CommonSpirit

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.

Compassion Inclusion Integrity Excellence Collaboration

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.

What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?

TEXT

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
– 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7 NIV

SACRED STORY

Though I've been a singer all my life, there was a time when I was a certified nursing assistant. Singing has been life-giving since I was a little boy and sang with my seven brothers; my father encouraged this gift. I often sing as I go through my day and don't think too much about it.

A while back, a patient whom I will call Claire came to the floor where I worked. She was a slight, quiet woman. We chatted as I settled her in her room. I must have carried a tune or two while I was working. Three days later, Claire was my patient again. She told me, "You're always so cheerful. I love to hear you sing." Though called away to another patient, I promised to return to sing.

When I returned, Claire's husband was in the room. She asked me to sing whatever came to mind. I love old spirituals, so I sang, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Tears came to their eyes. They asked for another song, and I sang, "What are You Doing for the Rest of Your Life?" Claire and her husband held hands and looked deeply into each other's eyes. I slipped out of the room.

Continued on next page...

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Continued from previous page...

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SACRED STORY CONTINUED

When I came to work the next day, the charge nurse asked me to see Claire. Again, her husband was with her. Stuttering as she spoke, Claire asked if I would sing, "When the Saints Go Marching In" at her memorial service. I was shocked, but managed to say yes. She died two weeks later.

I knew that Claire was terminally ill, but there were so many other things I did not know. I did not know that the spiritual I sang was a favorite of her husband.

I did not know the depth of the couple's love for each other, or that "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life" was the story of their love. I did not understand that God was using my gifts to speak His love to them and provide a final affirmation of their love for each other. I just went through my day as I always do – with song, prayer, and an open heart.

From the Sacred Stories Archive

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What gifts and skills do you see making a difference to the people we serve?

What talents do you contribute to the healing ministry?