

## A Day in the Life

### 0820

As the hospital chaplain grabs her lunch from the back seat of her car her cell phone rings. It is the ER. An early morning car accident has brought a man to hospital with life threatening injuries. His family has arrived and is distraught as he is not expected to live. They have asked for a priest to come in.

### 0835

After throwing her bag in her office and readying herself for the visit she makes her way to the ER. There she finds the aged parents of the patient and his wife. The wife is very upset and explains that while she and her husband are not very religious his parents would like a priest to come to bless their son. After listening to the family awhile longer she excuses herself, consults with staff and then goes to make arrangements for the priest to come in.

### 0900

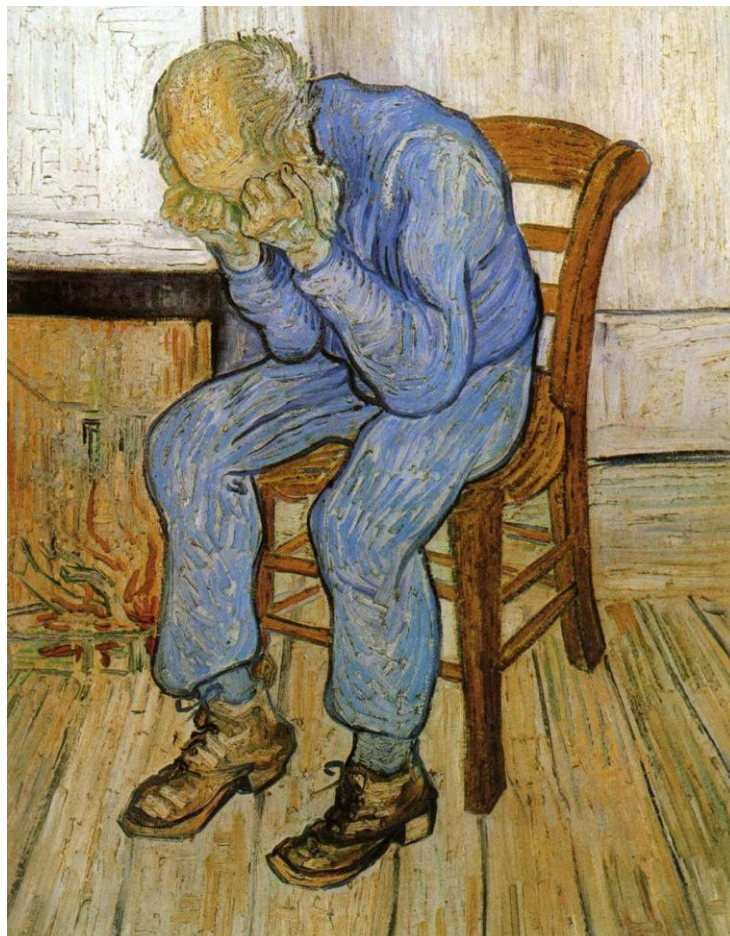
On her way back to her office she encounters an older man sitting in a waiting area looking out of a window. He is crying. Less than a year ago his wife died and he is now on the very unit where she died. Being here brings back many memories of what her last days were like. After listening for awhile the chaplain explains that she needs to make a phone call but that she would like to come back and see him again if that would be alright? He agrees.

### 0910

The chaplain makes contact with a local priest who is familiar with the family. He promises to be there as soon as he can.

### 0930

On her way to rounds on the palliative care unit she stops at the switchboard for a list of patients requesting spiritual care visits. Rounds begin with the chaplain sharing a reading that is meant to inspire the staff for the work they will do. Her reading today focuses on the strain on caregivers in caring for the dying. For the remainder of the meeting the chaplain listens to reports



on patients she is following. She also shares any insights for the staff about the spiritual well being of these patients.

### 1100

Following the meeting she visits patients and their families on the PCU who have requested to see her. As she makes her rounds a nurse tells her that a patient needs to talk as she is very frightened at this time. Their conversation focuses on her fears of dying and not knowing what comes next. The chaplain and the patient explore her beliefs and how they give her hope while at the same time leaving her with many questions and doubts. The meeting ends with the patient feeling less agitated. The chaplain promises to come see her again.

**1145**

The Chaplain is called to visit a patient on the rehabilitation unit. The social worker on the unit updates her on the patient and how he is struggling as he recovers from a stroke. He tells the chaplain that he is an avowed atheist but that he really needs to talk. He is particularly struggling with issues of loss and personal identity.

**1232**

Returning to her office after lunch she notices a message on her voicemail. The new leader of the Sikh temple called to arrange a time to be oriented to the hospital. She calls him back and they agree to meet following week.

**1300**

There is a knock at the office door. It is a nurse who is having a particularly hard day at work. She is feeling overwhelmed and needs to talk.

**1320**

The phone rings. It is the maternity unit. A young couple has lost their first child. While they are not connected to any faith community they want this moment of loss to be honored in some way. A nurse on the unit has called the chaplain to come to work with the social worker who has already been caring for the family. The chaplain listens to the couple's story. She hears their hopes, fears and sadness. After they have shared their story she asks if they would want a blessing for their child. They agree and so with spiritually appropriate words the chaplain blesses their child and the couple.

**1400**

The Chaplain makes her way to a local extended care facility where she has been invited to talk about workplace grief. Staff gather and share about how recent deaths in their facility have affected them and their work.

**1515**

She spends time working on a memorial service for a cancer patient she got to know over the past few months. After the patient had died her husband asked if the chaplain would help lead the service and say a few words at her celebration of life.

**1550**

As she continues working on the service she remembers that she still needs to follow up with the man she met in the waiting area. She finds him in his room reading a magazine. He shares with her that today was his

wife's birthday. She asks him about their life together and he shares more of their story, his eyes glistening with every thought of her. He shares how he looks forward to being with her again one day.

**2210**

Later that night as she is watching the nightly news the phone rings. It is the hospital switchboard. A patient in psychiatry is struggling and has asked the nurse to get someone to come in and pray with her. As it is her night to be on-call she turns off the TV, changes and heads back to the hospital. *(While the preceding accounts are fictional they are based on actual experiences of VIHA Chaplains - D.Colyn)*

## Partners in Holistic Care

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