

Caring Connections

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



Embodying Holy Joy

The Purpose of Caring Connections

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written 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 — not least — 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.

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, along with a financial data form, for committee review.

Applicants must complete the Scholarship Application forms that are available from Judy Simonson [ELCA] or Joel Hempel [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 Judith Simonson at jsimonson@aol.com and to Joel Hempel at Joel.Hempel@lcms.org.

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Editorial Office: Editor, *Caring Connections*, c/o Lutheran Services in America, 100 Maryland Ave., Suite 500, Washington, DC, 20002, or email Lee Joesten at lee.joesten@gmail.com or Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com.

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News, Announcements, Events: E-mail items to Judith Simonson at jsimonson@aol.com or Joel Hempel at Joel.Hempel@lcms.org

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Editors: Diane Greve, Lee Joesten

Editorial Board: Heather Bumstead, Ghislaine Cotnoir, Joel Hempel, Charles Keogh, Phil Kuehnert, David McCurdy, Lorinda Schwarz, Judith Simonson, Nancy Wigdahl, Charles Weinrich, David Wurster

News editors: Judith Simonson (ELCA), Joel Hempel (LCMS)

Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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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 to please contact one of the co-editors, Diane Greve at dkgreve@gmail.com or Lee Joesten at lee.joesten@gmail.com. Specifically, we invite articles for upcoming issues on the following themes:

2018 #3 “The Opioid Epidemic and Addictions”

2018 #4 “Mental Health Ministry”

Have you dealt with any of these issues? Please consider writing an article for us. We sincerely want to hear from you! And, as always, if you haven’t already done so, we hope you will subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Remember, subscription is free! By subscribing, you assure 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 numbers 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

Diane Greve

JOY IS ONE OF THOSE “FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT” that is often named in the psalms and throughout our scriptures. We may know it when we experience it, yet we may not always be quite so sure how to describe it. Joy is an emotion that is embodied. We jump for joy, we sing for joy, our hearts leap for joy. We are encouraged to rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15).

In many of our ministries we focus on emotional and spiritual suffering, and it is right to do so. And yet I do know that sometimes we can become so focused on fear, loss, and illness that we can forget the joy and celebrations of life in our midst.

The Yale Center for Faith and Culture¹ has embraced and explored a Theology of Joy and the Good Life. Their work invites us to consider joy and suffering as intertwined, not “either/or” but rather “both/and.” Spiritual health allows us to live in the vision of the good even in bad times. How does this speak to the role of the chaplain, the pastoral counselor, the certified educator? How might we hold these two aspects of the Christian life together without diminishing the depth of the sorrow, without minimizing the pain? The CPE student who is being asked to take a “critical” look at her family to better understand her own interpersonal dynamics may experience fear of exposing her family, of breaking the family rules, of undercutting the good. Being reminded that her family could have been *both* nurturing *and* emotionally limited simultaneously may help the student to venture into exploring the full picture of her family.

To supplement this issue of *Caring Connections*, I recommend the book *Joy and Human Flourishing*² that provides a compilation of essays from various scholars involved with the Theology of Joy project. One is written by Mary Clark Moschella and entitled “Calling and Compassion: Elements of Joy in Lived Practices of Care.” In her contribution, Moschella, a professor of pastoral care and counseling at Yale Divinity School, considers the dilemma of many CPE students and practitioners. Where do we find joy in our ministry? And how do we come alongside joy in our care receivers? Her research identifies several key themes that create space for joy in the experiences of caregivers and in their various ministries of care. Among those are a sense of vocation and a conviction that one is fulfilling the vocation; a practice of presence; a capacity for feeling gratitude and wonder; collaboration with colleagues; practice of compassion; theological reflection and self-awareness; and, a tendency

¹ <https://faith.yale.edu/joy/about>

² Volf, Miroslav and Justin E Crisp, editors. *Joy and Human Flourishing*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. Print.

to notice and perceive beauty, strength and goodness in God, in human beings or in creation.³ You may recognize some of these for yourself.

To my knowledge, no one has created a spiritual assessment tool that includes joy. Yet some of the key themes named above for the caregiver may also apply to the care receiver. I would wonder if any research has been done in our medical settings to determine the role that the spiritual attribute of joy may play in resiliency and healing. Do some of you have prayers, litanies and rituals that you find meaningful as you celebrate and claim joy in the lives of those you serve? If yes to any of the above, would you be willing to share them with the *Caring Connections* readers?

The contributors to this issue of *Caring Connections* provide a range of perspectives on joy as it is manifested in their ministries. I am grateful to each of them for engaging this somewhat ethereal yet embodied topic.

- **Rich Bimler** reminds the reader of the source of Christian joy while living joy through humor.
- **Angela Goodson** provides a transparent account from her counseling ministry in which she was able to turn anxiety into joy-filled calm.
- **David Wurster** offers a sermon he wrote a few years ago that gives a theological grounding to our joyous reflections.
- **Don Stiger** tells of ways he incorporated his love of music into his ministry to bring joy to those he served.
- **Ghislaine Cotnoir** reflects on how she has celebrated joy and the good life with residents in the care facility where she ministers.
- **Don Knudson** found joy and revitalized ministry in his long term care chaplaincy vocation.
- **Chuck Weinrich** recalls some humorous memories from his ministry that illuminated joy.
- **Nancy Wigdahl** considers how she has known contentment and joy in her calling as a chaplain and certified educator.
- **Phil Kuehnert** recommends three books he found helpful in exploring the juxtaposition of joy and sorrow.

May these weeks of resurrection celebration fill you with joy for the journey, for the satisfying times and the gut-wrenching days! Embody joy for your sake and those you meet.

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WE WANT TO THANK JASMINE GIBSON at the Lutheran Services of America office for posting past issues of *Caring Connections* once again: www.lutheranservices.org/CaringConnectionsArchive

This will make it much easier for you to locate past issues and articles for your ongoing use.

3 Ibid Pp. 112-113

Joyfully Lutheran!

by Dr. Rich Bimler

PSALM 126:3 says it so well: “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy!”

We could end this article right now and move on to the next stimulating manuscript but, being Lutheran, we must respond to that age-old question, “What does this mean?” You may already be questioning the title of this piece, thinking that “Joyfully Lutheran!” is an oxy-moron! Years ago I proposed a new book for Concordia Publishing House which would provide a history of humor in the LCMS. I also tried to be helpful by suggesting that it be printed on one side of a 3x5 card. I am still waiting to see it in print!

Here is the crux of the matter: Joy in Ministry does not begin or end with any of us but rather it is a gift that has already been freely given to us by Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection! Now you and I already know that, but if you are like me, we continue to live as if we are the ones who need to create this joy and laughter on our own. The psalmist is right on target when he proclaims, “The Lord has done it!” It is our response to go and do likewise, filled with the joy of the Spirit living in and through us. Even when we fail to share his joy or when we mess up the message, the Lord is there to woo us back through his grace and forgiveness. Now that’s what I call joy — something to celebrate with others!

A chaplain friend of mine shared a conversation he recently had with a person he was visiting. “What’s the most important quality you look for in a pastor? Is it good sermons, sound theology, relational skills, positive leadership, or what?” The person thought for a moment and then responded, “Obvious joy in his work!”

A mentor of mine would often say, “Joy is knowing that even when there is no joy — there is joy, in Christ Jesus,” and that’s good enough for me.

The Lord continues to proclaim his message of love and hope to us and through us by giving us the gift of joy each day, even when we are locked into days of despair and darkness. Joy in the Lord does not depend on how we look, act or feel, but rather on the fact that “the Lord has done great things for us!” Being “Resurrection Resources” means that we proclaim his joy to others, in spite of our worries, wars, and woes. Joy-deprived people seem to say, like Charlie Brown, “Someday we are going to die,” while joy-filled people tend to respond like our friend Snoopy, “But today we get to live!” That is a sign of having joy, not only “down in our hearts,” but also on our lips and in our actions as we take seriously the fact that our role

Even when we fail to share his joy or when we mess up the message, the Lord is there to woo us back through his grace and forgiveness.

is to bring “Joy to the world,” not only through song but also through our hearts and hands.

As we go about our ministries of health, hope, and healing, it is a major challenge to not just say the words of joy, as if everything will turn out okay, but rather to proclaim words and do actions of joy that point people to the presence and power of God’s grace, comfort, and hope, in Christ.

Remember that *quasi-Lutheran*, W.C. Fields, who once quipped, “Start each day with a smile ...and get it over with?” Too often, I fear, many of us equate laughter and jokes with being synonymous with the word JOY. Not necessarily so! I recall the many children’s sermons I’ve done through the years. Once I shared with the little ones that we only have JOY when we put J (Jesus) first, O (others) second, and finally Y (you/us) last. Sure sounded good at the time, but through the years I’ve come to re-think that statement. Instead, JOY should be spelled “backwards” – first, it is essential that You and I (Y) know that we are loved in Christ Jesus; then we share who we are, God’s redeemed, with others (O) so that we and others can then see (J) Jesus serving and celebrating in and through all of us! JOY begins with knowing *whose* we are and sharing this with others, all in the name of Jesus.

The whole message of Christ’s gift of joy is that even when obstacles get in our way, there still is joy, in Christ, because we are Easter people and Alleluia is our song!

Joy in ministry is all about knowing through faith that the Lord loves us and cares for us, regardless of ourselves. Joy in ministry is not about pretending that everything is going to turn out well. Rather, joy in ministry is having faith that the Spirit continues to work in and through us to point us and others to the cross and the resurrection. The whole message of Christ’s gift of joy is that even when obstacles get in our way, there still is joy, in Christ, because we are Easter people and Alleluia is our song!

Someone once remarked that joy is “happiness on steroids!” Not bad, but we also are joyful in our quiet and solemn times as well. Joy is the gift from God that “keeps on giving,” even in the midst of sorrow, grief and loss. That is because it is a gift, which means it is not attached to any behavior or circumstance. It is always there and it is always free because it has everything to do with the Lord and nothing to do with us. Joy in ministry is the happiness we feel that does not depend on what happens, because the resurrection has already happened! Joy is knowing that there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation and nothing we can do to mess it up. Now that’s something to be joyful about!

So, joy-filled people, how are we doing as we share and celebrate the JOY of our ministry? I must confess that the biggest obstacle that gets in the way of my sharing “joy in ministry” is ...me! I often take myself too seriously, do not take others seriously enough, and get my priorities all mixed up. A favorite quip of mine is that the three essential ingredients for Hazel and me being married for 57 years, in a row,

is 1) we laugh a lot together, 2) we forgive a lot together, and 3) I travel a lot! Often times, the more I get out of the way and let others be who they are in Christ, the more joy and ministry happens.

So where do we go from here as we daily face being “joyful in ministry?” We all need to be “fed” joy through the Word and Sacraments as well as through supportive people around us, in family, parish, and community. Having a “circle of confessors” who are brutally honest with us is crucial. A mentor who can help us sort out the “gotta do’s” from the “maybes” and the “no ways.” A friend who continually reminds us that we already have a Savior, and his name is Jesus, not us!

Joy is not just a word to use but rather it is an attitude to share and celebrate because it is a gift from the Lord! Check out these three suggestions as we go forth in joy:

1. Remember the Lord’s words, “And God said ‘Lighten up!’” Granted, it is a loose translation but do take it seriously! Where does he say that? Check out Genesis 1:3 – “And God said, ‘Let there be light!’” Then read John 8:12, where he proclaims, “I am the Light of the world!” We too become lights to the world, through him. Once when I was sharing this with a group, a woman raised her hand and joked, “And don’t forget all the “Israel-Lights!” Yes, everyone’s a comedian, trying to share the joy!
2. Laugh at yourself! If you do not think the Lord has a sense of humor, just look in the mirror! My sense is that we often forget that we have 6 senses, not 5. We often forget that 6th sense — a sense of humor. A friend of mine used to joke, “In case of an accident, I’m not surprised.” I cannot speak for you, but I do know that when I take myself too seriously, I tend to limit the joy and celebration that I could be bringing to others and in doing so, I do not take the Lord seriously enough!
3. Give other people permission to laugh! My “former” friend, John, gave me a gift when we left St. Louis (Actually when we were asked to leave!). It was a mug that read, “Life is hard...and then you die!” Now isn’t that a great way to look at life? But it does help to encourage others to laugh at themselves and to laugh with others. By the way, it was not too long after this experience that I somehow received a call to another congregation! A coincidence? Only the Lord knows! I recall a time as a youth minister that the young people had the idea of situating themselves so that as people returned to their pews after celebrating the Eucharist, they would see 2 or 3 young people smiling and giving high 5’s to the members. It was the young people who wanted to give others permission to share their joy and happiness in this great gift of the Lord’s Supper.

We all need to be “fed” joy through the Word and Sacraments as well as through supportive people around us, in family, parish, and community.

Let me suggest a few additional ways of helping us keep a focus on the JOY of ministry:

1. Take a ride through the scriptures and read, shout, or whisper “Hooray” at all the times the Lord is proclaiming to us that we really do have Joy to share in our ministries.
2. Be intentional about putting young people and older people, including ourselves, in “ministry range” of each other. We miss so much of the joy when we do not use the gifts of having older people share their stories and experiences with younger people. As a friend once reflected, “Every time an older person dies, another library burns to the ground.”
3. Watch for ways that people “suck the joy” out of our ministry. Do not ignore these situations but do not dwell on them either. I asked a number of church workers to tell me what brought both joys and sorrows to them, and most of them referred to those few negative voices around them that disable and deplete their energies. We cannot control how other people act, but we can work at exercising self-control in terms of how we respond.
4. Help people of all ages to “celebrate God’s gift of aging.” Joy is not being shared when the generations continue to have negative perceptions of people younger or older than themselves. Use positive examples of both the young and the old. If we want to make fun of an age group, my rule is simply, “Only make fun of the age group that you are a member of yourself!” So I can be joyful as a 77 ½ year old and laugh at myself when I state that the first word my grandkids heard from me was, “Huh?”
5. Remember the Japanese saying which is on the entrance to the Hospice Center in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, which states, “The sun setting is no less beautiful than the sun rising.” Joy in ministry is all about celebrating birth and life and God’s gift of aging. Let us continue to travel together as Joyful Lutherans, along with the rest of the joyful bands of believers! Continue to sing and shout together, “Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee.” Continue to lighten up, laugh at ourselves and help others do the same. We are called to be “joy-fillers.” A “joy-filler” helps people to be “joy-filled!” If you have joy in your heart, why not tell your face about it? And by the way, joy is contagious — let’s all pray for an epidemic!

We miss so much of the joy when we do not use the gifts of having older people share their stories and experiences with younger people.

We summarize our joyful journey together through the words of my mentor-friend, Herb Brokering. Sing it, say it or hum it to the tune of “Come Ye Thankful People Come!” as we continue to give thanks to the Lord, joyfully!

1. God of laughter, God of grace,
How it shows upon your face
That you see and hear the earth
With a spirit filled with mirth.
Do you see the inner-side
Where we laugh and where we hide;
Where our laughter finds its seed
Where you give the hope we need?
2. God of rain, the sea, the sun
Thank you for the waking fun.
Do you sing inside the night
While a seedling waits for light?
God of going to and fro,
What are all the worlds you know
Through the skyways of the air?
Are you always everywhere?
3. God of vistas deep and far,
Keep on fire that tiny star
That will show the world and me
When to cry, to laugh, to see.
God of harvest, God of green,
Show us vistas still unseen,
Heal our faith and heal our eyes;
Easter is your great surprise.
4. God of joy we raise your cup,
Hands and hearts are lifted up;
Ah, the wonder of the feast,
Table set from west to east.
God of all when race is run
Show us we have just begun;
Give new eyes for us to see
Laughter in eternity.

(Used by permission)



Dr. Rich Bimler, Bloomington, Illinois, has served the Church in various positions throughout his 55 year ministry career. He repositioned in 2006 after serving for 15 years as President/CEO of Wheat Ridge Ministries. He is serving part-time as Ministry Consultant and Ambassador of Health, Hope, and Aging! (AH-HA!) for Lutheran Church Charities, Northbrook, Illinois. He continues to write, speak, and consult with many agencies and organizations throughout the world.

Rich continues to enjoy his wife, Hazel, his family, grand parenting, jogging (slowly), St. Arbucks, writing, laughing, and, of course, the Chicago Cubs!

Joy and Anxiety: A Therapist's Dialectical Approach

by Deaconess Angela Goodson, LMFT

“LET’S GET ONE THING STRAIGHT: I am not talking today and you can’t make me,” says my teen client, before settling into the chair and assuming a distant, steely-eyed stare. My mind flits to the image of the client’s mother, waiting in the therapy office lobby, expectantly hoping for me to make a breakthrough with her child. Here I am, attempting talk therapy with a teen who announced silence and we have 49 more minutes of session remaining. My heart races. I am going to fail. I think about escaping, leaving the room, going to talk to the mother, or going to my office to work on documentation. Maybe I should have gone to law school, I think. Then, I imagine confronting the teen with a monologue about adolescent brain development, a soothingly rational psycho-educational moment that would make me feel that even if the client did not speak, I had still done *something*. In a matter of seconds, this teenager has managed to push against my biggest anxiety trigger. In the midst of a flood of emotions and irrational thought, I recognize that my own fears are taking charge of the session. I take a breath and decide to put my entire self into this most uncomfortable of moments. If my client is stating that dialogue will not happen today, then I am going to run with it. “Be present,” I tell myself. I look at my client and say, “Wow! That is quite a choice. Okay then, here is what I am going to do. I am going to sit for a moment and quiet myself down by breathing to some soft music.”

I turn on meditation music from my phone and take off my shoes. I sit in a relaxed, open posture and proceeded to focus on my breathing, as I would in a room by myself. My galloping heartbeat gradually slows down. For a moment, I think about how odd this probably looks to the teen who is watching a 36-year-old woman wearing her therapist uniform of layers upon layers of stretchy, forgiving, cotton knitwear, calm herself down; I notice that my mind has wandered and focus again on breathing. I feel myself enter into an engaged state, where I no longer see my client or this session as a threat. I am actually happy to be in this moment, with this client. I accept the premise my client placed upon the session and manage to quiet down my own anxiety. It is not that my anxiety leaves, but that I move into acceptance of it. Joy and anxiety exist in the same space.

It is not that my anxiety leaves, but that I move into acceptance of it. Joy and anxiety exist in the same space.

Finding joy in my work as a marriage and family therapist does not involve putting on my cape and coming to the rescue. It is not about technical brilliance, as much as I strive for that, as if knowing every possible theoretical model will erase my anxieties and replace them with unimaginable happiness for both me and my clients.

Instead, I find that understanding and soothing my own anxieties is what has led to the moments of fulfillment and joy in my professional life. The emotion of anxiety communicates, to those who listen, that a situation could be dangerous. Meeting another person's pain or dysfunction face-to-face is indeed a dangerous proposition. In this session with my teen client, I worked to practice the very skills I teach to my clients. In my practice, I have a passion for working with clients who struggle with borderline personality disorder (BPD). These clients all have unique stories, however, in general they have in common the fact that it is difficult for them to regulate their emotions. They grew up in families where what they felt was not validated, and no one coached them through recognizing an emotion and appropriately expressing it. For clients with this kind of struggle, dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) is an evidence-based therapy, developed by Marsha Linehan, which teaches clients skills for navigating through overwhelming emotions.¹

The concepts of DBT have helped me frame my own approach to discovering joy as a clinician who struggles with anxiety. The “dialectical” philosophy of DBT emphasizes a holistic approach that encourages clients to navigate a synthesis between emerging polarities. These polarities often keep clients stuck. Therapeutic work, in order to be successful, must involve the seemingly opposite concepts of acceptance *and* change. Clients practicing DBT utilize mindfulness and distress tolerance skills to practice acceptance of those areas of life that are unalterable: loss, grief, the decisions that others make, basically anything that falls outside of the realm of what a client controls. At the same time, clients learn skills in emotion regulation and interpersonal communication, which gives a client the ability to change her own behavior.

Therapeutic work, in order to be successful, must involve the seemingly opposite concepts of acceptance *and* change.

For me, these “sticky” polarities have been anxiety and despair on the one hand, and a sense of joy and fulfillment on the other. The paradoxical truth of DBT informs me that there needs to be a “radical acceptance,” that there will always be some amount of anxiety involved in sitting with another person's story. I spent fifteen months working as a chaplain resident before I trained as a therapist. During my time as a chaplain, I had intense panic attacks after my nights on call. All night long, I forced myself to deny that I was anxious. I was there to serve others, after all, and no one wants to encounter a chaplain having a crying jag. The vicarious trauma of chaplaincy left me emotionally raw. I did feel joy at times — at the triumph of young lives in the NICU, during prayers with patients before surgery, or when someone thanked me for visiting an elderly family member — however, I also knew that I was getting worn out. When I look back on this experience with a clinical eye, I think I struggled with accepting my own emotionality. I intellectually acknowledged that there needed to be space for sadness. I often wrote about “making space” for

1 Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT Skills training manual* (2nd edition).

mourning in my CPE theological reflections. I wrote about my Lutheran faith, about the paradoxical tension between Law and Gospel, grace and justice, sinner and saint. These paradoxes were, and are, a great comfort for me. Although I had not yet discovered DBT, I believe that I was stumbling toward a synthesis.

Yet, I still tried to stuff away my anxieties, thinking that I could only be happy if I was anxiety-free. I felt that, surely, I would reach a point where I wouldn't feel anxious about hearing another person's pain. I would be able to competently step up to the metaphorical plate and hit a pastoral counseling homerun. I remember the words of my CPE supervisor during one of my tearful supervision sessions: "What if you tried to make friends with your anxiety?" I have tried to do just that, to listen to what my anxiety says to me, to allow it to exist, and to know how to effectively limit it. What I came to discover, was that by daily encountering my anxiety without running from it, I was able to open myself to new emotions. I could feel uncomfortable about being in a situation *and* feel that God was using me to serve others. By accepting the negative emotion of anxiety, I could also more fully accept a feeling of joy.

Today, I recognize that I still struggle to accept my anxiety. This struggle helps me empathize with my clients, who wrestle tremendously with their own fear, sadness, and anger. Meeting with another human and managing to encounter their pain and trauma does hold the possibility for danger, which will inevitably raise my anxiety level. It is only when I can mindfully accept my anxiousness that I can hope to experience the immense joy of the professional helping experience.



Angela is a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) who lives and works in private clinical practice in rural Winfield, Kansas. She is passionate about helping others learn to live life with integrity and purpose. Angela is a consecrated Lutheran deaconess with the Lutheran Deaconess Association. She holds an MA in American history from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a MS in marriage and family therapy from Friends University in Wichita, Kansas. She completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education as a full-time chaplain resident at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kansas. She is married to Jacob and mother to Sophia, 12 and Seraphina, 10.

Jesus Is Loose¹

by Dave Wurster

JOY WAS BUSTING OUT ALL OVER. Two pregnant women greeted each other and joy reverberated through their bodies, their voices, back through years of family tradition and out into the world for years to come. It was bursting forth from the soul of creation, and the Creator himself was taking delight in the new life breaking open the darkness and confines of death in a sinful world. The angels in the heavens were singing the hallelujah chorus before Handel.

Neither of the pregnancies was quite normal. One woman was old beyond her fertile years. Her Medicare would have been red flagged. Her man of many years was shocked beyond belief. His speech came back by God's grace at the birth of his son. The other woman was very young, and not even legally married when her pregnancy began. Her man was shocked and thrown into agony and doubts when he heard she was pregnant. At God's urging he stayed with her for more discovery and adventure than he could ever have imagined. When she greeted the older woman that baby leaped in his mother's womb. When she heard the greeting of the older woman and realized how her baby fit into the story of her life and the story of her people, she broke into a song of joy.

Mary sang, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." The song of joy includes the image of a strong warrior who turns the world upside down as arrogant and prideful people in power come down when he breaks their world and raises up the poor and humble in a new and ever-living world.

Her son, Jesus, who danced for joy in creation, was now loose deep inside of creation. This child God with skin on was loose in his world. Jesus is now loose to loosen his people from the smallness and constriction of blindness, disease, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame and crippling secrecy and the chokehold of death itself.

Jesus being loose is the source of deep joy and strange fear and even deadly battle. When Mary and Joseph took him to the temple for the ritual of their people at a child's birth, an old man, Simeon, met them and rejoiced to see him. In the midst of joy he could see the battles ahead. He repeated the theme spoken by the child's mother and applied the theme directly to her soul. "He is destined for the fall and rising of many...a sign spoken against...a sword will go through your heart also...the

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¹ This title was the creation of a Catholic priest and "stolen" by a Methodist colleague; I then took his example and stole it from him — which he agreed was appropriate since I learned from him.

secret thoughts of many will be revealed.” Because Jesus is loose on the battlefield, joy will rise up victorious from the depths of unquenchable life and mercy.

There is a sculpture in the middle of the campus at Concordia University on the plains of Nebraska that depicts the theme of Jesus is Loose. The bronze sculpture consists of a large block of granite maybe six feet square. The block is breaking apart from the inside. Coming out of the block is a naked powerful man bursting into life and the sunshine. This is the new man bursting out of the confines of the cold, hard, block of sin, fear, death, guilt and shame into a new and vibrant life. Joy is bursting out from deep within and beyond our own soul or self from the Spirit of God in Christ who is life and joy incarnate. Joy breaks loose in the new self that comes forth when the old self dies, says St. Paul.



Photo Courtesy of Concordia University, Nebraska

Ultimately, joy comes through the freedom that can emanate only through death and resurrection to new life. This freedom completely overturns much of what our world and society tells us that freedom is. So often we are led to think and believe that freedom means to do as we please in a life with no limits. The “hymn of the day” for this freedom is depicted in Frank Sinatra’s song: “My Way.” A little serious thought reveals this idea of freedom is the core of many addictions in our society and world.

Jesus taught a different way to freedom. He taught us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” This freedom means we learn to hear the rhythms of creation and the voice of our Lord revealing to us our unique personhood, gifts and vocation or calling in this life and how these fit with others around us. Freedom is not just tooting our own horn, but catching on to the sounds of the whole orchestra, our place in it and to the person and direction of the conductor.

Joy goes together with freedom; and, freedom arises from struggle, battle and victory. We will find that these struggles and battles are both outside and inside of us. As the disciples follow Jesus of Nazareth—both in the written gospels and in the gospel being written daily in the lives of people today—open eyes reveal the “rule of three.” When Jesus is loose the crowd will always break into three parts: one part will hate him and try to discredit and kill him; one part won’t really give a damn about him or life in general; one part will love him and find joy.

One group is easy to spot in the Gospels—in Mark they plan to kill Jesus by the beginning of chapter three. They use the common tricks of their slanderous trade to destroy him. They call him crazy (get a mental health diagnosis on him in modern terms), demon possessed, a heretic, a danger to the political peace with Rome and such things. They basically try to delegitimize him as a leader and destroy trust in his words. In modern life we can see this in politics, in church and in family. In the

family of an addict, for example, it is not unusual for the codependent members of a family to delegitimize the addict as the addict moves toward health because the move to health disrupts family emotional balances and reveals family secrets—the thoughts of many may be revealed.

Some of us were talking about this at dinner one night with the director of the Georgetown Family Center. He consulted with families, big business and religious groups. He called these people who cling to status quo peace mongers—conflict avoiders. Peace mongers have little or no joy in their life. They manage to destroy lots of joy including their own.

A second group that appears when a free Jesus comes on the scene are those who don't really give a damn—beyond getting something for themselves. When Jesus healed the ten lepers his batting average that evening was ten per cent—that's hard for people in ministry or in life, especially those with a perfectionist streak. Also the one who got it was a Samaritan—an outcast. We do well in faith not to let this group dim our joys in life. In a way these are peace mongers too, and realism says, "Face the facts of life here!" because rose colored glasses shut out not only the unpleasant facts of life but also the joy of life.

These people do disagree with Jesus and each other and they fight with Jesus and each other, but forgiveness and joy grow deep as they face the toughest battle of all—the one inside, the civil war of the soul.

Then there is the third part of humanity—the salt of the earth people—the peacemakers. This is the group that finally goes deeper and deeper into love and faith and joy as the journey goes on. These people do disagree with Jesus and each other. And, they fight with Jesus and each other. Still, forgiveness and joy grow deep as they face the toughest battle of all—the one inside, the civil war of the soul.

Peter is a beautiful example of this kind of person. Perhaps his first disagreement with Jesus came way at the beginning, at the boat in front of a big pile of fish. I can imagine the professional fisherman grumbled inside when the amateur rabbi told him how to throw the net and how to fish. After the huge catch Peter was aware that something big was going on. He said to Jesus, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man." Peter was not stupid. He knew down deep inside that if he got involved with this one he'd discover things about himself and life that would shake him to the core. Over and over again he argued and fought with this man whom he learned to love. When Jesus told the disciples that the way to life and joy lay through the cross and death, Peter reacted in anxious disagreement. Jesus' rebuke was quite sharp. He called him a "devil in the way." Again Peter was not stupid. He knew that if Jesus died as he said then Peter's present life and hopes were at risk. The way it worked out was that Jesus was not the only one who died that fateful day and rose to new life. The old Peter also died and a new Peter was raised to life. Joy broke through in the battle with fear and death.

Karen (not her real name) fought a spiritual battle like Peter. She came to a pastoral counselor years ago. She said she came to talk because she had found herself walking in the night, in the cemetery and in her night gown. She was doing well in her professional life; she had two preteen children and she had been in abusive relationships with three men. One was married to her and the father of her children. She had just left the third who was a live-in. After a year of weekly appointments she sat in the silence and then said, “You know why I left him, don’t you?” The pastoral counselor remained silent knowing she needed the space to speak. She paused and said, “I left him the night I knew I was going to kill him. I wasn’t running from him anymore; I was running from me.” The pastoral counselor simply said, “I think you have already killed a man.” She looked up and said, “What do you mean?” He said, “The Jewish guy with the Jewish mother.” She sat back and said, “I get it. I do get it.” This happened at the beginning of Lent. She took the Lenten discipline in her southern Methodist church to heart. After Easter she told her counselor that the journey through the liturgy in Lent and Easter was the most profound and deeply joyful she had ever experienced. The Psalm verse, “There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared,” was a living reality.

The word Israel is thus a good expression of one of Luther’s basic reformation axioms: Sin boldly but trust more boldly. Going into battle and winning in this way leads to large life filled with joy.

Karen and Peter both in their time had an “Israel experience” for joy. Jacob, about to meet his brother Esau, found himself in a wrestling match with God that lasted all night. It was an exhausting fight. As morning came and he hung on to God, God said, “You will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel (one who wrestles with God) for you have fought with God and man and have won.” Many have asked how you can fight with God and win. Martin Luther is reputed to have commented: “You fight with God long and hard—no holds barred—clear through to the core of battle and God’s presence. There at the core you find grace. When you find God’s grace you are a winner.” The word Israel is thus a good expression of one of Luther’s basic reformation axioms: Sin boldly but trust more boldly. Going into battle and winning in this way leads to large life filled with joy.

The journey to joy is different and unique for each traveler. The preacher in Ecclesiastes says, “For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven—a time to be born, to die, to plant, to reap, to kill, to heal, to laugh, to mourn....” It is interesting to note that the word for purpose—a time for every purpose—is the Hebrew word for delight (*chefetz*).

Joy is a deep abiding power that wells up like a spring of living water to eternal life (John 4), that runs deeper than happiness. No, we don’t want to disparage happiness as when a child gets a new toy—or an adult, for that matter. We just realize that Joy, and her sister, Gratitude, well up from the battle won to appear in the victory

parade of Jesus who breaks loose from the confines of tomb and death and who is now loose in all his creation. Jesus is Loose; Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever—Hallelujah.



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.

You Make Me Smile...With My Heart

by Rev. Don Stiger

“I need only listen to music to know there is a God.”

- Kurt Vonnegut

UPON RECEIVING Diane Greve’s invitation to write this article, I immediately shared with her how much I applaud *Caring Connections* in choosing to devote an entire issue to “Joy in Ministry.” I was also immediately transported back to 1980 and my first unit of CPE residency at Lutheran General Hospital (LGH), Park Ridge, IL. At the end of a peer’s verbatim presentation, our supervisor, Art Bickel, remarked (paraphrasing): “You know, it seems like the vast majority of verbatims and case studies you guys bring in here have only to do with pathos and sadness. Frankly, it’s starting to depress the hell out of me! After all, there’s also a lot of joy happening upstairs on those units. If we lopsidedly focus on ministry that only deals with the second half of St. Paul’s exhortation to *“rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep,”* are we really practicing the full art of pastoral care?”

As I recall, our group heard our supervisor. I, for one, noticed more joy and celebration showing up not only in clinical materials, but also IPR’s and other dimensions of CPE. To this day, I think Art’s prophetic words also planted seeds that nudged me to begin incorporating more intentional use of music in spiritual care. Helping to eventually launch a pastoral care-based music therapy program at Lutheran General became one of the true joys and privileges of my 39+ years in pastoral ministry. Initially named *“Musicare,”* it was one of the expressions of spiritual care I missed most after departing LGH in 1997.

Fast forward nine years to another Lutheran-affiliated medical center. This time in Brooklyn, NY. Working through its Office for Mission and Spiritual Care, one of my most treasured pastoral activities was that of coordinating a hospital-wide program known as *“Musicians on Call.”* Begun at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in 1999 by Michael Solomon and Vivek Tiwary, *Musicians on Call* (MOC) continues to sponsor a *Bedside Performance Program* and *CD Pharmacy* (both live and recorded music) at over 60 nationwide locations. At Lutheran HealthCare (LHC), this meant that every Monday evening our staff and volunteers could escort professional recording artists around the hospital, room-to-room, offering patients and family members performances of any music they wished to hear (of course, only at their request and with their permission). Meanwhile, the *CD Pharmacy* — consisting of hundreds of music CD’s MOC provided — allowed chaplains, nurses, and others to

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connect patients with therapeutic music-listening through CD players. It's estimated that MOC now brings the healing energies of music to about a half-million patients, families and caregivers. Volunteer artists have included Bruce Springsteen, Sting, Kermit the Frog, Britney Spears, John Mellencamp, Dido, Seal, Melissa Etheridge, Faith Hill, Michelle Branch, Billy Joel, Paul Simon, Tony Bennett and James Taylor.

On several occasions I had the privilege of partnering with a gifted singer/songwriter/guitarist by the name of Nadine. One of my many "joy in ministry" experiences with Nadine occurred early one February evening on a medical/surgical unit. We encountered an older woman in a dimly lit private room. She was awake and quietly resting, her husband seated at the bedside. As I introduced Nadine and myself to the couple and shared a bit about the program, the patient's spouse was quick to inform us that they were "long-time music lovers, especially of the old standards." They would love to have Nadine play, as long as it could be "kind of soft." My promise to not sing seemed to bring a slight smile to their faces. In checking with the charge nurse to see if it was indeed alright to share live music with the patient, I learned that she was in her late 80's, had a diagnosis of stage IV cancer and would soon be transferred to an inpatient hospice. Evidently, her husband never left her side and staff was becoming concerned about his self-care and well-being.

When Nadine asked what they would like to hear, once again there was no hesitation. They not only requested "*My Funny Valentine*," but began recounting how it had been "their song" since they had married in the 1950's and heard it performed on Broadway in the Rodgers/Hart musical, "*Babes in Arms*." The patient even recalled where they had dinner prior to the show and the exceptional single-portion dessert they had shared with two spoons. Reminding them that Valentine's Day was only about a week away, Nadine remarked, "It seems there couldn't be a better time for sharing this song, could there?" I was probably not alone in sensing some of the deeper meaning inherent in her timely comment.

Reminding them that Valentine's Day was only about a week away, Nadine remarked, "It seems there couldn't be a better time for sharing this song, could there?"

As Nadine sang softly and played her guitar ever-so-gently, the couple soon joined hands at the bedside, singing a few of the lyrics with her: "*You make me smile with my heart... Your looks are laughable, un-photographical...*" Of all the emotions evoked throughout those memorable moments — love, grief, thanksgiving — by far, most palpable for me was joy. I had little doubt that I was seeing it in the eyes of the patient herself and wondered if the music might be bringing back precious memories and feelings from Valentine's Days gone by. Within a minute or two, the music had drawn the charge nurse and unit secretary to the door; they were soon joined by two medical residents and a woman from housekeeping.

While at times the phrase, "standing on holy ground" can seem cliché, it certainly goes far in capturing what the seven of us experienced huddled around that couple.

When Nadine finished playing, a pensive silence fell upon the room, accompanied only by the sound of sniffing noses. It was the patient herself who was ready to shift gears and bring the room a bit more up tempo. Breaking the silence, she wondered if “*Bicycle Built for Two*” might be played next and Nadine happily obliged. As everyone sang along this time, once again it was sheer joy that reigned through that dimly-lit room. While Nadine played one or two more songs for them, I remained glued to their faces, recalling the words of Tolstoy: “*It’s music that helps me feel what I cannot feel and understand what I cannot understand.*” I’m sure I must have also once again given thanks to God for the extraordinary healing energies inherent in the wondrous gift of music.

About a year-and a-half later — in fact, August of 2007 — I was paged in the middle of the afternoon by the hospital’s COO. Aware that I was quite the jazz enthusiast and known for sharing music with patients, she informed me that a professional jazz musician had been admitted earlier that day. He had been transferred from a Manhattan nursing home, had a DNR order and was expected to die within a matter of days. The COO wondered if I might be open to visiting him and his daughter, hoping we could provide emotional and spiritual support. Not until arriving on the unit did I realize she had been referring to none other than the legendary Max Roach - a true jazz giant, widely considered one of the most important drummers, composers, and educators in jazz history. He was one of the true pioneers of an entire genre of music known as “bebop” and had worked with such luminaries as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Miles Davis. Max Roach was also a significant figure in the Civil Rights Movement.

While his eyes remained active and alert, Max was verbally unresponsive. In an initial visit, which included some conversational spiritual assessment, his daughter shared cherished stories from her youth of often “hanging out” with her dad and artists such as Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. It was not surprising to learn from her that, “Of course, its music that touches my father’s soul more than anything else...it always has.” I informed his daughter of the availability of the *CD Pharmacy*, wondering if she thought he might appreciate listening to some music via a CD player and headphones. Without hesitation, she reiterated that listening to music seemed to her the one thing that might reach him and bring some comfort. With a resident physician’s approval and primary nurse’s awareness, I headed for the CD collection stored in our volunteer services office. As I had hoped fervently, a volunteer was able to dig out two recordings of Max accompanying Miles Davis. Released under the old Prestige label, one of them included tracks from a live performance.

Through the simple technological wonder of a dual headphone jack, within an hour I was listening with Max Roach to a soulful blues tune *he* was playing with Miles Davis. While he remained for the most part expressionless, Max’s daughter quietly

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shed tears that seemed to release a mix of anticipatory grief, thanksgiving and joy. It was when I later returned and witnessed father and daughter listening together that, for the first time, I noticed a slight smile forming on Max's face. As his daughter had also noticed, his hand was intermittently tapping to the music. She repeatedly stressed, "I can tell he's hearing this now." I never saw Max or his daughter again. He died two days later while listening to that music. The New York Times reported that well over 1900 people attended Max's funeral at Riverside Church in Manhattan, a service that celebrated the life of a truly gifted child of God.

Music therapy reaches back at least as far as David playing his lyre for Saul, calming his troubled soul. Today, neuroscientific research overwhelmingly confirms music's healing, therapeutic effects on body, mind, and spirit. Specifically, music literally bypasses the neocortex of the human brain in reaching us with its healing energies. Our brain's neurons fire in direct union with the rhythm of music, literally changing the rhythm of the brain. Using a pet phrase from the world of neuroplasticity, "Neurons that fire together, wire together" (author unknown). A simple EEG can show that the sound waves from a Bach cantata actually *look the same* as the brain waves they trigger. This phenomenon, known as entrainment, directly affects how we feel, what we recall, even our sense of wholeness and self-transcendence. A professionally trained and credentialed music therapist can apply her/his clinical skills in ways that help a stroke patient retrain neural pathways, lower the heart rate of an infant in a NICU or bring significant relief to someone struggling with an anxiety disorder.

To a "lay" medical science enthusiast like myself, this is more than a little inspiring and encouraging. Further harnessing the unique properties and energies of music would seem to hold great promise in advancing our capacity to care for the health and well-being of whole persons. I continue to adamantly believe that wholeness, medicine, the arts, healing and spirituality are inextricably interconnected. That said, at the end of the day, what matters most to me is that, in his dying hours, someone like Max Roach could be transported onto a nightclub stage, jamming with Miles Davis and playing his heart out. I sure know I'd love to be listening to Miles and Max when I die.



Prior to retirement in 2016, Don Stiger served as Senior Vice President for Mission and Spiritual Care at NYU Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY. He is an ordained pastor in the ELCA, board-certified chaplain in the Association of Professional Chaplains, and certified supervisor in the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education. Don served for six years as Director for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling and Clinical Education at the ELCA Churchwide Office and is both a co-founder and past co-editor of Caring Connections. He currently serves as interim pastor at Emanuel L.C., New Brunswick, NJ as he eagerly awaits becoming a first-time grandfather in July.

Splashes of Joy

by Rev. Ghislaine Cotnoir

JOY

1 a: the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires: delight **b:** the expression or exhibition of such emotion: gaiety

2: a state of happiness or felicity: bliss

3: a source or cause of delight.

– Merriam Webster

“Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’ The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”

– Psalm 126:2–3

IT WAS A FAIRLY TYPICAL DAY. *It began with a staff member who stopped by to ask for prayer for a family member who was awaiting results from a biopsy. They were not expecting good news. + Next, what I anticipated would be a short visit with someone I see frequently became a tearful time of facing fear and guilt that had long been buried. + Called from that visit, I sat with a family as they waited for their beloved matriarch to breathe her last breath. Tears flowed as she died. “Why did God let her suffer for so long,” her husband lamented. “She never did anything to deserve it.”*

Anyone of us who serve as chaplains could write a litany of moments of suffering, sadness, trauma and loss into which we are called every day. Quite likely, if we polled colleagues from other disciplines and asked them to name five reasons they might call a chaplain, most, maybe all of the reasons they name would fit into this litany.

It was a fairly typical day. I ate cake and sang as we celebrated Anna’s 102nd birthday. + I smiled with a man who, getting ready for the annual Christmas pageant said, “I had to wait 90 years to be a shepherd!” + Joan, who had not felt strong enough to get out of bed for several days, came to the chapel with her daughter. We read in Philippians about joy and we sang every hymn we could think of. Joan smiled for the first time that week. Her daughter shared that it was the kind of moment that her mom used to call a “splash of joy.” Joan looked at me and said, “We always need to find splashes of joy!” Indeed.

Anyone of us who serves as a chaplain could add to the litany of moments we might describe as “splashes of joy.” We experience them every day. They lighten our hearts and make us realize that often we receive so much more than we can possible

give. They are the moments we try to capture when folks ask why we do what we do, assuming that our litanies are always sad. But I wonder if our colleagues from other disciplines know that we bring the presence of God to celebration as much as to sorrow? I wonder if any of them would think to call us for moments of joy, would understand that stopping to acknowledge the presence of God in those moments is grace-filled!

In a very brief, and admittedly unscientific, survey of what Spiritual Care Departments list as “when to call the chaplain,” I found only three that listed anything about the chaplain’s availability for times of joy or celebration. (Admittedly, when I have been called upon to draw up such lists, I’ve not included this component either.) Our brochures, our assessment tools, our procedures and protocols are weighted toward what we provide in times of spiritual and ethical distress and confusion. We speak more to our availability in times of suffering and sorrow than to what we can also offer when news is good, when the song is one of thanksgiving not lament.

Perhaps this is, in part, because *how* and *when* we respond to sorrow and difficulty are well-framed in religious ritual. As chaplains, we baptize emergently; we anoint with familiar actions which for some require specific practitioners; we hear confession and offer absolution with words we know by heart. We use oils and water and bread and wine. They are known and expected. In word and action we offer comfort and consolation. We record them so that everyone knows they have been administered rightly. It is important that we are familiar with these actions and enact them when they are requested and appropriate. Our co-workers know to ask for them.

The ways we respond to joy and celebration are perhaps less well-grounded in rites that we are deliberate and consistent in offering. Religiously required rites to celebrate a good surgical outcome, or the day of being discharged or being reunited with a loved one as death approaches barely exist. But we often witness these moments of joy and are privileged to participate in them. They bring the presence of God and create sacred space and place.

What ritual action might we bring to these splashes of joy? Could Paul’s words in Philippians 4 be heard as an equal mandate for bring sacred presence to celebration as the words from James are for bringing sacred presence to sickness?

“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the LORD” (James 5:14).

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

They are the moments we try to capture when folks ask why we do what we do, assuming that our litanies are always sad. But I wonder if our colleagues from other disciplines know that we bring the presence of God to celebration as much as to sorrow?

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:4–7).

Do this as well! Pray over and anoint those who are sick. But as mindfully, pray, rejoice and give thanks with those who are celebrating!

Of course, we already do this. There are times where such deliberate joy rituals have emerged for points of transition. Chaplains regularly offer blessings for stem cell transplants. Room blessings, when residents move into senior living communities, celebrate a new chapter of life. Invocations and benedictions are included in employee and volunteer celebrations. But do we sing the joy as consistently and loudly as we sing the lament? Should we? Might we make joy so much a part of our ministry that it too is required, requested and recorded?

Theologically, joy is undeniably linked to God’s presence and deliverance. Joy is the natural response to connection with God. In the Old Testament joy comes when, after waiting, even lamenting, God finally does something, even if it is just being present. People respond in celebration. They are grateful. They dance and they sing. They develop hope for the next time of waiting as they remember what God has done and claim the expectation that God will be present again. This remembrance which builds hope and expectation permeates the joy of the New Testament. Celebrating joy in a way that is public, consistent, expected and frequent becomes, not only a response to a singular event, but creates a narrative of God’s presence. Celebrating joy creates a narrative of hope that builds when God’s people acknowledge God’s divine presence.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin says, *“Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.”* Might not mindful celebrations of the splashes of joy that occur every day fill us with such a sense of God that we would create a well from which to draw strength when our days attend to suffering upon suffering?

Nepalese writer Santosh Kalwar writes, *“If I can see pain in your eyes then share with me your tears. If I can see joy in your eyes then share with me your smile.”* Our ministry calls us to see and share the pain and tears; also to see the joy and share the smiles. The sacred song of our typical days is sung in both.



Ghislaine Cotnoir currently serves as the Director of Pastoral Care at The Artman Home & The Hearth at Drexel in Ambler, Pennsylvania. After her ordination in 1988 she became assistant pastor at Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rochester, New York. From there she became a chaplain at Rochester General Hospital. Ghislaine also serves on the Caring Connections editorial board.

How did I find joy in ministry again?

by Chaplain Don Knudson, M.Div., BCC retired

“JOYFUL, JOYFUL WE ADORE THEE” is the opening line of “Hymn to Joy” by Henry Van Dyke put to the music of Ludwig Van Beethoven. Within the Christian tradition we have a theme of joy that is celebrated, especially in the season of Easter. I can tell you from my experience that when one is in a clinically diagnosed depression, joy is out of reach. That was the place where I lived back in the middle of my life. I was a burned out parish pastor. With support from my denomination, through therapy and the CPE process, I carried on. It was a long road back. Out of that time of a deep sense of failure, hopelessness, grief and loss I emerged to find my calling in chaplaincy. I served in long term care. Yes I did, for 23 years.

As a student of philosophy, I remember Socrates who, according to Plato, said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Chaplains who have used the action-reflection method of learning in CPE have had more than the average opportunity to experience the examination of one’s life, strengths and weaknesses. What I learned in my therapy and in my CPE experiences is that I could live, learn from and even embrace the gloom, hopelessness, the helplessness that was part of my life. Yes, “life is difficult” as M. Scott Peck wrote in *The Road Less Traveled* (1978). Once that is accepted, he wrote, life will no longer be difficult. At least, I would add, we won’t make it more difficult than it need be. So I felt at home when I entered the nursing home as chaplain where I saw frailty, loss, grief and struggle. I knew some of the territory. I believed I could walk beside them.

What follows are some stories that led me to discover joy in ministry again among those I served in long term care.

The picture you see is Ann¹ who lived to be over 110 years old. I remember visiting her, alone, sitting in her room. I thought she looked sad. As I came to know her I found something very different. Her story, the one she repeated over and over summing up her life, went like this, “I have had a wonderful life. I had a wonderful husband, wonderful children that I taught in school... wonderful... wonderful friends, I’ve had a wonderful life. My life has been just wonderful. I can’t imagine that heaven could be better... but I suppose it is.” Yes. She was a joyful person! She looked back on her life as wonderful and joy-filled.

I presided at her funeral service. One of her friends attending the service confided, “You know Ann. She was so positive, so upbeat. I know that I can never



¹ Ann died over a decade ago. Her story, for which permission was granted, was part of the Geriatric Pastoral Care Institute video I produced.

be like that.” As he spoke I could tell that her joyful persona was oppressive to him. It was an expectation he felt. He couldn’t imagine himself being that joyful at life’s ending. Because of his struggles and fears, he felt condemned by her joy, knowing he could never be like her, as “good” as her.

I could relate. I will never be like Ann either. She was a unique and special person. Most of us have a mixed bag of experiences that we carry through the stream of time in our memories. We had our ups and downs. So we may feel less than those who seem to see only the good and wonderful. But this is unnecessary suffering. I’m reminded of the scripture: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 NRSV). Laughter, dancing and joy have their time and place along the stream of life. Of course, there are also the other times. Is it not in the darkest times we may see a glimpse of light? Joy is possible and surprising.

Is it not in the darkest times we may see a glimpse of light? Joy is possible and surprising.

A couple entered our care center to live together. They needed help and no longer could live independently. Not long after they came, the husband died leaving his wife with deep grief. They had been married and inseparable for many decades. My ministry was to be with her in the weeks and months that followed to provide support and listen for her grief. I thought, “It won’t be long before she gives up and dies to join him.” I was wrong. It was some months after his death that I saw her coming toward me wheeling her wheel chair. “Pastor, I have something to tell you” she said. “I want you to know that I’ve decided to live again!” She flashed a big smile I’ll never forget. Joy! She felt joy again. I was surprised by joy!

Our active living department purchased a computer for residents to use. It was when the internet was new. Getting the computer was a great leap forward for many of our people. A particular woman wanted to get connected by setting up an email address. She wanted to be able to communicate with friends who had email. During that time her son became ill. His diagnosis was serious, and sadly, he died in a relatively short time. This was a great tragedy in her life. Then unexpectedly, she received a great surprise! I learned that as a very young woman she gave birth to a baby boy whom she had placed for adoption and never saw again. This was a sadness with which she had lived most of her adult life. Amazingly, at the very time her son died, her lost son found her on the internet. For many years he was looking for his birth mother through the internet. When she set up her email, he found her name. He emailed inquiring if she were indeed his birth mother. She was! He asked if he could come see her. She, of course, said “Yes!” I saw the two of them meet for the first time. “God took one son from me and gave me back another,” she said beaming. Joy! Out of sadness she was surprised by joy. And so was I.

In my setting there were many people who had broken lives, no family, mental illnesses and alienated family members. A theme of my chaplaincy was to say, “Wherever you have been, whatever has happened to you in the past, we are now here together. You have survived. You are amazing. This is a community of caring and if we want we can recreate for ourselves a new family. In the Christian tradition spirituality is about community, belonging, loving family, brothers and sisters, living by grace with mercy. Nobody’s perfect nor is expected to be.”

I held a men’s social group weekly. Father’s Day was coming soon so I asked the men, “Tell me about your fathers.” They all shared a memory. Eventually one said, “I had a wonderful mother, but I had a terrible father. He was never home. It was like I never had a father.” Another resident, much older, said, “I was a terrible father. I was so judgmental. None of my children want to have anything to do with me. I don’t even know where they live.” It was in that exchange that the younger resident said to the older one, “You know what, I’ll adopt you as my father.” And he did. A new family unit was born. Out of brokenness came connection. Such moments gave me joy in my ministry.

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Another resident regularly attended the weekly chapel services and Sunday worship. One day he came into chapel early before a service. “Chaplain, can I tell you something? I had a dream last night.” “What happened?” I asked. “I saw Jesus,” he said. “Really? Tell me more.” I said, “Did he say anything?” “No,” he reported, “he was just walking along. But I said, ‘I love you Jesus!’ Was that real, do you think?” he asked. “Sounds good to me.” I responded. Wow! That’s significant, I thought. Every time after he had a big smile on his face, which never was there before. Such powerful dreams are often predictive. Within 2 months his health declined and he died. I knew he was going to be OK no matter what. His fear was gone. And his smile lingers in my mind to this day.

Now it’s your turn. You have stories. You have experiences that give you hope, joy, a sense of deep purpose and a reason for being called to spiritual care. You might want to write some of those stories down.

This is only a glimpse of how I found joy in ministry again. As I have recently retired from my role as a chaplain, I have had more opportunity to reflect. I can tell you that I am grateful for the privilege of serving seniors and others who needed care over 23 years of my life and ministry as a chaplain. I was part of a great team of caregivers, a community of caring. Glimpses of joy, fun, laughter and compassion were sprinkled through each day. With that, I’ll let Henry Van Dyke have the last word in his prayer, *Hymn to Joy*:

*Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, God of love!
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee, Praising thee, their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, Drive the gloom of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.*

(Henry Van Dyke, 1852–1922)

And to that I say AMEN!



Don Knudson is a board certified chaplain, now retired, who served Ebenezer Care Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota as chaplain for over 23 years. He is rostered as an ELCA Minister of Word and Sacrament, retired, in the Minneapolis Area Synod, ELCA. He grew up on a farm in South Dakota, received his BA degree from Augustana College (now University), Sioux Falls, SD. He received his M.Div. degree from Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota, a seminary of the former Lutheran Church in America. (Northwestern Seminary later merged with Luther Seminary in St. Paul.) Don is father to 2 daughters, 21 grandchildren and one great grandson. He is married to Gloria Swanson, retired and former minister of vital aging at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville, Minnesota.

Sometimes You Gotta Laugh

by Rev. Chuck Weinrich

SHAKESPEARE UNDERSTOOD IT: for a tragedy to be a “success,” there must also be moments of levity. Hamlet had its moments of humor. King Lear and Richard the Third did too. Life is like that as well. There are moments of absurdity, humor or delight in the midst of sadness, anxiety or even death itself. During my years as a chaplain I began to notice how comic relief would occur in the saddest of moments or in a time of crisis.

I hope that as you read these little vignettes you remember similar humorous incidents that have happened in your ministry. I want those memories to bring a smile and warm recollections. Of course, sometimes humor can cover over painful memories, but my desire is that you will be able to appreciate the brief intrusions of silliness, witticism or poignancy in your ministry as ways that allow you to accompany your patients/clients even more effectively.

- A Jewish family requested prayer as their patriarch was dying. I told them before I could say a meaningful prayer specifically about him, I would like them to tell what he meant to them. Slowly they began to identify things about him that meant a lot to them, adding favorite stories to illustrate their words. Often the comments would generate nods of assent and tears of recognition from the others gathered around the hospital bed. Occasionally an incident would be recounted that brought smiles, chuckles and even gentle laughter. As I left them, I said to them, “Thank you for the privilege of being with you. This was like ‘Sitting Shiva’ with your loved one still here with you.” There was, in their grieving, some light in the darkness. Humor provided some relief in the midst of their struggles with losing their husband/father/grandfather/uncle.
- The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit [PICU] at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) was a place of sharp contrast, seemingly miraculous recoveries balanced by devastating tragedies. One highlight for me in the middle of all the tension and struggle came about when the mother of a months-old boy with multiple problems asked me for a specific prayer. Her son had stopped urinating, which was complicating his other physical issues and further endangering his life. It’s important to note that the family name was “Steele.” I suddenly remembered the accounts in Exodus 17: 6 & 9 and Numbers 20: 7 & 11, when God instructed Moses to get water for the people of Israel from a rock...and I then prayed with the boy’s mother and nurse, “Gracious God, you once brought water from rock, saving the Children of Israel. We call upon

I hope that as you read these little vignettes you remember similar humorous incidents that have happened in your ministry.

you now, in your mercy, to bring forth water from Steele. We ask this in Jesus' name." When I finished, they both were crying and smiling at the same time. Soon I was on my way, and then within the hour received a page to return to the PICU. When I entered the boy's room, the nurse, with a huge grin on her face said, "Your prayer worked! God made water come out of Steele. He just peed!" Even though the little guy didn't live more than a few weeks longer, his story—and my prayer—became a legend for years afterward.

- After being a chaplain educator at CHW for five years, I moved my ministry to the other end of the life spectrum, developing a CPE program at The Village at Manor Park, a geriatric long-term care facility in Milwaukee. The level of tension was significantly lower than at Children's and humor was more evident and abundant. Nevertheless, there were times when the sadness of dementia was balanced by a moment of levity. One of the staff chaplains was conducting a worship service on the dementia unit, before the residents with dementia were integrated into the general community. One woman appeared to be sleeping through the service until the chaplain announced the hymn, "Amazing Grace." The woman called out, "Not 'Amazing Grace!' I hate that song, and it's all we ever sing: 'Amazing Grace'—'Amazing Grace.' I hate that song." The chaplain quickly responded, "Well, we don't need to sing that song. We'll sing something else. What would you like to sing?" The woman thought for a second and then said, "Let's sing 'Amazing Grace.'" "Good choice," replied the chaplain, and the woman happily sang along with the rest of the group.
- Several years ago in my personal therapy, I was struggling to accept my own angry feelings. My therapist asked me, "What would happen if you would ever let go and released your anger?" I thought for a moment or two and then said, somewhat ironically, "The whole world would be destroyed." She paused for another moment or two and then asked, "Does that seem like megalomania to you?" I laughed out loud and then, feeling freed by this absurd exchange, delved more deeply into my anger issues.

Holy joy can come in many forms. I hope these snippets from my memories might have inspired you to claim humor and find enjoyment within your ministries.



The Rev. Charles Weinrich served as chaplain and CPE supervisor at Overlook Hospital in Summit, New Jersey before moving to Milwaukee where he joined the supervisory team at Children's Hospital, and then began a CPE program at The Village at Manor Park. He and his wife, Carol, have now retired to Port Orange, Florida. He loves good humor and enjoys telling stories. Chuck was co-editor of Caring Connections for ten years and is now an ACPE Clinical Educator, retired. In 2013, Chuck was a recipient of

the Christus in Mundo award.

For the Joy of Ministry

by Rev. Nancy Ruth Wigdahl

PERHAPS I'M RETIRING A BIT EARLY by clergy standards. I plan to leave my current position at the end of 2018 and assume an active retired role with my professional organizations of ACPE and APC. After serving a parish for eight years and now as a chaplain and ACPE Educator for thirty years, it is time to enjoy the unscheduled joy of active retirement.

I am challenged to consider all the ambiguous losses that will come with this pending change in my life. At the moment I am compiling the delicious bucket list of travels, visits and volunteer opportunities that have rested on my back burner far too long.

I am beginning to reminisce about the joys of meaningful ministry over the past years, especially as I was graciously asked to write an article for this issue of *Caring Connections*. The topic of joy came from me on a slight whim; yet, joy is as valid as our usual practice-of-chaplaincy topics. Joy has felt antithetical to our characteristically real life and necessarily practical themes for this professional journal. Yet I cannot deny that there has been real joy in the ministry I have been engaging in various venues over the past few decades. How about you?

Joy is in the heart of the individual; my joy may not be so for you. It is challenging to tell another of my experience of joy, sometimes you just have to be there. Even then, my joy is shaped by the filters of my life story, values and faith. More often, I feel joy encountering what I have come to understand as the mystery of God which is a dramatic shift from the intellectual focus of my Lutheran identity and heritage.

I have been incredibly fortunate to have had positive years in positions where I felt the joy of effective enough ministry. There is joy in the apparently well-timed and well-stated comfort of others and the simple “thank you” following an innocuous encounter. In passing through a quiet hospital lobby one day I saw a pensively sad expression on a man’s face. I paused to acknowledge him and ask how his day was going. “It’s okay.” The next day he sought me out to tell my how important it was to him that I stopped to greet him. Mysterious joy.

These days I almost always cry tears of joy at the ordination of a former CPE student. How can there be anything more satisfying than being among the community of God as a new pastor receives the joyous external affirmation of a calling internally felt for so many years?! Likewise, I feel joy when a first year seminarian completing a summer of CPE proclaims that she can indeed do ministry.

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Or, when another student humbly thanks me for “calling them out” on a self-disparaging behavior.

Some ministry encounters linger as profound glimpses of the mysterious incarnate God. My mind’s eye goes to my midnight encounter with a family of nineteen siblings, all gathered around their recently dead mother as they name an endless litany of gratitude for the life she has given them, so evident in their mutual love and support. Or a young man expressing humble joy and gratitude at being found with an incapacitating broken hip in an isolated parking lot on an icy subzero evening. The profound joy of a successful new birth is precious contrast to the gut-wrenching wordless pain of a perinatal loss.

Joy in ministry is a choice, a mindfulness practice attuning one’s mind, heart and spirit to those things which give meaning, awe, and wonder to our blessed ministry. Joy travels with us much like the proverbial cloud and pillar of fire, a flag of God’s mysterious presence amid perpetual life transitions. Joy has kept me going when the incongruous caprices of hospital administrators, organizations or judicatories leave me puzzled and grappling for explanation. Joy is mine and I intend to take it with me into active retirement.



The Rev. Nancy Ruth Wigdahl is a board certified chaplain and ACPE Certified Educator with Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She also serves on Caring Connections Editorial Board.

On Joy in the Mo(u)rning

by Phil Kuehnert

*“Weeping may endure for the night,
but joy comes in the morning.” – Ps 30:5*

-Thursday after Ash Wednesday – 2018

One Day after a shooting in the Parkland, Florida High School, 17 dead.

Three authors:

- Jacqueline A. Bussie – *Outlaw Christian: Finding Authentic Faith by Breaking the “Rules”* (2016)
- Richard J. Foster – *Celebration of Discipline – The Path to Spiritual Growth* (1978)
- James K. A. Smith – *You are What You Love – The Spiritual Power of Habit* (2016)

THE 15TH OF FEBRUARY was the 46th anniversary of a very private shooting in New Orleans, Louisiana. Five blocks from the teeming masses of delirious and inebriated Mardi Gras revelers, my friend and I were confronted by two young men who demanded money. The four of us stood facing each other. Talking disrespectfully to the two young men resulted in me being shot twice. The horror of that moment and of the next weeks and months are quick to surface each time there is news of another private, or as was the case yesterday, of a very public shooting. Joy? Really?

This year, on February 14th, my wife, Judy, and I were gathered with a small group of parishioners for a potluck supper in the undercroft of Bethany Lutheran Church in Waynesboro, Virginia when, before the prayer, the pastor announced that there was a “national issue,” a shooting in a school in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He indicated there could be multiple fatalities. He again mentioned the shooting at the beginning of the Ash Wednesday service saying that, at that point, there were four confirmed fatalities. At the end of the service, which included both the imposition of ashes and Holy Communion, he announced that there were 16 confirmed deaths. When we arrived home we were greeted with the news that 17 were dead at a high school in Parkland, Florida. The final credenza of the evening was a photo of two distraught women outside the high school, the one holding the other had a cross marked with ashes on her forehead. No joy. No joy.

The horror of that moment and of the next weeks and months are quick to surface each time there is news of another private, or as was the case yesterday, of a very public shooting. Joy? Really?

Burying alleluias for Lent is a common liturgical tradition. Not until Easter do they reappear. Does this mean we also bury joy? After a tragedy like a school shooting with 17 dead, when is joy to reappear? A cynic would say, “with the next news cycle, or maybe before.” The three authors named above are not cynics but they write with the awareness that many Christians in this country are victims of a superficial, cliché filled, patina-encrusted spirituality that makes a mockery of the biblical and the liturgical concepts of rejoicing and joy.

It is interesting how the three above-named authors have similar diagnoses and similar prescriptions to identify the etiology of and remedy for spiritual malaise.

No one referenced the other two and each wrote in different cultural contexts. Foster’s book was written forty years ago. Bussie’s and Smith’s were published in 2016. All three come from different Christian traditions — Quaker, Lutheran, Reformed.

Foster’s book, now in its fourth decade with over a million copies sold, uses “celebration” as a primary concept to underscore his central premise that discipline leads to freedom.

Smith’s book, written from a Calvinist/Reformed tradition, personalizes the struggle to remain free from the primary cultural “liturgies” of mall, stadium, health care and university as he challenges and encourages disciples of Jesus to habituate within the traditional liturgies of the church catholic.

With breathtaking candor, Bussie addresses the failed theodicies of clichés and pat answers as they seek to provide comfort and meaning to suffering. Her final outcomes of hope and joy are framed in the stories of her own spiritual journey and those of her students, friends and family.

What all three authors do, each in their own way, is stress the importance of the intentional and mindful Christian life. “With eyes wide open” is a rallying cry in each of the books as the reality of a dying and irrelevant Christian religion in the United States is grieved, as each provides a revealing exposé of the emptiness of the cultural and social trends that define our lives, and as radical forms of discipleship/discipline are outlined in detail. No reader of any of these books will be at a loss to understand what the implications are for life as a disciple in today’s world.

That Foster’s book still speaks today underscores the deeper issues that have been challenging Christians from the first century through today. All three authors rely heavily on the wisdom of the church from the early church fathers through 19th century prophets. Each of the authors demonstrates from their own personal stories and in their theological orientation the importance of the worshipping community as an indispensable part of the “authentic” Christian life.

“With eyes wide open” is a rallying cry in each of the books as the reality of a dying and irrelevant Christian religion in the United States is grieved, as each provides a revealing exposé of the emptiness of the cultural and social trends that define our lives, and as radical forms of discipleship/discipline are outlined in detail.

All of this presupposes a somewhat healthy if not mature spirituality. This presupposes that the sufferer/celebrant has been a part of a community that encourages and teaches the spiritual disciplines (Foster), a community that lives “authentic Christianity” (Bussie), and individuals who have been habituated by the traditional liturgies of the church catholic (Smith).

Specialized ministry in public institutions cannot presuppose all of that. In fact, most pastoral care situations, including those within a worshipping community, should not presuppose these conditions. But in the latter, when a pastor/caregiver has history with the community and/or the individual most often there will be a sense of where the care receiver is in their ability to seize joy.

For those called to minister in the name of Jesus, it would be irresponsible to park joy on the shelf labeled, “For Archives.” At the same time, for most people, the word “joy” carries with it a happy, “we won” connotation. Using the word prematurely or inappropriately will often be counter productive. The concept can be used without using the word. The metaphysical, faith-driven and transcendent qualities of joy most people can grasp with little coaching.

In contrasting happiness and joy, Bussie demonizes happiness as being the smug confident attitude of the person who has won, achieved or arrived, with joy being the “twin sister of suffering.”

Jaqueline Bussie’s book should be especially meaningful for the specialized minister. The primary contexts (hospitals, geriatric institutions, jails, counseling offices) of specialized ministers are where suffering, despair, pain, fear and death often rule. Joy is often difficult to find. Not for Bussie. In contrasting happiness and joy, Bussie demonizes happiness as being the smug confident attitude of the person who has won, achieved or arrived, with joy being the “twin sister of suffering.”

When people ask me what joy is, I always start by saying joy and suffering are twin sisters. I am not the first to notice joy’s strange kindred with sadness, which is why when we speak of both we say our heart aches. Joy is when love, appreciation and beauty outwit pain and despair, yes, but the weird thing about joy is that it always seems aware — just below the surface — of what it is outwitting. Joy is aware of its own finitude, like my grandma who once said, “I know I will die, and soon” — then smiled and took a bite of a chicken leg (p 241).

Painfully aware of how difficult it is to cultivate joy Bussie makes practical suggestions. Practicing authenticity eliminates the charades and energy that pretensions and secrets demand. She promises, “Take the risk of authenticity and tell someone you trust your true story; it’s how you resist a world where most people live a lie. You will find joy there, I promise (p 244).” She encourages the obvious — humor and physical movement, but then offers a surprising suggestion. “The best way to resist evil, grief and suffering and to cultivate joy is through the practice of our vocations (p 246).” Finding joy in what we do is the unique challenge of the

specialized minister and why this journal, in particular, is so important to celebrate and enhance excellence in our unique vocations. There is a reason it carries the word “caring” in its name.

I particularly recommend two of the books for specialized ministers. If there is a limit to resources to buy or time to read, Bussie’s book is a must. Not only is her prose spectacular, but her willingness to be authentic will provide encouragement to all of us who have to provide an answer for the hope — and joy — that lies within. Second, for the minister who needs to get serious about their personal spiritual life Foster’s book has no equal that I know of. If there are care receivers who express a desire to go deeper with their spirituality this is the book to recommend. Finally Smith’s book is interesting in his effort to identify and expose the “liturgies” that define life in the 21st century. The subtitle “The Spiritual Power of Habit” is an indication of why he stresses the habituation of the liturgy of the church catholic.

We can be sure that there will be repeats of personal and “national issues” that will break our hearts. The response of many in those moments will be to shelve joy. Christians dare not do that. To do that would be to abdicate one of the primary responsibilities of those who provide care. These books by Foster, Bussie and Smith provide the opportunity to dig deeply into the dynamics of joy and to come away with a renewed appreciation of how we can sing the camp song, “I got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart to stay!” Because “Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).



Philip Kuehnert is a retired pastor/pastoral counselor living in Williamsburg, VA. Before retiring, his forty years of ministry included parishes in New Orleans, Atlanta and Fairbanks and clinical work at Care and Counseling in Atlanta and the Samaritan Counseling Center in Fairbanks. An unpublished essayist, Philip is currently working on his memoir, Confessions of a Failed Conversionist. For the past two years he has written a weekly “Monday Morning Encouragement” for Stephen Ministers and other care givers. He and his wife Judy have four children and seven grandchildren.

News, Announcements, Events

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- April 23–25, 2018 Caring for the Human Spirit
www.healthcarechlaincy.org
- May 9–11, 2018 ACPE Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA
www.acpe.edu
- May 15–17, 2018 LCMS SPM Educational Event
www.lcms.org/spm
- July 9–13, 2018 International Conference of Police Chaplains, Lexington, KY
www.icpc4cops.org
- July 12–15, 2018 APC/NACC Joint Conference, Anaheim, CA
www.nacc.org/conference
- Aug 17–18, 2018 Prison Ministry Conference, St. Louis, MO
www.sidlcms.org/prison-ministry
- Oct 2–4, 2018 LCMS SPM Educational Event, Belleville, IL
www.lcms.org/spm
- Oct 14–18, 2018 Federation of Fire Chaplains Conference, Fort Wayne, IN
www.firechaplains.org
- Oct 16–18, 2018 National Disaster Response Conference, St. Louis, MO
www.lcms.org/disaster
- Nov 2–4, 2018 The Association of Certified Christian Chaplains Conf., Colorado Springs, CO
www.certifiedchaplains.org

Upcoming 2019 Zion Conference

The next triennial Zion Conference will be held at St Mary's Seminary and Retreat Center in Mundelein, Illinois. Confirmed dates are September 26–29 for 2019. Zion Conference has been a tradition for many years as Lutheran chaplains, pastoral counselors and clinical educators join for prayer, camaraderie, education and renewal. The ELCA and LCMS have continued to be supportive of this joint event. The last event in 2016 was held near St Louis and was planned by the LCMS. This year, the conference is being planned by the ELCA with the leadership of David Kylo. Watch for more details to come.