it wasn't discussed in connection with our work. But among the students, we talked about our beliefs and how they were shaping our work and our personal theories of therapy. With our lives so influenced by our faiths, how could our work not be?

Among the students, we talked about our beliefs and how they were shaping our work and our personal theories of therapy. With our lives so influenced by our faiths, how could our work not be?

During those graduate school years, my new husband and I were looking for a church to call home. We had met in the marching band at the University of Dayton, where the Marianist traditions run deep and our Christian faiths connected us with each other and so many other students. But in our new home of Philadelphia, we struggled to find a church that felt good to both of us. His Catholic background and my Presbyterian upbringing felt more like a divide. We spent many hours talking about our beliefs, our values, and the faith that we wanted to give to our future children. We wanted a place where we could be comforted by the traditions of the Mass and where all people were loved, valued, and celebrated. We wanted our daughters to learn without doubt that they could be leaders in the church if they felt called in that direction. We wanted our children to know that they were made perfectly in God's image, no matter how their brains or bodies worked, no matter who they loved. We wanted a church that was working hard to bring people together, to build people up, and to love their neighbors. For a year we visited a different church every week. Finally, at the suggestion of a wise colleague and friend, we visited a church that was part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We had found our home.

These values that we were searching for in a church are the same values that I pursue each day in my work: to bring people together, to build people up, and to love. Those things that I planned to teach my children are the same things I want to share with my clients, my staff, and my community: you are capable, you are valued, you are celebrated. Of course, those aren't the goals listed on my treatment plans. They say things like, "increase communication abilities," and "decrease anxiety," and "create positive rapport." But the foundation of my work is my belief that God has already made each of my clients perfectly. We are all working on goals. We are all striving to better ourselves, to communicate more effectively, to decrease our anxiety, to connect more competently with others. Sometimes, as a music therapist, I can support another person in this growth.

I work with a 5-year-old boy who we'll call Leonardo. He's a complete delight: friendly, enthusiastic, silly, smart as can be, and autistic. If you met Leo, you'd first notice his infectious smile and how cute he is. If you spent a little bit of time with him,

you might notice how talented he is with numbers. You might also see that he flaps his hands when he's excited, or that he loves to run and slide on the floor or crash into walls, giving himself the strong sensory input that he craves.

Leo and I often work together on sensory integration, or the ability of the nervous system to interpret sensory information. We often start our session with a music and movement experience in which I am singing a song about moving around the room. The lyrics tell Leo when to stop, when to go, and how to move. I'm not interested in his ability to follow the directions, in fact, I'm usually following his lead. I'm working to support him in the movements that he needs to help his body feel more calm and focused. Leo likes big, strong movement. We stomp, run, and jump. The rhythm and articulation of my guitar reinforces the quality of his movements. Like in freeze dance, when the song says, "stop," he halts his body as quickly as he can, waiting for the moment when the music and his movement begin again. The structure of the music allows him to anticipate when he will stop and when he will start again, helping him to organize his nervous system. I can usually see when his need for this strong sensory input lessens, and we move on to lighter movements, like skipping and spinning, then on to movements that will help him feel more connected with the ground, like sliding along the floor and rocking on our feet or bottoms. The song ends with a verse about sitting in the chair, during which Leo readily sits in the child-sized purple plastic chair, knowing that there is more movement and fun to come. We continue our sessions working on speech skills with drumming and singing and a familiar goodbye song to help him transition out of the clinic space.



Leo and his mom don't see or hear about my faith. What I hope they see is that I think Leo and the way his brain works are exactly as God intended. I don't have any desire to change who he is. I don't want him to stop flapping his hands or taking joy in spinning balls. I don't need him to talk like I do; I want him to be able to express his needs, desires, and ideas with the world when he wants or needs to. I want him to feel fully accepted as he is.

Today my clients rarely know my faith, but it affects my work every day. It is because of my faith that I know that my clients are already perfectly made. My prayer is that they feel seen, celebrated, and valued, and that through music, I can connect with them during our time together.

Loren Goodman (pictured above) is a Board Certified Music Therapist and the Owner of Prospect Music Therapy LLC. She lives with her husband, four children, and a chihuahua in the Chicago area.

Writing the Soundtrack to My Recovery

Corey Grunklee

I'M COREY, AND I'M AN ALCOHOLIC. I have been saying that in certain places for the last eight years. While it rolls off my tongue like I've said it thousands of times, I do not take the phrase for granted. It still serves me as a wakeup call to remind me of the battle I need to face every day. Sometimes I have spoken that in settings that are not accustomed to hearing such an introduction, and I receive questions. One of the most profound was after I had mentioned my alcoholism very early on in an interview for the current pastoral position I serve at Trinity Lutheran Church in Auburn, Alabama. "Why would you lead with that?" I lead with that because it is as plain of an introduction that I can think of that immediately puts me in a position to be known as a resource for others who struggle (in my case alcohol and other addictive behaviors). It would be equally true and resourceful for me to say that I am Corey, and I am a redeemed sinner, but for whatever reason that doesn't invoke as many conversations as mentioning alcoholism. I am someone who has been to some dark depths of sin and has been brought back into the light of Jesus to talk about it. I want to help. I want to keep healing. I want others to heal too. For the purposes of this article, I want to share how songwriting has helped me in my daily recovery from addiction, and aided me in my walk with Jesus.

It has taken a lot of different resources for me to experience recovery from alcoholism and the real sins that my drinking attempted to keep hidden from myself and others. A 12 step program was essential, because it showed me that there are others like me who found a solution to the problem that works. The program also gave me a proper introduction to my Higher Power, the Triune God of the Holy Scriptures, that, somehow, 31 years of Christianity and 5 years of pastoral ministry hadn't quite made. I got a sponsor and went to a lot of meetings. I identified my problems, who I had hurt, and tried to make amends wherever possible. Recovery included frequent counseling, a tool I still use. I sought out counselors who had either recovered themselves, or had worked with so many alcoholics that they could convincingly talk the talk which would help me walk the walk. I made regular exercise a part of my recovery. I took seriously the things I learned in the 12 step program and put them into practice because I believed that the men and women in those rooms had been where I'd been, done what I'd done, and convinced me without a doubt that I needed to do what they did in order to get what they got. And it worked. I got a relationship with Jesus that I didn't know was possible. I got the tools to become a

For the purposes of this article, I want to share how songwriting has helped me in my daily recovery from addiction, and aided me in my walk with Jesus.

contributing member of society, a decent husband, a dependable if still overmatched father, a humble pastor and a friend.

The above paragraph is a brief account of what it took to initiate the recovery process. Woven into my story before, during, and after initial recovery is a love for music and songwriting. I wrote a song for the first time in 7th grade. Even then, it was an exhilarating discovery that I could create something from words, a melody, and some chords in my head and call it a song. From then on, it is no longer an idea, but a thing that you can experience with your senses. I loved the process of moving from nothing to something with every word, note and feeling that could be mixed and molded together to form a song that someone else could enjoy on one level or another. I wrote a lot of songs before I began the recovery process, but it was after the recovery process had set in for a while that I began to use songwriting as a kind of self led therapy as well as a way to allow others to experience the ride of recovery in song as well.

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While some songs are written as complete fiction, which itself is a great therapeutic exercise, a lot of my songs draw on some shred (or more) of reality as a jumping off point. In the case of one of the first songs I wrote in my recovery, I definitely started and continued with a description of actual events. After a few months of a lot of meetings, intensified working of the 12 steps, and just a general rebuilding of some of the damage I had caused, I began writing down notes that would become songs. The notes were simply for me to remember what it was like as things were happening and changing rapidly. Most notably was that by writing down some of my most troubling fears, some damage I had done to others, and then acting on them to release some fear and make amends, my relationship to God changed dramatically. The image that became especially powerful to me was that of darkness giving way to light. I remember the phrase “morning has broken” coming into my mind, and in response, the phrase “breaking the night” became like a billboard in my brain. I latched onto the idea that the light of Christ not only overcomes the darkness, but destroys, chases and breaks it.

One night, not being able to sleep due to the new found energy I had when lies, excuses, and over night drinking aren't a priority anymore, I cleared a spot at my kitchen counter, grabbed a pen and a notebook and started turning some of those notes I was keeping into a song. The first one that developed was a song about what I have just described. It was time to write songs again. It was time to reflect on the success and the victories that God had provided. “Morning is breaking, breaking the night” became the focus of the song that was created that night. I was in a place of deep gratitude that the steps I was taking in recovery were working. The lines about

finding honesty and dignity are redemptive qualities that recovery has given me back. There are also some obscure Bob Dylan song references hidden in the verses. As a way to distract myself from thinking about drinking or other aspects of my “old” life, I listened to a lot of Bob Dylan music because he writes a lot of verses and I could easily get lost in thought listening to them. Originally, I believe that there were seven or eight verses that I had written, but these four made the cut. The last verse is an explicit and deliberate shout out to the victory in Christ which ultimately atones for my past, present, and future, and is the fuel used to propel my recovery forward. [You can listen to all songs discussed in this article here.](#)

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BREAKING THE NIGHT

*Finally cleared a seat at my kitchen bar
I pulled up a chair but I had no guitar
I found a blue pen not looking for a fight
Morning is breaking, breaking the night*

*It was hard to find but I love honesty
I found dignity too it wasn't looking for me
I was praying I was wrong turns out you were right
Morning is breaking breaking the night*

*I was waiting and waiting was my time out of mind
That tempest was simple I threw the bums a dime
On a list was your name one I had to write
Morning is breaking breaking the night*

*I was dead in transgression but alive in the blood
Can't trust my own heart so I trust only God
One hell of a battle one heavenly fight
Morning is breaking breaking the night
Morning is breaking breaking the night*

Most of the songs that I wrote early on became expressions of triumph and focused on the positive side of recovery. I was, internally, gloating about the changes that had come. I had reached a level of honesty that was actually earning trust with those I had hurt in the past. I was happily sharing my experiences with people who were new to 12 step programs and still seeking help. In some of those conversations, I heard familiar phrases that I had made a living off of earlier. I can taper off my alcohol consumption. What I need is one great night just to sort of say good bye to my favorite drinks. Or on a more negative note, it's too late for a second chance. I'm afraid of what I might be like if I'm not drinking. These are the types of thoughts that

keep all sorts of people stuck in bad habits or even sinful behavior. It's frightening to imagine what life will be like after a lot of effort to make some drastic changes that actually work! It was a combination of these phrases that made of the bulk of a song I titled "Coins in My Pocket." I carry two coins, medallions, in my pocket almost 100% of the time. One is my medallion that signifies how long I have been sober in years. The other is a coin I received after completing a 2 year practicum on missional living. I wanted to express why those coins were so important, and how they have come to symbolize a rejection of all the excuses I used to make when it came to admitting I had a problem and needing a lot of help.

There is often harsh language in 12 step type rooms. The language is harsh from people who know how serious addiction can get. There really is no room for excuses, for self-pity, for any sort of talking oneself back into the addiction. I had to learn to hear "no" a lot, and be able to accept that. In embracing that, I needed to have this song help me accept that. There is no winding down or tapering off. I had to stop. I had to get help. I needed to die to sin and rise to life in Christ immediately. In addition to how desperately I needed to admit I had to make a change, I also had to assert the positive. I now know that admitting my sin, confessing my guilt, and receiving the forgiveness of Christ works. I know it works for me and I know it works for others. I wanted to be able to sing that! I wanted to capture both sides, the stuff I had to do, and the stuff I now proclaim. While I am still a work in progress, the urgency and daily remembering of my baptism has not waned to the point of a relapse. So I keep the coins in my pocket, and I keep pouring myself into sharing this message to others.

I wanted to express why those coins were so important, and how they have come to symbolize a rejection of all the excuses I used to make when it came to admitting I had a problem and needing a lot of help.

COINS IN MY POCKET

*There is no wind down no tapering off
No last chances no good byes
It doesn't matter but I've got my reasons
Coins in my pocket to explain why
I've got one to remind me of this corner I sharply turned
It took years of day by day to heal up from being burned
I have one more-reminds me of when
I died to myself and I came to live again
There's always time to start again
New beginnings new highways
Go and take them but remember
You don't count years and not count days
I've got one to remind me of this corner I sharply turned*

*It took years of day by day to heal up from being burned
I have one more-reminds me of when
I died to myself and I came to live again
And I'm taking heed lest I fall down
When I'm tempted I know the way out
I've got one to remind me of this corner I sharply turned
It took years of day by days to heal up from being burned
I have one more-reminds me of when
I died to myself and I came to live again
I died to myself and I came to life again*

More recently in my recovery I have written some songs that deal with the uglier, hurtful and more embarrassing side of my addiction. For whatever reason, I am more willing to face those things on paper and set them to music than I was early on. The beauty of it, for me has been that once my feelings are on the page, some of the original fear, guilt, or regret is taken away by facing it right there on the page. Another aspect of songwriting that is helpful to me is that even if I decide to be a little vague in the way that I describe a situation, lyrically, I still know the truth and can work through the expression of it without anyone else knowing the details or even the reference point. One incident in particular inspired a song I eventually called "Still Shining." Feeling a need to make sure other people knew how much I had changed, sometimes I spent a lot of money to try to prove it.

In one instance, I bought my wife a pair of diamond earrings. To make a long story short, my wife removed her earrings in the living room one night and they ended up on the floor. I vacuumed them up and threw them in the trash before I even knew she had lost them. Never one to admit defeat easily, I looked and I looked all over the floor. I literally took a comb to our carpet. Desperately I emptied out the vacuum and searched through the dust, dirt and tiny Legos for earrings but to no avail. The whole thing bothered me for a long time. It occurred to me that this scenario served as a metaphor for me trying to gloss some things over. I gave her those earrings to sort of cover up my past. I had done that so many times in the past. Buy something nice after I embarrassed her. Clean the house, change diapers, get up on time for a few days after months of being virtually absent. Diamond rings don't make people recover. Even well intended gestures don't make people recover. Only repentance and grace do that. Beautifully and graciously, even though I unknowingly threw away my wife's diamond earrings, she was still as bright and wonderful as ever. And to her credit, she still loved me even after all of the heartache and hardship I put her through. This

Another aspect of songwriting that is helpful to me is that even if I decide to be a little vague in the way that I describe a situation, lyrically, I still know the truth and can work through the expression of it without anyone else knowing the details or even the reference point.

scenario, documented and set to a well-worn chord progression, provided me a very satisfying release of my old ways, and a celebration of my wife's faithful perseverance.

STILL SHINING

*What did it ever mean to hand you a thing like that
When underneath the diamonds were all the cracks
How could I have known that what I had to find
Was looking back at me all this time*

*Like a dark cloud on the sun has a silvery lining
Though the diamond is gone you're still shining
you're still shining you're still shining on
When the ground gave way and swallowed it like a grave
I could not imagine what would take its place today*

*Like a dark cloud on the sun has a silvery lining
Though the diamond is gone you're still shining
you're still shining you're still shining on*

*On my hands and knees I looked til I knew it was gone
What I found is that you and I will go on and on and on and on*

*Like a dark cloud on the sun has a silvery lining
Though the diamond is gone you're still shining
you're still shining you're still shining on*

Every now and again I will pick a couple of Bible verses to use for times of prayer in various situations. One of my favorites is Psalm 57:2. I prayed the words of this Psalm countless times, and finally a melody came into my mind that allowed me to be able to sing the Psalm as a prayer. This song took on a “past, present, and future” imagery that reflects the “what it was like, what happened and what it's like now” formula for sharing one's recovery journey. This song, in particular, speaks to the healing nature that I have benefited from in songwriting. It is one thing to talk to someone about your challenges, shortcomings and failures. Writing those things down, weaving in a powerful proclamation of truth from God, and then singing it out as a personal prayer and testimony brought forth a lot of healing. Putting the fears, the mistakes and regrets down in black and white stripped them of some of the mystic power that I had assigned to them. Prior to the song, those things held me captive. But lining them up against the Word of God completely conquered my former captors. An added bonus to writing the Word of God in to the song is that just as the problems are real, now the solution has become just as real and even more powerful. The juxtaposition of the sin and the Word put the right perspective on their relationship. The solution

Writing those things down, weaving in a powerful proclamation of truth from God, and then singing it out as a personal prayer and testimony brought forth a lot of healing.

trumps the problem. A song of lament has become a psalm of victory and praise. And that is the way it has been for me for more than eight years now. The Father greeted the prodigal son back before he could even ask for a chance to be a slave. The mourning has turned into dancing. I am grateful to be able to sing a song of prayer, praise and thanksgiving out of the journey God has placed me.

TIL THE DANGER IS GONE

*I rest in the shadow of Your wings, until the danger is gone
My soul takes refuge in You alone, have mercy on me Oh my God
God I offer myself to you to build with me and do as you will do
And may this battle won
Bring all praise to the Son
That more would be made victors in You
I still remember where I was
The day You took the obsession away
I cannot deny I look the world in the eye
I know peace and reprieve every day
Your will be done not mine, many times a day it may take
You take anger, worry and fear,
and self-pity away from here
You restore my soul for Your name's sake*



Corey Grunklee is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Auburn, Alabama. He previously served churches in Michigan, Texas and Florida. After a nearly two decade struggle with addiction, he is enjoying 8+ years of sobriety.

Music on the Inside

Nick Shults

MUSIC HAS TREMENDOUS POWER. To transport us to another place or time. To elevate or calm our mood. Music has the power to change lives. I know this because music changed my life. Music was the hook which God used to keep me involved in the life of the church. As I was about to be one more Lutheran confirmand who never darkened the door of a sanctuary again, God pulled me back with a few guitar chords and some cheesy camp songs.

And I have seen it change the lives of many others, giving them the opportunity to use their talents for the sake of the Church, from children to youth to adults. But as I have transitioned into a new role, from parish pastor to prison chaplain, I have been introduced to a group of men, inmates at the facility in which I work, clerks employed in the chaplain's office, and incredibly talented musicians who have, for many years, led the worship music at the weekly Protestant worship services held here.

Not only have they been instrumental in teaching me what a chaplain *does*, they have also shown me, again, the power of music, for even in prison the power of music is undeniable. These men, I will call them 'D' and 'B', when not under COVID-19 restrictions, are part of a band that leads a group of upwards of one hundred men in praise and worship. From classic hymns to contemporary songs, their large repertoire of music inspires joy and hope.

Their music careers are certainly different. 'D' began singing in fifth grade, picking up the guitar at 17 and "learning to tune it at 20". 'B' started playing the guitar at 21, learning basic chords and songs like "Freebird" while in prison. Over the past 10 years he has honed his skills and also become a talented vocalist.

Despite their differences, their sounds meld seamlessly as they practice each Friday morning in the chapel. But it's more than just their sound that meshes. It's also their approach to the music and their role in the Christian community in the facility. Through music, 'B' says he has been led to a "full understanding of my calling". His desire is to build people up, on the inside and on the streets, through music. In talking to him, he has expressed a desire, upon release, to lead worship in congregations. There is, he says, "no greater joy [than] to do what you're called to do".

'D' has taken the opportunity not only to lead worship, but also to engage with the lyrics of songs and their scriptural foundations. Both playing music and coming to a greater theological understanding of who God is have both played an important role in 'D's' spiritual growth while in prison.

Not only have they been instrumental in teaching me what a chaplain *does*, they have also shown me, again, the power of music, for even in prison the power of music is undeniable.

In addition, they have dreams for the future of the chapel band. B desires to leave a legacy, to leave the music program better than he found it. And he most certainly has. When B arrived the chapel didn't have any equipment or instruments. Although aging, the chapel now has a sound system, drums, a bass, keyboards, guitars and microphones.

For the Christian community that attends the services, the music has also greatly impacted them. It has also been a way to cope with their current situation. Both 'D' and 'B' reflected on the privilege of watching the men of the facility worship. The music offers them the opportunity to be transported outside of the prison walls. "They're not in prison for that one hour," 'D' says.

Our facility is still under COVID-19 restrictions so, for now, the music played in the chapel is heard by only a very few ears. But the hope for a return to more normal worship in the chapel, the opportunity for some of these men to play music and for that music to transport those in this facility remains strong. Not a day goes by when I am not stopped as I walk through the compound and asked when church will resume. The desire for community, the Word of God, and the opportunity to worship is an indication that a glimmer of hope remains in this place.

Now, as both B and D look forward to transferring facilities, the search continues for those who will pick up the mantle of the chapel band and carry it forward. No doubt the styles will be different and perhaps the approach to leading a group in worship through music. But the effects will be the same: transporting men in this facility to the throne of God where they can receive His gifts.



Rev. Nick Shults currently serves as a full-time prison chaplain in southern Colorado. He previously served as Pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Sunnyvale, CA and Director of Christian Education at Faith Lutheran Church in Fair Oaks, CA. He is married to Jen and they have a dog, Olivia. Nick and Jen like to hike and camp. Olivia, not so much.

A Bird of Paradise

Chuck Weinrich

IN AUTUMN OF 1990 I arranged to take a 2-day-a-week sabbatical for a period of 5 months, during which I spent an hour every Friday morning with Anne Strand, a former CPE student who was now a Pastoral Counselor and Art Therapist. I had reached a point in my ministry as a chaplain when I was feeling overwhelmed by death, and asked Anne to help me work through some of these situations. In the process of trying to draw my feelings, I got even more frustrated because I couldn't draw or paint scenes that accurately illustrated what I was hoping to portray—particularly human figures and faces. Anne suggested that I might be helped if I stopped using paints or even pencils to express myself artistically and, instead, find a box of 8 children's crayons—the large ones often used in kindergarten and lower grades—and bring them along for my next week's session with her.

The day before that session I had a request from a head nurse to visit with a male patient who had been diagnosed with AIDS, and was exhibiting deep depression. When I entered his room (lights out, shades pulled) I sat in a chair next to his bed, and learned that he was an architect. He described some of the physical demands of his job and then shared his distress over the fact that he had lost so much of his strength that he was unable to continue in his calling. He questioned what value his life had at this point. After more conversation and prayer, I left, planning to see him on the following Monday.

On Friday morning I went to a local drugstore, intending to find some of the crayons Anne had suggested. I saw them on a shelf and, when I reached for them, I was inspired to grab two boxes. After paying for them, I headed over to the hospital, went to the man's room, and since he was on the telephone, I simply placed the box of crayons on his tray, said, "See you Monday," and left.

On Monday, I headed once more for his room, and was surprised to see that the lights were on and the shades were pulled up. When he saw me, he called out, "Chuck! Look what I've been doing!" After I sat down, he showed me several sheets of paper on which he'd drawn beautiful pictures of buildings he'd designed, scenes of gardens and trees, all drawn with ink and colored with the crayons I'd given him. He told me, "I couldn't believe it. I haven't used crayons since grade school, but I've had such a good time with them this weekend. I realized I may not have the strength to do the architectural drawings for my work, but I have enough to sketch and color!" About that time my pager went off, calling me to another emergency, but as I got up to leave,

I headed over to the hospital, went to the man's room, and since he was on the telephone, I simply placed the box of crayons on his tray, said, "See you Monday," and left.

he handed me one of the drawings, saying, “Here; I did this one for you.” I thanked him and left. Back in my office I put the sheet on my desk and went to the emergency call. Later that day, I finally had a chance to look at which drawing he’d given me. It was the one pictured here—a Bird of Paradise!

Tuesday morning, I quickly headed to his room, fully intending to go deeper into why he had done the drawing in the first place, but also why he had chosen to give that specific drawing to me, the chaplain. I have to admit I was greatly disappointed to find that he had been discharged on Monday evening—happy for him, of course, but sorry that he and I hadn’t been able to talk about the significance of “Paradise” for him.

I believed he had done that particular drawing as part of his wrestling with what having AIDS might well mean: a death sentence...and then what? Oblivion? Eternal punishment for how he had contracted the disease? Or continuing, in some way, with being eternally in the presence of a loving God and God’s very Son, Jesus Christ? I was sorry that I wouldn’t be able to explore those questions with him and could only hope that he would find another pastoral person with whom to address these issues and find real comfort with their understanding. Maybe he’d even sketch them another Bird of Paradise!

I never saw him again, but I have thought of him many, many times. I have hung his framed drawing in each of the homes in which we have lived for many years afterward. I also had several opportunities to share the significance of the drawing with people visiting us at home.

This experience has also encouraged me to continue using art in a variety of ways. I became bold enough to use art in preaching, While I had done a lot of art in this way before (back in the late ‘60s, my wife Carol and I crafted many huge banners to decorate the church I pastored before entering chaplaincy), I developed several sermons in which I cut out 12” tall ‘balloon’ letters which I stuck on the altar or wall of the church in which I was guest preaching, spelling out a word basic to the sermon theme, like “H-O-P-E,” making each letter stand for an aspect of what hope connoted in faithful Christian living (unfortunately I overextended myself when I used the word “H-O-S-A-N-N-A”—sermon was w-a-y too long!). In a prior issue of *Caring Connections* I detailed an extensive ministry I had with a woman slowly dying of cancer in which we used art as an effective means of exploring what she was experiencing as she approached the time of her death (*Caring Connections*, 2017, # 3 “A Ministry of Accompaniment with the Dying” – “Last Leaf” p. 25).

I believed he had done that particular drawing as part of his wrestling with what having AIDS might well mean: a death sentence...and then what?



There were also other incidents in pastoral visitations where I used sketching, but the most significant development came in my supervision of students of CPE. That story is told in the next article.



Chuck Weinrich is a retired CPE supervisor, living in the Independent Living area of Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg, PA, where he and his wife, Carol, enjoy being only 2 miles from their daughter and her family. Before this move, they lived in Port Orange, FL, about 4 miles from one of our sons and his family. He served as co-editor of Caring Connections for several years, and continues to serve on the editorial board for this e-magazine.

The Use of Artwork Within Clinical Pastoral Education

Chuck Weinrich

AFTER COMPLETING MY EXPERIENCE WITH ART THERAPY, as alluded to in my previous article in this issue, I continued to use art in various aspects of my ministry, chaplaincy and supervision of CPE. We moved from New Jersey to Milwaukee, WI, where I worked as a chaplain supervisor at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin for five years and then moved to The Village at Manor Park, a geriatric long-term care facility also located in Milwaukee, where I developed a CPE program in this geriatric setting. Along the way I took two additional art classes, “Studio Art” and “Drawing 1” at Alverno College, an all-female college with a humorous bumper sticker that read, “Harvard—the Alverno of the East” and one at Mount Mary College, “The History and Theory of Art Therapy”, in which I wrote a paper that eventually was published in *The Journal of Pastoral Care*.¹

My involvement with all these artistic projects moved me to find ways to integrate art activities within the units of CPE I supervised. In this article I want to share some ways that I integrated art reflections into units of CPE that I supervised, and then share some examples of how I used art—specifically drawing with colored pencils—at mid-units as teaching vehicles.

Every two weeks, in Summer units and in Residency units (once a month in Extended units) I substituted the usual Friday InterPersonal Relations seminar with an Art IPR. Each Art IPR used a different medium, but usually had a common theme: “Describe yourself in relationship to the group since the prior session.” After working with the various materials for about 15 minutes, we would then take turns ‘presenting’ our artwork and explaining its connection with current feelings within the CPE process. The media that I selected began simply and progressed to more challenging types. This was the progression:

1. Playdoh – relatively easy to work with, and it engaged the students and me in expressive play. I participated in each exercise. Almost every student, whether comfortable with artwork or not, was able to begin expressing their feelings and insights with varying degrees of comfort through this exercise.
2. Torn Construction Paper – no scissors or worrying about making a straight line. By this time, the end of a month in a summer unit, or even more time

My involvement with all these artistic projects moved me to find ways to integrate art activities within the units of CPE I supervised.

1 Vol. 52, No. 3 — Fall, 1998 “Addressing the Whirlwind: A Conversation About Clinical Pastoral Education, Geriatrics, Group Process and Art Therapy” pp. 241–247

in an extended unit, students had begun to develop trust in themselves, one another and how “this art stuff” helps them grow, and they usually found this modality helping them be more playful, interactive, and insightful with one another.

3. Finger Paint – this was my personally least favorite medium, but I included it to affirm my willingness to enter into growth and struggle along with the students. By this time students were getting still more comfortable in engaging with or challenging each other, and the messiness of this medium reflected their comfort in “messing with” each other.

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4. Charcoal – also messy, but seemed to allow for deeper introspection and exploration of the ‘darker’ side of relationships with selves, each other, supervisor, family, God, etc.
5. Crayon using one’s ‘minor’ hand. This medium was most familiar to people, but not drawing with one’s minor hand. The purpose was to continue to move out of left brain, rational activity into right brain, relational focus. It was near the end of the unit, so it allowed a focus on evaluation of self and relationships. It was possible for people to write or print again, inviting both hemispheres of the brain to find expression.
6. Final week: Artist’s Choice. Focus was on ‘wrapping up,’ summarizing what the unit has meant for the student, particularly in relationship with group and supervisor.

At the time of mid-term evaluations, I also developed a way for me to ‘step back’ and give the peer group opportunity to interact with each presenter in her or his hour. I used my favorite kind of colored pencils, Prismacolor, to create a composite drawing on an 11x14 paper while the students each read their mid-unit evaluation and got responses from the others. I would occasionally make a verbal statement related to the process I was observing in the group, but was predominantly quiet during the evaluations, letting the artwork be the primary vehicle for my observations. I wouldn’t show the drawing until the end of the day, sometimes just letting the students ‘find themselves’ in it, and other times giving my verbal interpretations of what I’d drawn.

Between mid-unit and conclusion, I would take my drawing to Kinko’s or some other place for reproducing copies, making one for each of the students. I would give these out on the final day of the program. Some students said they framed theirs and hung them in their offices. I imagine some others might use it for kindling a bonfire that evening. But I hope each found some congruence between the relationship we

developed through the course of the unit and the drawing I had made about them and their peers.

Here, for example, are two drawings from the Autumn and Winter units of a residency group of five individuals.

- Upper left sketch in each drawing is related to the same student.
- Upper right and center student sketches trade places in the two drawings.
- Lower left and right student sketches also trade places in the two drawings.
- I have found that oftentimes the sketch in the center position [I usually had five students in a group] turned out to be the “identified patient” or emotional center of attention in that particular group.



For the mid-unit evaluations of the third unit of our residency program, instead of developing a third composite drawing, I decided to use a good deal of my time paging through several of my own art books, looking for photos of paintings or sculptures that would echo my sense of the individual student in areas of relationship a) with self, b) with God, c) with patients and/or families, d) with their peers and e) with their supervisor. For example, a student whom I observed to be struggling with authority issues might get a copy of a painting by Rene Magritte titled, “The Chair”. It is a realistic painting of a diminutive regular chair, positioned on the seat of an immense stone chair. If I wanted to affirm a female student claiming her own authority and being more assertive, I might find a photograph of Gaston Lechaise’s statue, “Standing Woman.” Fortunately, there were excellent photocopiers at the centers where I supervised, so I could make excellent copies in either color or black and white.

How effective were these means through which I wanted to integrate my personal love for drawing/making art with my supervision of students in Clinical Pastoral Education? I realize the insertion of unique facets to an educational program might be problematic. Was I avoiding being more present with a student when I was caught up in developing images that would speak to/convey my sense of what they needed to address in their growth as effective pastoral caregivers? Or might the image I come up with be a powerful tool for their own self-awareness in ministry? Was I just having fun at their expense? Or was God using my love of drawing and artwork in general as an effective tool for confrontation, challenge and/or affirmation? These

were questions I continued to wrestle with during the entire time I was using art work as part of my ministry as a clinical educator. I hope my sharing of this material might motivate others to explore integration of one's personal skills and enjoyment, regardless in what field they might be, to play an active role in one's pastoral activity, whether that be as a congregational minister, a hospice or hospital chaplain, a pastoral counselor, a teacher, a parish nurse or a clinical educator.

The Story Written on My Skin

Travis Ferguson

THE STORY WRITTEN ON MY SKIN really isn't *my* story, per se. It's the story of a craftsman who took great pride in what He created. It's the story of that creation falling on the floor and breaking into little pieces. It's the story of the craftsman who, loving that creation so much, worked a plan of restoration.

When people ask me "why did you get all those tattoos?" I wish I could quote to them Saint Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:22 "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." If I said that, I'd be lying. The true reason I went under the needle for my first tattoo was to spite my mother. (Lord, have mercy...)

That first tattoo was a dove — a symbol in Christianity of the Holy Spirit. The dove had been an important symbol to me ever since my Confirmation that occurred on the Feast of Pentecost in 2014. But that certainly was not my last one...

Altogether, I have 9 spots on my body that have been "inked" with Christian symbols: (1) a dove, (2) a triquetra, (3) a fish, (4) the Greek word, *agape*, meaning love, (5) the Hebrew word, *chesed*, meaning loving-kindness, (6) a visual depiction of "I am the way, the truth, and the life", (7) a cross, (8) an anchor, (9) and, of course, Luther's Rose. Each symbol communicates a significant truth about Christian theology, and each one has led to a different conversation about who Jesus is.

The two most noticeable tattoos I have, both displayed prominently on my forearms, are the anchor (with the words "Hope Anchors the Soul") and the word *chesed*. The word *chesed* (just three simple Hebrew letters) translates in a few different ways, but at its root it summarizes the love that God has for his people. The letters find their home on my right arm, over an ancient scar that was self-inflicted when I was in High School. Yes — you read that right. This Lutheran Pastor once engaged in self-harm — and I am not afraid to talk about it anymore.

In high school I struggled with self-worth, shame, the unknown, and relationships. During a particularly dark season of my life, a season where my soul was riddled with the age-old question of "if God is so good, why do bad things happen?" I would take a box cutter and drag it across parts of my body. Most of those marks are healed now... but one large scar remains.

On a regular basis in my 20's, I would look at my arm with great shame. "How could I have been so depressed that this is what I resorted to?" "Why did it ever reach this point?" "What do other people think when they see it?" In my last year

Each symbol communicates a significant truth about Christian theology, and each one has led to a different conversation about who Jesus is.

of seminary at Concordia — St. Louis, I went to a local tattoo shop with the word *chesed* written out, and asked them to place it directly over the scar — where the scar could still be seen, but where the scar would no longer be the focus.

In the years since getting that tattoo, I have been able to share with hundreds of people the story written on my skin. It's the story of both darkness and light. The story of despair and hope. The story of self-reliance and the Cross.

The story written on my skin does not always have a joyful *beginning*, but it certainly has a joyful *ending*. And that's the beauty of tattoos — they tell a story that makes people ask a question, which always leads to a conversation about a central truth: Jesus.

As a lover of tattoos, I have become infatuated with the story that is written on the skin of my other brothers and sisters wandering this world. It has been one of my life's greatest joys to hear the stories behind the ink, whether it be *secular* or *religious*. Religious tattoos, however, obviously pique my interest more, because this body art often gives a preview to the greatest story of all time.

And that's the beauty of tattoos — they tell a story that makes people ask a question, which always leads to a conversation about a central truth: Jesus.



Throughout history, art has a certain way of doing this that preaching, music, and even the sacred liturgy cannot. Though I must admit there was a time when I gawked at beautiful and ornate churches saying, “That money could have gone to the poor!”, I now appreciate art's place in the church, namely because art gives us a picture of the divine. St. Pope John Paul II believed the same thing. In his “Letter to Artists”, he says:

“In Christ, God has reconciled the world to himself. All believers are called to bear witness to this; but it is up to you, men and women who have given your lives to art, to declare with all the wealth of your ingenuity that in Christ the world is redeemed: The human person is redeemed, the human body is redeemed, and the whole creation ... is redeemed. The creation awaits the revelation of the children of God also through art and in art. This is your task. Humanity in every age, and even today, looks to works of art to shed light upon its path and its destiny.”¹

Art points us to the Divine. Art brings light into people's darkness — even art that's canvas is the skin.

1 John Paul II, “Letter to Artists” (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999), 17.

Stories written on skin aren't for everyone — and that's okay. But the story written on my skin has been a form of art that has, time and time again, proved to shed light. I'm always looking forward to the next time someone stops, points, and asks "what's the meaning?" I'll be ready with "well, let me tell you a story..."

Further Reading:

Chad Bird, "What Does the Bible Say About Tattoos?", www.1517.org/articles/what-does-the-bible-say-about-tattoos



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Handprint: A Physical Reminder of Those We Love

Anna Speiser

OUTSIDE OF THE LIBRARY OF LUTHER SEMINARY in St. Paul is a sculptural image of Martin Luther, his eyes closed and his face peaceful. It's a copy of Luther's death mask. Death masks, taking a cast or impression, often in plaster or wax, of a person's face after death was a common practice from the Middle Ages through the 19th century. The masks served as a memento of a person's image, particularly when photographs were impossible or rare. Still today, physical reminders of those we love can be important and comforting for the bereaved.

At our hospital, we have a tradition of creating a handprint of patients who die while in the hospital, and presenting the print to the family. Many families have shared their appreciation for this very personal memento. Following a patient's death, with the family's permission, the chaplain or the social worker, often with the assistance of a nurse or aide, makes the handprint. Using common tempera paint, we cover the palm and fingers of the patient with a generous and even layer of paint, then gently press the hand against a blank sheet of paper. We frame the image in a simple black frame and print the loved one's name and dates of life at the bottom. Many of our families have found this to be a touching remembrance of their loved one. I have seen these handprints displayed at several funerals, often included on the table amongst photos and other memorabilia, or even at the front of the church during the funeral, alongside the cremation urn. During Covid as hospital visitation was limited and travel was difficult, the handprint took on a special significance as a concrete memento of a time when all the family could not be present. One family was very touched to receive the handprint and told me they planned to mail it to their sister, who was not able to travel to be at the hospital during their father's death or attend his funeral. They hoped the print could be a tangible keepsake for her who was having to experience her father's death from a distance.

During Covid as hospital visitation was limited and travel was difficult, the handprint took on a special significance as a concrete memento of a time when all the family could not be present.



In our Christian tradition, we proclaim an incarnate God who took human form and walked amongst us in an earthly life. We live out our divine calling through our physical bodies. As the motto of the ELCA proclaims, "God's work, our hands." We experience our emotional and spiritual lives, our relationship with God and one another, through our human bodies. For many of us, our loved ones' hands are a tender representation of our loved ones as a whole. We

remember them holding our hands or cooking us meals, doing crafts or gesturing in conversation. We experience our loved ones in part through the work of their hands, and an image of those hands can help us connect to who they were.

I recently visited the home of a newly admitted hospice patient. When I arrived, she invited me into her living room. Hanging above her couch was a framed handprint. I inquired about it, and she explained it was an image of her husband's hand, made years before when he had died at our hospital. She went on to share tender memories of him and their years together. It was easy to see the handprint was a heartfelt reminder of a special person, gone but not forgotten.



Anna Rudberg Speiser is a hospice and hospital chaplain at Providence Medical Center in Wayne, Nebraska. She lives on her family farm near Emerson, Nebraska, with her husband and two children. She is certified with BCCI and is an ELCA Minister of Word and Sacrament. Anna serves on the Caring Connections Editorial Board.

Serendipity

David Wurster

Note: This is not an academic style article but was inspired from a discussion about the topic of pastoral care and the healing arts. This is a reflection about serendipity and the intersections of pastoral ministry and the healing arts discovered in living the two lives of a parish pastor and professional pastoral counselor over 40 years of ministry.

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL MORNING IN THE BUSH near the Zambezi River in Zimbabwe. Our small group was traveling to a village to meet Mpisi, the chieftain of an area of a region. We were in the bush; we had already “met” Cape buffalo, lions, hyenas, and elephants on the way to the village. When we arrived at the village Mpisi’s wife, who was wearing a Princeton University T-shirt, told us that her husband was on his way to meet us. He had attended a funeral already that morning. We were ushered to a community arena with a thatched roof to wait. When we wondered about the earth colored floor we were told it was dried cow dung.

A short time later Mpisi arrived in his white shirt, black slacks, fine leather shoes, and gave us his official welcome. He told us about the country, the area, the village and the people. He broke into a sermon about the wonderful balance of creation and the beauty God had created. He went on to tell us how the resurrected Christ is Lord and the renewer at the center of his people and the world. He then led us into a discussion of our backgrounds and his personal world as a leader of the people of the area and included subjects like education and the administration of education in the area. He found out that he and I were the same age and then that I was a pastor. He then said, “Oh, you are a shepherd; we are both shepherds so you understand what I am saying.” In some more sharing he also discovered that I had advanced education and training in what we call specialized pastoral care. At this discovery he became animated and said, “Come. You have to see my office”.

He then led me through the houses of the village to a double sized house—all with thatched roofs—to a double sized building with a thatched roof and packed dirt floor. He showed me the office and then took a thick document from a shelf and said, “I want you to see this.” He showed me a master’s dissertation from the University of Florida with his name below the candidate’s name on the title page. He had been the dissertation supervisor for the graduate student in herbal medicine. We had another point of contact for I had done such supervision for graduate students

He found out that he and I were the same age and then that I was a pastor. He then said, “Oh, you are a shepherd; we are both shepherds so you understand what I am saying.”



over the years so we shared another bond. He proceeded to show me some of his supply of herbal ingredients he used in his healing art.

Before I was allowed to leave he took me back outside saying, “Come, You have to see my bank.” He showed me a fenced enclosure in which were goats and cows. “See, this is my bank.” We parted having shared a time of healing presence together in the body of Christ.

As I thought about it, it was serendipity—a surprise discovery. I never expected to meet and share time with a shepherd/theologian in the bush of Zimbabwe, but I did. He was disciplined in a

We parted having shared a time of healing presence together in the body of Christ.

healing art—herbal medicine—and was known among his people and beyond. He was someone in specialized pastoral care and would have done well in the evaluation committee meetings I had done over the years. I became impressed with this man’s integrity of faith, life, and practice. The words he spoke about creation and the resurrection came from a cross marked character that informed his leadership and guided his hands and mind as a healer and teacher. I was humbled and grateful for time with Mpisi and led to think more about healing ministries; they are often serendipitous and beyond our expectations. In Matthew’s gospel Jesus’s ministry is depicted as three pronged: peaching, teaching, and healing. (Ch. 4 & 9)

Mpisi was a living expression of this.

This expression with the help of reflection with others led me to think more broadly about healing flowing through the Word made flesh in ministry—both parish and specialized pastoral care. Following are just a few observations and questions from my former lives.

- **Horses and healing:** A church leader volunteered in Equistar—a program that paired horses with the developmentally disabled. This was a healing ministry; I was blessed to be his pastor in this adventure.
- **Dogs and healing:** Two teen age girls, one baptized by me as an infant, wanted to do a service project. They wrote a grant application to a church agency and competed with congregations and agencies in the area and were awarded a \$10,000 grant to obtain and train a service dog for a disable person.
- **Song and healing:** A group of senior ladies in their 80’s—members of my congregation—decided to help an old friend and her husband. The woman had Alzheimers, and her husband was her caretaker. The group of ladies said he needed a day off each week to go shop and play golf. When he left she became agitated and the group discovered that they could calm her down and give her some peace and rest by singing old German hymns with her.
- **Music, visits, healing:** The city congregation I served as pastor had a merger with an inner city congregation. I did not know the people or shut-ins of the inner city congregation and part of my education was quite serendipitous. Every Thursday

at 1:00 PM a car arrived outside of my office with two old grandmothers, and two young men—one with a trumpet and one with a clarinet. I'd ride shotgun and we'd go visiting with music and communion. On one occasion I was told that I met with one of the drug lords of Buffalo. These people who picked me up knew a woman who became "his woman" in the core city. This disabled woman wanted communion. They would usher me into the core city. When I went into the house the man would greet me and wave and then disappear in consultation with other men. We would talk, sing, and commune with the drug lord's woman. This routine had a healing effect on the congregation in transition and the community I was in. This was no real secret to the police—the chaplain of the Buffalo police was a trusted colleague during this time. We both knew that this kind of healing ministry is done "on the edge," and he knew this more than I.

We both knew that this kind of healing ministry is done "on the edge," and he knew this more than I.

- **Stephen Ministry:** A very successful Stephen Ministry was started and sustained while I was pastor in the city. The congregation invested in the program to the tune of thousands of dollars, and the leader was very capable. The leader and team assessed the history of the congregation and the merger and decided that for the sake of confidentiality/trust the pastor not participate in the Stephen Ministry. They asked for my blessing and that I come to educational events at their request to share with them; they were well aware of my training and professional involvement. Their assessment of our situation was very accurate and sound. But the healing of that ministry went well beyond the care receivers. This ministry of healing was a "holy infection" that infected the whole congregation. Serendipity again and also pastor on the edge was the most effective way of healing ministry. I learned that these people expected gospel sermons that connected with their lives and vocations.
- **Worship and healing art:** And now for some thoughts and questions about the largest and most regular healing event—or should be— in Christendom: regular worship. Perhaps the way to get to this point is in story form which has been shared and processed with colleagues over the years. Two different experiences in just a few days will help highlight my point here. First experience: My wife and I attended a memorial service for an elderly woman from my former parish. We knew most of the church full of people. We felt nourished and inspired and healed in soul by the liturgy, hymns, preaching and fellowship. Experience two: We attended a "contemporary" service with people we know and appreciate a great deal. The feeling we share from the start is anger. The music was loud and intrusive and shallow. The preaching was shallow, and institution building (member recruitment and "how to" do programming). The experience was not a healing experience.

This brings me as a Lutheran around a big circle in my life to a provocative question. How does it happen that there are times when I have attended a Roman Catholic Mass that I have found much more majesty, beauty, biblical and Christ centered gospel worship and preaching and thus healing than I have found in some Lutheran worship? This is meant to be provocative. When any worship becomes politicized, moralistic therapeutic, or some such combination the healing potential drops. If the branch is cut from the vine there is no living healing but only dead and withered religious trivia.

This question takes me back to St. Matthew, Mpisi and an old mentor. In St. Matthew Jesus went about preaching, teaching, and healing. He sent the disciples out on the training runs to preach and heal, but they did not get to teach until the last few words of the Gospel are spoken. He does not send them out to teach until they experienced a transformation of self in his and their death and resurrection. At the heart of any ministry of healing is the transformation of a self into a healer—this is always a process full of serendipity that happens on the edge of things. In this way the healer becomes a gift in the serendipitous life journey. So, the memory of an old mentor, Dr. Oswald Hoffman, Lutheran Hour speaker for years, comes to mind. I was a script writer for Ossie for seven years. Ossie told us, “When you go into a pulpit you are not there to lay something on someone; you are there to give them a gift.” Giftedness is at the heart of all healing arts. Meeting Mpisi was a gift. Mpisi and Ossie are soul mates.



David F. C. Wurster, PhD received a BA from Concordia Senior College (1965) and an M.Div. and STM from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (1969 and 1970). He was ordained in 1970 at Valparaiso, Indiana and served congregations in High Ridge, Missouri; Ridgewood, New York; and, Buffalo, New York. He became a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC) in New York in 2006. Dave has served as a parish pastor and a pastoral counselor in a dual style ministry for 40 years. He is now a Diplomate-Emeritus in AAPC. He retired from the parish eight years ago. Dave served as adjunct professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary in St. Catherine's, Ontario and was a script writer for seven years for Dr. Oswald Hoffman, Lutheran Hour Speaker. In addition, he has served as a consultant in conflicted congregations.

Dave is married to Ruth, a professional musician and teacher. They have two married daughters and four grandchildren. In retirement he serves as board member and staff consultant for the Samaritan Counseling Center of Western New York. He also plays banjo and guitar with a jam group. He and Ruth travel extensively.

Using Spiritual Practice to Enhance Healing

Lorinda Schwarz

OVER YEARS OF CHAPLAINCY I have been able to be exposed to a variety of spiritual practices, many of which can be incorporated into any number of Spiritual belief systems, including Christianity. I have been fortunate enough to participate in workshops and classes for such practices as guided imagery, Enneagrams, Spiritual Health Assessments, use of Mandalas and others. I have been able to see how these practices can be adapted to assist in helping people in many crisis situations to find peace or a path through difficulty and turmoil.

At one point in my career I was introduced to the Sacred Art of Living Center in Bend, Oregon and took part in two of their courses for the Sacred Art of Living and Dying program. Below are two of the forms of spiritual teachings they offer for individuals studying to be Anamcara, to work with care givers, or hospice programs.

- Spirit of the Enneagram Workshop — *“Nine Portraits of the Soul”* — *perfectionist, giver, performer, romantic, observer, loyal skeptic, epicure, protector and mediator.* At the heart of Enneagram spirituality is the belief that spiritual freedom is enhanced by simply recognizing the dominant illusion of our type. This is one of the workshops they offer.
- They also teach the use of the SHA (Spiritual Health Assessment) which measures four dimensions* of existential suffering: Meaning, Forgiveness, Relatedness and Hope. These are universal experiences, regardless of a person’s age, gender, culture or belief system.

On their website (www.sacredartofliving.org) they state that responses to the four dimensions of spiritual suffering should be prescribed only after caregivers have received mentorship appropriate to their profession and experience. It is highly recommended that, before introducing the SHA, institutions and their personnel receive appropriate training through the Soul & Science of Living or Sacred Art of Living & Dying programs. To learn more about these series and the related Anamcara Project, which are offered worldwide, contact Sacred Art of Living Center: www.sacredartofliving.org. More than 20,000 caregivers worldwide have graduated from these education and training programs.

“The work of the Sacred Art of Living Center is essential because spiritual suffering is the least diagnosed cause of pain.” Dame Cicely Saunders, MD

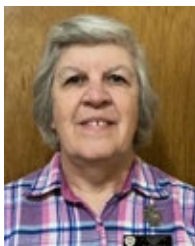
I have found the use of their assessments and teachings to be very beneficial over the years in my Chaplaincy work. It was through them that I was introduced to the use of the Mandala as a way to open a person up to speaking about spiritual pain

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or relationship issues. Once in dealing with a hospice patient whose pain seemed uncontrollable, even at the highest level of pain medication, the use of a hand drawn Mandala helped him express his deep inner pain over the broken relationships with his sisters. As we talked through this, I was able to reach out to his sisters and they responded. He was able to have some conversations with them. The medication finally began to offer some relief to his pain after these conversations. Eventually his sisters actually made a trip to see him one time before he passed. After this visit, nurses told me his pain became very manageable in a disease progression that should have only continued to worsen the pain. He was able to pass peacefully in the end, all made possible by exploring the colors he placed on his mandala and why he chose them, what they represented in his life, and exploring the intensity with which he colored in the various parts.

In participating in various workshops, I was introduced to guided imagery. Guided imagery has helped me to deal with some of the things in my past that have sometimes troubled me. Without going into too much personal detail I was able, through guided imagery, to find a safe space within myself that enabled me to deal with some of the harsh thoughts I sometimes harbored regarding myself. It offered me the opportunity to journey back to where I first experienced those voices, identify who they came from and actually give those disparaging comments back to those individuals. I didn't have to "own" those negatives any longer, could find safety for myself in a place created just for me, by me, which led to the releasing of some negative habits in my life and allowed me to better accept God's gracious gifts.

In looking at people's spiritual walks or one's own spiritual walk, I think it is a good thing to look at how various spiritual practices can fit into finding peace and grace within one's own doctrine and belief system. Many times we avoid using gifts such as guided imagery, spiritual direction, mandalas or other options that we may encounter for fear that it will lead us out of our own spiritual beliefs or give other cause to ridicule or doubt us. Instead it is often helpful to embrace these practices within our own beliefs and use them in ways that fit for us to help us deepen our walk and relationship with God. If the practice doesn't lead you closer to our triune God then you can always set it aside.



Lorinda Schwarz is a Lutheran deaconess who has served as a chaplain within the Oregon Dept. of Corrections (ODOC) for 24 years. She currently serves at a 1,700 bed male medium security prison. Consecrated in 1986, Lorinda has also served as chaplain for adults with MR/DD, for those who suffer mental illness and for both men and women who are incarcerated. Lorinda is married and a mother of 5 children, grandmother of 12, and great grandmother to 3. She currently lives in Pendleton, Ore.

RESPONSES

I just read the latest issue of *Caring Connections* (Vol 18, No. 2). I really like the emphasis upon and the highlighting of various partnerships in health care.

I appreciated the Bouman article but was drawn to the ministry of presence. One year at Crest View (a Lutheran facility in the Twin Cities) I mobilized residents and volunteers to clean up and restore the garden just outside one of the memory care units. It was fun to help residents with dementia plant flowers in pots. We had so much fun.

Thanks for your work,
Deacon Steve Arnold
Forest Lake, Minnesota