

numa

caring for the spirit at nrgh

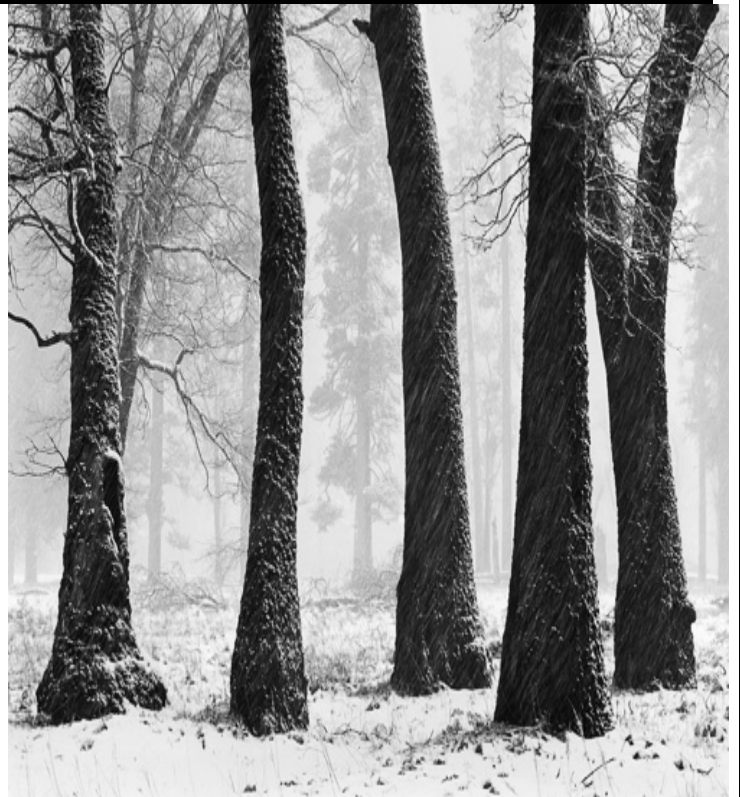
A Spirituality of Winter

Someone once said there are really only two seasons on the west coast; rainy and really rainy. That being said there is much to be learned by paying attention to the movement of the seasons. By noticing and reflecting on the changes in seasons we have the opportunity to care for our souls. The changes around us are signs inviting us to stop and pay attention to a bigger picture of life.

Spring, of course, is the favorite of many. This season with its bursting buds and new growth reminds us of fresh starts and new possibilities. Summer is the time of fullness and abundance. Summer's warmth, long days and fruits remind us to enjoy life and appreciate all the good we have. Fall slows us down and pulls our spirits inward. Days are shortened and life all around stores energy for the next season. Fall moves us to hunker down, focusing energy on school, work and family.

And then there is winter. On the coast our winters can be constantly dark and wet. In winter there is little of the lush growth of spring, there is little fruit and no harvest. If unchecked this season can negatively affect our moods and outlook on life. As the castle guard in Shakespeare's Hamlet noted, "Tis bitter cold and I am sick in heart."

While winter can make us 'sick in heart' we can learn much as we reflect on this season. For one thing winter teaches us that a season of inactivity is not a bad thing. Winter is an essential part of the seasonal cycle. It is part of the larger cycle of birth, death and rebirth. This truth is helpful to remember when we hit winter moments in our lives. When we find ourselves in any sort of dismal season we can remember that it is not the end. If we are hospitalized or going through a grey period we can remember that 'spring is coming'. The winter times of our lives are also part of a bigger cycle.



Winter also helps us notice with greater clarity the bright parts of life. It is on the darkest coldest nights that the stars appear the brightest and it is against the backdrop of dark grass that the first crocus pops out in a blaze of color. Similarly it can be in the moments of approaching death that a mother finally sees how much her daughter means to her or in the coldness of a new diagnosis that we see who are closest friends are. Could it be that the winters of our lives is where we notice life the most?

Christmas Mourning

This can be a cruel season for those who have lost a loved one in the last while. This season can bring back memories and reminders that loved ones are no longer here. The holidays also involve expectations about getting together with family, about special meals or special gifts, and special traditions.

Even when we find a way to cope with everyday life the holiday season can bring a renewed sense of these dreadful feelings of grief. So what can we do?

Plan ahead: Sit down quietly and think about what you can handle comfortably. Figure out what you can do, what you can scale down on and what you can skip.

Change or Modify: Change can make things less painful. Consider doing things differently this year. Have someone else cook. Go to a different venue to celebrate.

Let people know: Tell your friends and family just what you can, and can't, do. You'll find that others are only too happy to take over some of your tasks, or to assist you in those you choose to keep. Talk about the person who has died. Others often avoid mentioning your loved one's name in an attempt to avoid hurting you, so be honest with them and teach them that it is a more painful not to talk about your memories.

Ceremonies: Commemorate your loved one with a special ceremony. Make them part of your traditional holiday celebration by including them in your family dinner - lay an extra place setting, light a special candle, make a small speech and raise your glass in a toast. Consider involving children in this new tradition.

Do something for others: You may find comfort in doing something for others. Take the money you would have spent on a gift for your loved one and donate it to a charity in his or her name.

Excerpts from an article by Susanna Duffy

Faiths In Focus: Judaism

Judaism is a monotheistic religion (belief in one God) that began approximately 4000 years ago. The sacred texts of Judaism are the "TaNaKh" [the Law, Prophets and Writings] often called the Old Testament (by Christians). These texts present a written account of the people of Israel as they responded to the call of God toward worldwide peace and justice. The family is often the focal point for religious observances, education, and identity.



The sacred day, the Sabbath, begins on Friday sundown and continues to Saturday sundown and is observed by worship at the synagogue and through family events. Other sacred days include Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Passover (Festival of Freedom), and Hanukkah (Festival of Lights).

Healthcare issues for Jewish patients may include special requirements for diet (e.g. kosher foods) and end of life care (e.g. visitation by rabbi, no autopsy & special preparation of body for burial).

(Faiths in Focus will appear regularly in numa to educate about different faiths and related healthcare issues.)

Blessing For Cleaning Staff

*as you
sweep and mop
dust and wipe
lug and haul
battle bugs
and clean up blood*

may you remember

*that the most
necessary thing of all in a hospital*

is that it should be clean

and because you make it so

*we can all do our work
and patients can heal*

Accessing Spiritual Care

Spiritual Care is available 24/7 to patients, their families and staff. To contact Spiritual Care call local 4022 or 250.713.3883. The chaplain is on site Monday - Friday from 830-1630.

For after hours spiritual care contact the switchboard for an available on-call chaplain. For clergy from a particular faith tradition consult the *Religious Organization Directory* available on each unit.

numa (Greek for "Spirit") is the quarterly newsletter of Spiritual Care Services at the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. To contact the NRGH chaplain call 250-755-7691 (ext. 4022) or email Darren.colyn@viha.ca