

Chaplains Association of Ohio Conference: 11/4/2022

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Love and Fear by Michael Leunig

There are only two feelings, love and fear:
 There are only two languages, love and fear:
 There are only two activities, love and fear:
 There are only two motives, two procedures,
 two frameworks, two results, love and fear,
 Love and fear.

Our Morning Together:

9:00 – Welcome and Reflection and Meditation
 9:15 – First Covid Spring
 9:40 – Breakout Rooms- Conversation
 10:00 – What Arose in You?
 10:20 – Break
 10:30 – Large Group Sharing and Barriers to Restoration
 10:50 - Restoring & Rehumanizing Ourselves
 11:50 – Wrap up

Overview of the Morning:

Invitation to tell your story, to listen to a colleague, to gain a few ideas.

Coming out of Covid, sort of. What happened, how it landed in you?
 What learnings arose?
 Explore Rehumanizing: Healing the Healer, Self-compassion, Restoration of self.
 What undermines this restoration?
 Some dynamics & strategies that help restore/heal/become a whole human being.

Meditation: Hand Massage/Grounding the body:

9:15: The First Covid Spring: 3/13/20:

Story about the beginning.
 Exposed to Covid – what Covid exposed in you.

WE'VE ALL BEEN EXPOSED

a poem by Sarah Bourns (Minister in NYC)

We've all been exposed.
 Not necessarily to the virus (maybe...who even knows).
 We've all been exposed BY the virus.

Corona is exposing us.
 Exposing our weak sides.
 Exposing our dark sides.
 Exposing what normally lays far beneath the surface of our souls,
 hidden by the invisible masks we wear.
 Now exposed by the paper masks we can't hide far enough behind.

Naming our experience. How was it for you?

What happened to you?

Lost job, sent home, limited in work area, protect vulnerable chaplains.
Donning & Doffing, Local ministers, Anointings, Phone calls, Video End of life,
Alone & Team-mates, Anti-maskers, Anti-vaxers, Worshipping communities,
Handle religious holidays....

The First Covid Winter: 11/13/20:

Double the numbers, Staff wearing out, running on empty, Conflict with
organization, Vax or get fired, Accumulated Grief after grief!

9:40: Breakout Rooms: What was it like for you?

Simply tell, listen.

10:00 Group Conversation: What Response Arose in you?

What new things arose in those days? Like Immune response.

Inner/Spiritual responses & Salient Features?

Losses and Gains.

What suffering? Isolations? Limitations?

Burnout? Compassion Fatigue? Fed Up? Getting Out?

Supportive Partnerships/ Relationships & those Lost.

Adaptation to your service/ministry

New skills learned- phoning, Zooming, Ipads/tablets.

Realizations about Spiritual Care and your skills

What's not true for you any longer?

What's still true for you even now?

10:20 Break

10:30 Large Group Sharing & Conversation Continued

What have you learned?

How are you NOW? How are you moving forward? (THE List)

What do you say YES to now, that you said NO to before?

What do you say NO to now, that you said YES to before?

What undermines Restoration/Re-Humanizing?

Healing the Healer, Self-Compassion, Self-Care, Restoration...

Culture that is: Death Phobic and Grief Illiterate. (You are counter-cultural)

Addicted to Competence, Progress, and Improvement.

Fear, ego, stress, overwhelm, survival instinct – developmental regression.

Culture of cynicism, sarcasm, skepticism: Modern Holy Trinity

Cynical: intentions are self-serving. (dog-snarling)

Sarcasm: “tear the flesh”

Skepticism: questions the truth of something.

10:50 Restoring & Rehumanizing Yourself:

The Demands of our Calling to Serve:

- What our calling demands of us:
- Called to be present and witness the joy and suffering of those we serve.
- Called to do the labor of maintaining a heart that is open, strong, clear, present.
This requires an ongoing commitment to practice... Daily! Practice!
Consequences for this...

Re-Humanize Yourself:

Story: "I don't know how you do what you do?!?"

Consider This:

1. How did this path begin for you? Who stood at the door of your first steps?
2. How do you do this? What is it that allows you to enter into this work?
3. How does this "land" in you?
You must process this energy through your system.
4. What do you do to re-humanize yourself? What do you actually do?
What works? What helps you?

Story: My Old Man Friend

Practices:

➔Doing the Grief Work:

The emotional reaction to change in a familiar pattern of behavior.

- Being honest about our own pain & doing the work to process the suffering.
- We are processing plants NOT storage tanks.
- Some ride home in your trunk. (Dan Rossbach)
- Dr. Frat's observation. (Gravitational field/orbit)

➔Body Awareness: Three goals: Body, Mind, Mind-Body.

➔Mindfulness, meditation practices, other holistic methods utilize some kind of "anchor" to focus attention and practice.

Breath, emotions, visualizations.

➔Relaxation Response: Dr. Herbert Benson

"The relaxation response is a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress... and the opposite of the fight or flight response."

- What activates relaxation?
Rosary, knitting, cooking, rocking a baby, yoga, tai chi...
- Washing Hands.
Go to sink, turn on water: release what's just completed.
Wash hands, massage hands, notice the physical sensation Now.
Dry hands, think about the next moments.
- Body scan. Just notice without trying to change or improve.
The anchor: body awareness, e.g. simple physical sensation.

➔ Domains of Posttraumatic Growth. (Trauma Informed Care)

Tedeschi & Calhoun- UNC-Charlotte

80's & 90's: I'm better for having gone thru this.

Notion of Growth vs Resilience (Bounce back, a return to previous state)

Manage adversity well, ability to go on.

The experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises.

Noticing "I'm different", how the trauma was transformative, stretched.

6 arenas that help scaffold growth within self, and help grow in others.

Not just enduring trauma, but growth and change.

How we make meaning now and going forward.

1. Appreciation of Life:

Increased appreciation for life in general.

Change in sense of what's important.

Awareness of being blest – fortunate, 'being so lucky'

2. Relating to Others.

Closer, more intimate, meaningful relationships.

Shed irrelevant relationships.

Increase in social support. Increase in being a support to others.

Compassion for others we disagree with or those who share the same fate.

Value of community: we don't do well in isolation

3. Personal Strength

Awareness of, and increase in personal strength.

Sense that I can handle things.

Paradoxically: More awareness of being vulnerable.

Crisis works for me- some of us thrive with uncertainty.

4. New Possibilities

Reprioritization of values and priorities.

What actually matters to me, importance of the 'little things.'

New possibilities for individual identification

New possibilities for one's life or life path.

5. Spiritual Change

Growth of spiritual and existential matters

May include religious behaviors, may not!

See Self as small and Large at the same time.

See self as part of a whole.

Multiple on-ramps for spirituality.

6. Creativity (more recently named)

Art, music, poetry, writing, pottery, quilting.

Seeing the existing elements of life in new and novel ways.

- Carolyn Myss: why don't people heal? Trying to go back.
Must go forward, see oneself in future, having gone thru this suffering.
What will you look like, a year from now???

- Your Greatest Gift: To listen to the emotional response to a loss without interrupting, criticizing, judging, analyzing or interpreting!
Response: "I didn't know, thank you for telling me..."
 - Safe way, safe person, safe place.

- Story: My Brain Surgery

- Partnerships that help:
 - Whom do you have in your life? (2's & 3's) Not meant to journey alone!
 - This work is isolating, working alone, can't tell stories to everyone.
 - Who can you swear with – and not blush?
 - Connection! (Brene Brown's work)

- Journaling/Writing:
 - Journaling modeled as conversation, not monologue. See Ricchiuto.

- Do you have a Teacher?
 - Rabbi? Spiritual Director? Mentor? Trainer? Therapist? (Jesus doesn't count)
 - Are you a student, in any real manner?
 - Learning costs you – costs you what you know.
 - Like to learn, don't like to be taught. (Churchill)

- Forest Bathing.
 - Gentle, guided walks that support well-being through sensory immersion in forests and other naturally healing environments. In Japan it is called "shinrin yoku," which translates to "forest bathing."
 - Walk: less than 1 mile. 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours.

"we must love life before loving its meaning," as Dostoevski told us. We must love life, and some meaning may grow from that love. But "if love of life disappears, no meaning can console us."

References:

Association of Nature and Forest Therapy- Helpful video here.

<http://www.natureandforesttherapy.org/>

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Corona is exposing our addiction to comfort.
Our obsession with control.
Our compulsion to hoard.
Our protection of self.
Corona is peeling back our layers.
Tearing down our walls.
Revealing our illusions.
Leveling our best-laid plans.

Corona is exposing the gods we worship:
Our health
Our hurry
Our sense of security.
Our favorite lies
Our secret lusts
Our misplaced trust.

Corona is calling everything into question:
What is the church without a building?
What is my worth without an income?
How do we plan without certainty?
How do we love despite risk?
Corona is exposing me.
My mindless numbing
My endless scrolling
My careless words
My fragile nerves.

We've all been exposed.
Our junk laid bare.
Our fears made known.
The band-aid torn.
The masquerade done.

So what now?
What's left?
Clean hands
Clear eyes
Tender hearts.

What Corona reveals, God can heal.
Come Lord Jesus. Have mercy on us.