

Sacred Stories

As CommonSpirit Health, we make the healing presence of God known in our world by improving the health of the people we serve, especially those who are vulnerable, while we advance social justice for all.

Sacred Stories convey ways our mission is being lived out by the gifted people in our ministry. We invite you to use these stories for inspiration, as a meeting reflection, or to encourage discussion with your team.

Prayer of Surrender at the End of Life

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...”
– Ecclesiastes 3:1

TEXT

A young woman breathing with the help of a ventilator lay unconscious in the Intensive Care Unit. For many days, her mother and other family members participated in multiple conversations and interdisciplinary conferences. Doctors gave a very poor prognosis and recommended comfort measures. The patient’s mother was a faith-filled Christian who passionately insisted she could not give up on her daughter.

The chaplain had built trust with the family. One day, the chaplain shared that a prayer of surrender with raised, open palms can have a profound visceral effect. He demonstrated the contrast between closed, clenched fists and open palms. The family was interested in participating in such a prayer around the bed of their loved one.

The chaplain gave thanks for God’s Spirit being present in the midst of all circumstances; offered surrender and prayer for God’s highest good for the

young woman; and acknowledged that an answer to their prayers could mean complete cure or passage into Heaven. In the midst of the shared silence with raised hands and open palms, the patient’s mother was able to say, “Not my will, but thy will be done.”

It was a bittersweet breakthrough that brought new peace to a mother’s fierce, dedicated love, and offered freedom. The act of surrender with raised, open palms helped this mother loosen the tight grip she thought she needed to maintain in order to advocate for her daughter. This began a new conversation about what the young woman herself would want, and her mother was able to let go.

Some time later, the mother returned to the ICU to thank the staff for the care her daughter received and the support that she had been given.

Submitted by

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SACRED STORY

Take a moment to experience the contrast between tightly clenching your fists, and gently raising your open hands in receptivity. Try this as you think about a dilemma you are facing.

What does “surrender” mean to you? How does one’s physical posture help or hinder a person’s practice of surrender?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION