

Soul Matters

Nourishing the Soul While Advancing the Well-being of Our Community

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Pastoral Care Services DeKalb Medical

Main

2701 N. Decatur Rd.
Decatur, Georgia

Hilandale

2801 DeKalb Medical Pkwy.
Lithonia, Georgia

Downtown Decatur

450 N. Candler St.
Decatur, Georgia

Chaplain Staff

McClellon D. Cox, D.Min., BCC
Director
404.501.5149 Main

Joyce C. Young, M.Div., BCC
Chaplain Associate
404.501.1772 Main
404.501.8132 Hillandale

T.J. McGiffert, M.Div., BCC
Chaplain Associate
404.501.1785 Main
404.501.8132 Hillandale

Franchesco Currie, D.Min., PRN
Carolyn Jackson-Edeh, M.Div., PRN
404.501.5148 Main

Chaplain Office

Main Number
404.501.5148

It is our mission to nourish the soul of the hospital, assisting any endeavor that advances the well-being of our community.

Hope is Life

At a memorial service recently, a survivor wiped away a tear, hugged me and said, "Hope is like breath. We need it to survive."

This is true, and yet explaining hope is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall! It is a natural force, a mysterious energy (an instinct, perhaps) which is the unknown integer in every equation. Scriptures and saints, poetry and metaphors have tried to explain it, but hope can't be deconstructed in such a way that we can look at its parts scientifically and say, "Ah, this is exactly what hope is." With hope, the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

Hope is so universal and so natural. Even in the worst of situations human beings are searching for something to ground us in hope for the future. The specific sacred story that drives the hope will usually differ from individual to individual and from situation to situation. But we are so prone to form hope in our souls that it is a normal reflex for us. It is like breath. We

need hope to survive.

"Totally without hope one cannot live. To live without hope is to cease to live. Hell is hopelessness. It is no accident that above the entrance to Dante's hell is the inscription: 'Leave behind all hope, you who enter here.'"

*Jürgen Moltmann,
Theology of Hope*

In spiritual care we treat a person's hope with urgency, never to take it away, and only sometimes to adjust it. This is why spiritual care is vital when the threat of terminal illness, loss or limitation become a part of the picture of health for patients and families. Chaplains have conversations to assess the focus of religious hope and to support, carry out, and carry on those elements as a patient grows into their hope for restored health.

Outcomes can be affected by the patient's hope and of those around them. When the prognosis is not good it is the patient who lives in hope who typically has the most satisfying outcome. Hope makes a difference.

Hope, through prayer and other spiritual exercises, is medicine for the soul.

—T.J. McGiffert
Chaplain Associate, DeKalb Medical



Welcome PRN Chaplains!



Franchesco Currie, D.Min.



Carolyn Jackson-Edeh, M.Div.

Still Keeping Hope Alive

One of the best examples of hope I remember is from the film, “Shawshank Redemption.” A while after being in the prison, Andy Dufresne, sent to Shawshank prison after being wrongly convicted of killing his cheating wife and her lover, is assigned to the prison library. While there, he writes letters to the state authorities requesting funds for books for their inadequate prison library. After many letters, he finally gets a response. He receives a small amount of money and boxes of used books and records. Andy is ecstatic to discover among the collection a copy of Mozart’s “The Marriage of Figaro.”

In one scene Andy locks a guard in the bathroom while he remains in the library office. He puts on the record player a selection from “The Marriage of Figaro,” then proceeds to broadcast the selection over the public address system. There, the lilting sound of a soprano duet soars throughout all the prison. All are mesmerized by the aria. Andy’s friend, Red, later comments: “I have no idea to this day what them two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is I don’t want to know. Some things are better left unsaid. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made these walls dissolve away, and for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free.”

Here we have an express of hope, filled with beauty and soaring harmonies. And for a moment, there was the hope of freedom, a brief remembrance that life is more than the pain and suffering of a prison.

Andy is sent to the hole for two weeks for this infraction, but upon returning from solitary confinement, he says that Mr. Mozart had kept him company while in the hole. The inmates scoff that anyone was in the cell with him. To that, Andy taps his head and heart and says that the Mozart’s music was inside of him. There was a place inside of him the prison could never lock up, and that place is called hope.

Hope! Even in the bleakest of places hope abounds. Hope keeps us afloat. If we lose it, we despair. Our task is to be able to keep hope alive, even in the direst of circumstances. Hope heals. With it, we are able to sing the Lord’s song even in undesirable situations. As we see in Andy’s case, keeping hope alive is not easy. It is not easy for any of us. Nonetheless, we must! In our work, in our lives, through good times and bad, we must keep hope alive.

Excerpt from the article, “There’s A Song in My Heart,”
by McClellon D. Cox, Director, Pastoral Services, DeKalb Medical

A Living Hope

While working in one of our hospitals, I encountered a young woman on the elevator. As is my usual custom, I asked “how has your day been?” She shook her head and burst into tears. When she was finally able to catch her breath, she detailed a list of things that were off track in her life: job issues, child care issues, relationship issues, money issues. She felt that there was no hope for a breakthrough and she felt alone. I asked if she was thinking of hurting herself and she replied “no” because of her care for her children. Yet, the theme of hopelessness kept coming up.

I got her email address promising to share any job leads that came my way to help her at least sort through options for other employment. That encounter stuck with me because of her age and the tremendous responsibility that weighed on her. Her hopelessness felt palpable; it was real. I thought of others, whom I may not encounter, that are in the same place, the same space. I remembered the question in Jeremiah that asked, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” In other words, is there no relief from the burdens or the challenges that plague us? Is the present adversity as good as it gets? We must purpose to resurrect the hopeless. We must purpose to be an encourager and be open to receiving encouragement. That’s hope!

Hope lives!! Hope may be obscured by clouds of doubt, fear and dismay but hope lives! There are times in our lives that we are juggling so many things at once that we forget

about our living hope. In Christian circles, we believe the living hope is in the Christ. Yet those outside of Christianity still have hope. Hope defined is the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best. I would suggest to you that we live in hope. The interdependency of humankind presents a premise that we are connected in the spirit and that we bolster the dreams and desires of those around us. I don’t know that any of us is so fearless that we are doubt-free. Yet we must be assured that as long as there is hope there is life. Hope can refresh the dead thing in our spirit and cause a revival.

People have worked at DeKalb for many years struggling to make ends meet. I was so happy when our CEO, Robert Wilson, announced that every employee would be given a new, higher minimum wage. HALLELUJAH!!! And while the increase in the minimum wage is not a treasure trove for the hourly employees, it gives a new spark of hope for the days ahead. A decent wage is a living hope.

Faith and hope are closely linked, but different. Hope is a precursor to faith. Hebrews 11:6 says that “without faith, it is impossible to please God.” While faith is the belief and trust in something that you cannot see, hope is presuming that there is something to even believe in; hang our hats on if you will.

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DeKalb Medical Chaplains provide a message of hope and inspirational music during the annual Perinatal Bereavement Service held on October 14, 2017.

(A Living Hope, continued from pg. 3)

It is the belief in what could be. For instance when your finances are low and you have faith that God will make a way, hope gives you a glimpse of the pathway and the door that could show you a way out of the problem. Proverbs 13:12: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."

The next time I saw the young woman mentioned earlier, she had a new attitude and a smile in her spirit. Why? She found renewed hope in the possibility of better pay and eventually a better life. Dr. Emil Brunner said, "What oxygen is for the lungs, such is hope for the meaning of human life. Take oxygen away and death occurs through suffocation, take hope away and humanity is constricted through

lack of breath; despair and hopelessness sets in." When hope is gone, life begins to dry up. Most of us see the story in Ezekiel 37 as a story about dry bones. Yet, Ezekiel is a story of hope. Ezekiel 37:11 says, "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off." But the Lord instructed Ezekiel to prophesy to the people of Israel that "change is coming." For each of us, there are better days ahead. With the help of the Creator, we live with the power of hope always surrounding us. Our circumstances may not see immediate change but hope informs us that there is a way out. Rev. Dr. Robert Schuller said, "let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future." Following that directive amplifies a truth that HOPE LIVES!

—Joyce Young
Chaplain Associate, DeKalb Medical



Don't Miss!

**Holiday Caroling
December 6, 7, 8**

**Memorial Service
February 2018 (date TBD)**

HOW TO CONTACT A CHAPLAIN

There are a variety of ways to contact a chaplain at DeKalb Medical:

Upon admission of patient

Indicate that a chaplain visit is preferred on the admission order requisition.

During patient's hospital stay, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

Do any one of the following:

- Submit a computer-generated requisition for a chaplain visit,
- Call the chaplain office at 404-501-5701 or 404-501-5148,
- Page the chaplain directly assigned to your unit, or
- Call the nurse manager and ask to request chaplain visit.

After hours (5pm-8am), holidays, and weekends

Page the chaplain on call. On call schedules are faxed to each department on a monthly basis.