Spiritual, Not Religious
A Path for Connection and Comfort

Chaplain Kristie Zahn | April 2017

The Human Experience:
The "Big" Questions, The Search For Meaning, Purpose, and Belonging

- Who am I?
- How did I get here?
- Why am I here?
- What is my life's purpose?
- What do I value, believe, and find meaningful?
- Is there a "God"?
- Where is God?
- What happens when I die?
- An emerging question: "Can I live a meaningful life without religion; grace without "God"?"

Vision For This Workshop

Begin to understand and foster equal respect for individuals who are "religiously unaffiliated" in order to more effectively offer spiritual care to those who are "Spiritual, but not Religious", and "None/Not Religious".

Intention

- Examine themes that inform those who declare themselves unaffiliated to a traditional religion, or the Nones/Not Religious.
- Learn various ways to approach, initiate, assess, and offer spiritual care to patients/individuals who find the sacred beyond traditional religion, or who have a secular view of life without a spiritual identity.
Topics We Will Explore

- Examine Trends/Explore Common Themes Implications for chaplains
- Spiritual, but Not Religious... Meaning, Connection, Hope; How best to offer spiritual care that resonates with SBNR...
- Nones/Not Religious... Meaning, Connection, Hope; How best to offer spiritual care to those who are NOT spiritual or religious...
- Building Bridges... How do we stand in integrity with our Faith Tradition AND embrace an "inclusive" ministry with SBNR and NONES...

Beginners Mind: A Cup of Tea

- Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.
- Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.
- The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"
- "Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

"The Lord is my shepherd" is a beautiful psalm, but people are tired of being sheep."
"Thomas Moore

"My Religion is very simple; my religion is kindness"
"The Dalai Lama

"Regard Heaven as your Father, Earth as your Mother, and All that lives are your Brothers and Sisters."
"Native American

- One in four Americans no longer identify with any particular religious tradition (one in three for American Adults under 30)
- Between 660,000 and 700,00 American per year in the last decade have left religion, making "no religion" the second largest "religious" group in the USA.

Despite The Moving Away From Organized Religion, Something Else Is Happening

- Surveys taken in the USA, Australia and Germany suggest that 15% of the population have had NDEs.
- Public Religion Research Institute report 65% of American score high on a measure of "spiritual connection".
- 6 in 10 people say they believe in God with a high degree of certainty. (If you include those who believe in "Higher Power" the numbers go up to 8 in 10).
- Atheists are often quick to admit that Mindfulness, Enlightenment, and Spiritual Awakening are possible/desirable for people separate from "theism".

People Believe, But They Believe Differently Than They Once Did: A Spiritual Revolution Is Afoot

- Movement towards claiming personal agency in living our lives. Individualism.
- We "go local" with food, lifestyle. We tailor delivery of news, music, entertainment...it's a "me" mentality. On line "friends".
- In every arena, we customize and personalize our lives, creating environments and experiences to make meaning and express our uniqueness.
- "God" is far more personal and more "personalized"; much closer at hand than once imagined.
- No longer "The Man Upstairs". Current references include The "Spark" of the Divine within. "The Kingdom of God within" "Created in the likeness of the Creator".

Spiritual Revolution:

God and the World

Not "Above and Beyond" but "Integral to the whole of creation".

- God is not the "Eternal Threatener", God is the "Ultimate Participant".
- Instead of God watching from afar and judging, God is inherent in life itself.
- "Everything is holy for those who have learned to see." -Rohr

Major shift in how people understand "God", and how they practice "Faith"

- A re-birth is happening; you can hear it as our earth groans for mercy, as the oppressed, marginalized, and poor push for dignity and economic justice.
- It is time for the church to wake up.

"Tlease Bebion" "Graveled"
SEEKING A RELIGION OF ONE’S OWN: Creating a Personal Spirituality in a Secular World
Thomas Moore

- People are seeking “experiential knowing” vs theoretical instruction or interpretation from an authority.
- Fewer are willing to do whatever the priest, rabbi, or minister tells them; they struggle to find meaning in traditional rite, ritual, and prayers.
- Many question practices that feel like “exclusion” vs “inclusion”.
- Many are “wounded” from a “hurtful” church.
- Others want to hide from the “shame of judgment”.

Many are turned off by Extremism & Routine-ism

https://www.ted.com/talks/sharon_brous_it’s_time_to_reclaim_and_reinvent_religion

Theological Visionaries

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; A Sacred Milieu: “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” “Divine radiating from the depths of matter”.
- Paul Tillich: A Theology of Beingness: “The courage to be is the courage to accept oneself, in spite of being unacceptable”
- Richard Rohr: “One God, All-Vulnerable, All-Embracing, & All-Given to you and me”

Return To A Mystical Experience of the Divine

- The Enlightenment You Seek Already Dwells Within
- God is Found In Imperfection
- From Profound Suffering Comes Great Wisdom/Joy
- Contemplation Means Practicing Heaven Now
- To Discover The Truth, You Must Become The Truth
- The Mystical Path Is A Celebration Of Paradox
- When You Are Transformed, Others Are Transformed

Rohr, “What the Mystics Know”
Resourcement involves a “return to the authoritative sources” of Christian faith, for the purpose of rediscovering their truth and meaning in order to meet the critical challenges of our time.

• A return to Mystical, Contemplative Theology?
• The Merging of Science and Spirituality?
• Indigenous Rite, Ritual, Core Truths?

What’s new, what’s different?
• Can we “nurture the baby” while we “recycle the bath water”?
• Can we “translate inner transcendence into outward expression”

Pause for Discussion:
Accepting this shift in understanding “God” and how the “Spiritual but Not Religious” or the “Nones” practice “Faith”, what challenges do you face as a chaplain in your ministry; in your own personal faith tradition?
How Do We As Chaplains Assess, Initiate, and Offer Spiritual Care to SBNR?

Start with the Basics:
Observe, Connect, Support, Intervention, Closure.

- Mindful Presence (ASSESS)
- Active Listening (ASSESS)
- Relevant, Relational Questions (INITIATE)
- Inclusive Prayer/Blessing (CARE)
- Personal Empowerment, Self Care (CARE)

Mindful Presence; Assess

LENS OF SPIRITUAL CARE: ADJUST YOUR FRAME OF REFERENCE for the SBNR:
- TRANSCENDENT DIMENSION: The conscious self into regions of the unconscious; emphasis upon the well-being of the “mind-body-spirit”, the interior life of the individual.
- MEANING and PURPOSE in LIFE: Life is deeply meaningful/personal existence has purpose.
- MISSION in LIFE: Sense of vocation, a calling, a destiny to fulfill.
- SACREDNESS of LIFE: Life is infused with sacredness, a sense of awe, reverence in nonreligious settings.
- SPIRITUAL vs. MATERIAL VALUES: Ultimate satisfaction is found in spiritual, not material.
- ALTRUISM, IDEALISM: Committed to the betterment of the world; A sense of social justice.
- COMPASSIONATE UNIVERSALISM and INTERCONNECTEDNESS: What I do, what I believe, affects everything, everyone?

Thomas Moore “A Religion of One’s Own”

CENTER YOUR AWARENESS & ENERGY TO BE FULLY PRESENT:
- SELF AWARE: What are your “non verbals” communicating?
- INTUITION: Be still, and listen to your inner wisdom.
- VIBRATION: How are you holding your energetic presence?

Active Listening (ASSESS)

- Clearing the Emotions, Finding Depth; Use Humor and Humanity to “Open the Door/Make Connection”
- Invitation to hear their story. Learn more about the patient as a person.
- How do they experience wonder, awe or the sacred in their life.
- What offers them Comfort? Support? How does the patient make meaning of what they are experiencing?
Relevant, Relational Questions (INITIATE)

• Tell me how you are feeling.
• Tell me about the last time you felt well. Where were you? What were you doing?
• What are you most grateful for?
• Share with me a memory of a time you were most happy.
• How do you feel about being in the hospital?
• How does your family and friends feel about your illness?
• What do your family and friends love about you?
• What worries you the most?
• What experiences fill you with peace?
• How do you deal with things you can’t change?
• What things, people, or activities give you peace of mind and restore you?
• Do you believe in God, or a higher presence in your life? Tell me about that relationship.
• How does your God speak to you?
• What is sacred in your life?
• Do you have any rituals or practices that center or ground you?
• Do you pray? How do you pray?
• What do you need most in your life right now?
• What do you think happens when you die; how do you want to be remembered?
• What would be “heaven” for you?
• How can I best support your spiritual needs?

Inclusive Prayer/Blessing (CARE)

• Hand to heart blessing
• Two hand, heart & belly
• Self compassion; self hug
• Guided meditation, symbols, metaphors
• Music/song/poetry
• Healing Presence
• Aromatherapy
• Inclusive prayer; mantra; gratitude
• Sacred object; anchor

Personal Empowerment (CARE)

• Practice acceptance. Stop comparing yourself to others and learn to embrace the person you are.
• Declutter your space. Living or working in a cluttered space can create a feeling of chaos within. Get rid of stuff that no longer serves you.
• Pamper yourself. Simple self-care techniques like taking a walk in nature, a nice warm bath, or prioritizing quality sleep are all ways of respecting your mind-body-spirit.
• Learn to let go. Accept that you cannot “save” everyone. Learn to establish healthy boundaries.
• Get comfortable with “no” time.” Treat yourself. Every now and then, pause to recharge.
• Take a tech time-out. Take time to “unplug” without gadgets to get back in touch with yourself.
• Start your day with a positive affirmation. Begin each day by asserting something positive.
• Learn forgiveness. Learn to forgive yourself.
• Have fun. Life doesn’t have to be so serious. Take time to play.
• Learn to say no. Saying no makes room for yes. Set boundaries for yourself. If you are not able to show yourself any respect, why should others?

Practicing self-care is something that takes very little time but it requires intention. Be compassionate and gentle with yourself. Take time for self-care.
Spiritual, but Not Religious

Main Themes:
• One with God as an active participant in the world, co-creating “reality” with all its beauty and pain through “free will”.
• God is a loving God, and the world is heaven on earth.
• God is a numinous presence that animates the world; Grace; Holy Spirit.

Soft, gentle ministry of inclusiveness:
• Invoke the “Divine Source of All”.
• Offer Blessing vs Prayer.
• Meet the person where they are at, with compassion, non judgment and presence.

None/Not Religious
Meaning and Belonging In A Secular World

How Do We As Chaplains Assess And Offer Spiritual Care Nones/Not Religious?

Start with the Basics:
Observe, Connect, Support, Intervention, Closure.
• Mindful Presence (ASSESS)
• Active Listening (ASSESS)
• Relevant, Relational Questions (INITIATE)
• Present Focused Tools/Techniques to Cope (CARE)
• Personal Empowerment, Self Care (CARE)
MINDFUL PRESENCE
Assess

Lens Of Spiritual Care: Adjust Your Frame
Of Reference; Nones/Not Religious:
• The Comforts of Science: Answers for the
  meaning of life, comfort in the face of difficulty.
• The "pull" of Here and Now: Becoming Mindful
  and Accepting Responsibility for Choices.
• Ritual Without Religion: Marking passages,
  expressing/containing emotions.
• Secular Grief: Naming emotions, finding
  connections.
• The Wonder of the Natural World: Awe,
  Inspiration.
• Morality and Civility: Social justice, reason,
  common sense.
• A sense of Belonging: Community, Commitment,
  Connection.

Center Your Awareness & Energy
To Be Fully Present:
• SELF AWARE: What are your "non-verbals"
  communicating?
• INTUITION: Be still, and listen to your inner
  wisdom.
• VIBRATION: How are you holding your
  energetic presence

Active Listening
Assess

• The Power of Presence, Humor, and Compassion:
  "Open the Door/Make Connection"
• Invitation to hear their story. Learn more about the
  patient as a person.
• What matters most NOW.
• What offers them Comfort? Support? How do you make
  meaning of what you are experiencing?

Relevant Questions

• Tell me about your illness?
• What are the Medical Staff telling you about your illness/prognosis?
• Are your family and friends supportive or challenging?
• Do you like having visitors in the hospital? Why, why not?
• When you are well, do you prefer being relaxed & alone, or busy &
  social?
• What makes you feel awe, wonder, or inspired?
• How do you manage stress in your life?
• How do you deal with things you can’t change?
• What do you value in life?
• What do you like to do for enjoyment when you are well?
• What fills you with fear?
• What do you do to calm your fears?
• What makes you laugh?
• Do you have a favorite author, poet, or inspirational quote or
  speaker?
• Why is it important that you heal and find a better quality of life?
• How can I best support you in finding comfort, a sense of relief,
  and peace of mind?
Present Focused Tools/Techniques To Cope

- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Art, Poetry, Music, Nature
- Personal Self Help/Self Reflection quotes

Personal Empowerment/Self Care

- Find your “Happy Place”
- Cultivate Resilience and Energy Management
- Letting Go and Moving On
- The Importance of Forgiveness, Thank you, I Love you, Now.
- Regaining a sense of hope.
- Get clear on what matters.
- Find meaning, connection with your life.

Nones/Not Religious

Main Themes:
- Influenced by relationships, science, literature, culture, society, personal experiences, politics, economics; open to awe, and wonder
- Often times are educated, seek meaning, connection, community and belonging
- Embrace personal values and a moral code of right and wrong
- Find identity in personal stories, roles, that which inspires.
- Affiliate to personal ritual/daily practices to manage stress. Katherine Ozment, “Grace without God”

Humanistic ministry of Compassion & Kindness:
- Self empowering tools, techniques to quiet the mind, manage stress, find connection and support
- Offer guided meditation, shift focus to gratitude, create space for reflection/life review; cultivate energy to heal.
- Focus on self-care, value clarification, support systems, “being affirmed”
How Do We As Chaplains Embrace an inclusive ministry AND stand in integrity with our own personal faith tradition?

• Do your own work of self-reflection; know your triggers, and have healthy boundaries. Know what pushes you into a place that does not feel genuine, and triage.
• Seek points of connection, common truths.
• Mind your ego, do not misrepresent, but allow yourself to listen with a beginners mind, and an open heart.
• Honor the power of presence, deep listening, nonjudgement, compassion and authenticity.
• Be mindful of your own self care.

What is Ours To Do?

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)  
The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” 27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” 28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ 36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” 37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Resources

• Grace without God, Katherine Ozment
• Grounded, Diane Butler Bass
• The Divine Dance, Richard Rohr
• A Religion of One's Own, Thomas Moore
• What the Mystics Know, Richard Rohr
• Becoming Wise, Krista Tippett
• The Handbook for Companioning the Mourner, Alan Wolfelt, Ph.d.
• Radical Acceptance, Tara Brach Phd
• Healing Spiritual Wounds Carol Howard Merritt
Life is a gift.
Never forget to enjoy and bask
in every moment you are in.
— Unknown —