

AHPCC Conference 2018
Resilience and Reflection in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care: the interface
between light and dark

Poetry Introduction and Session 1

The following were used/read in the opening presentation by David Buckbut not included in the Power Point

Poem and music

Resilience and Reflection

Music – the tune Kingsfold played with stylised ornamentation, then words...

“Tell me,
what are your sources of strength?”

She sits motionless,
“low in mood”,
waiting.

“What brings you comfort and meaning,
what gives you hope?”

She stares into space,
“depressed”,
searching.

“What helps you, how do you cope,
what sustains you? What makes you tick?”

Behind her eyes
the silence fills with music...

*...yes, the beck, where we caught minnows
and rode our bikes through on a hot summer’s day;
the skies of Norfolk where dreams were made;
and the barley field where I cut my knee;*

*walks on the beach;
a good book;
good company;
beans on toast;*

*caught by the police – never again;
holding my tongue;
holding fast doing it my way;
holding the audience;*

*that chiropodist;
being made to laugh – which I resist;
keeping secrets;*

telling half truths (lies);

*knowing the bully and that she is not my cousin;
knowing when to hide behind the mirror;
knowing I loved, was loved and am loved;
singing the old songs when others sing the new;*

*patience when no-one listens;
angry when I need to;
saying, "fine" when I am not;
being courageous when I am not;*

*divorce, setting me free;
children driving me to the edge;
work and discovering myself;
just living;*

*living and breathing;
joy and pleasure;
pain and suffering;
yes...*

She sat up,
tall,
straightened her head,
smiled a huge beam of a smile,
and said,
"Thank you."

Music – the tune Kingsfold played without ornamentation

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Poem

Comforting the Comforters

You who give counsel to others must give counsel to yourself.
You to whom many turn for wisdom must turn to yourself.
You to whom others come for comfort must comfort yourself.

The comforters and consolers, the healers of others
need comfort and consolation and healing themselves.
In sickness, in death, in tragedy, we are the same.

Let not the last hours eclipse the entire life.
Let not the pain, the forgetfulness, the suffering
negate the joy, the memory, the exaltation of life.

Nothing decent, nothing noble, no gesture of love,
no smile of encouragement is swallowed up by death.

In memory there is a resurrection of the life of the spirit.

Memory is our hold on the past
our solace in the present, our hope for the future.

Memory has a life of its own, an after-life,
a transfusion of meaning from one life to others.

You who have given heart and soul to others,
you who have sheltered others from wind and storms
guard yourselves from melancholy.

You who have given wisdom to others
open yourself to your hard-earned knowledge.

Know that the wound does not heal at once
but slowly forms protective layers.

You who have known grief and pain have also known
deep friendships, relationships of respect and trust.

You have taught others how to survive the affliction of sorrow,
you have taught others how to transcend the tragic moment.

That which gave you life
gave to you a miraculous spark.
May it illumine your path and brighten your way.

Anonymous (after H S Schulweis?)

Poem

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters - Portia Nelson

1. I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

2. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I'm in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

3. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.

I get out immediately.

4. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

5. I walk down another street.

Copyright (©) 1993, by Portia Nelson from the book There's A Hole in My Sidewalk.

Poem

The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me
what you do for a living.
I want to know
what you ache for,
and if you dare to dream
of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me
how old you are.
I want to know
if you will risk
looking like a fool
for love,
for your dream,
for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me
what planets are
squaring your moon...
I want to know
if you have touched
the centre of your own sorrow,
if you have been opened
by life's betrayals
or have become shrivelled and closed
from fear of further pain.
I want to know
if you can sit with pain,
mine or your own,
without moving to hide it
or fade it,
or fix it.

I want to know
if you can be with joy,
mine or your own,
if you can dance with wildness
and let the ecstasy fill you
to the tips of your fingers and toes
without cautioning us

to be careful,
to be realistic,
to remember the limitations
of being human.

It doesn't interest me
if the story you are telling me
is true.

I want to know if you can
disappoint another
to be true to yourself;
if you can bear
the accusation of betrayal
and not betray your own soul;
if you can be faithless
and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty
even when it is not pretty,
every day,
and if you can source your own life
from its presence.

I want to know
if you can live with failure,
yours and mine,
and still stand at the edge of the lake
and shout to the silver of the full moon,
"Yes."

It doesn't interest me
to know where you live
or how much money you have.
I want to know if you can get up,
after the night of grief and despair,
weary and bruised to the bone,
and do what needs to be done
to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me
who you know
or how you came to be here.
I want to know if you will stand
in the centre of the fire
with me
and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me
where or what or with whom
you have studied.
I want to know
what sustains you,
from the inside
when all else falls away.

I want to know
if you can be alone
with yourself
and if you truly like
the company you keep
in the empty moments.

*By Oriah © Mountain Dreaming, from the book The Invitation published by HarperONE,
San Francisco, 1999 All rights reserved*

Limmerick

Endpiece

There were lots of chaplains at Swannick,
who were weary and in need of some tonic.
They listened, reflected,
considered, digested
and left feeling rather euphoric.

David Buck

