

To: Rochester Regional Health Employees
From: Levi Gangi, Supervisor, Spiritual Care, RRH
Subject: Chaplain's Message: Facing Uncertainty

March x, 2020

Facing Uncertainty

At some point in your life, you've probably heard someone say "just take it one day at a time." It may have encouraged you or annoyed you, depending on the source. It's a common phrase, sometimes cliché, but in the midst of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic it is certainly relevant for us in health care. Each new day brings, well – we just don't know yet. We are used to long hours, and too much to do in too little time. But it is much more unsettling to face unknowns: How long will this last? How many people will fall ill? How do I protect my loved ones and still do my job to the best of my ability?

Uncertainty about the future is not something we as humans accept without difficulty. We plan the best we know how, we pursue physical and relational security, and unless our name is Edgar Allan Poe we don't spend too much time dwelling on our own mortality. And yet because we are firmly and irrevocably rooted in the *now*, uncertainty is always around us, lapping at our safe borders. But the human spirit has always endured through uncertainty in ways that inspire, defy reason, and make us proud. That human spirit exists in each one of us who now enter patient rooms, look for ways to help our co-workers, and work diligently at home in order to keep others safe.

As World War II dawned in 1939, bringing with it unknown hardships, destruction and sacrifice, British author C.S. Lewis wrote these words: "If humanity had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until we were secure, the search would never have begun." We can always find a reason to be afraid and to delay creativity, courage or compassion. But we in

health care have chosen a profession where we actively put others first – and those others are now looking to us to maintain hope and stay vigilant and in the midst of uncertainty.

None of us can do this alone. Despite the need for social distancing, I encourage you to find a way today to encourage your co-workers, to smile in the hallway or over your Skype meeting interface, and to dispel the fog of unknowing with words that bring hope, humor, and invite each of us to be stronger at the end of each uncertain day.

It is a privilege to serve beside you,
Levi

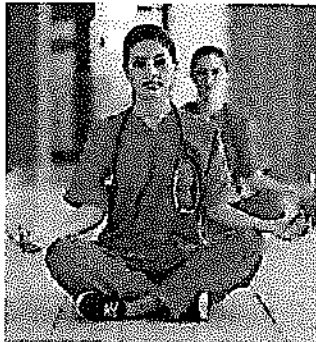
COVID-19

**ROCHESTER
REGIONAL HEALTH**

To: Rochester Regional Health Employees
From: Rev. Kelly Spahr, Pastoral Care Supervisor, Lifetime Home Care & Hospice
Subject: Chaplain's Message: Self-Care

April X, 2020

SELF-CARE IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE



I am honored to have Rev. Levi Gangi ask me to contribute to this weekly message. I have been a part of the Rochester Regional Health system for more than six years, both at Rochester General Hospital and at Lifetime Home Health & Hospice, and am grateful to have extraordinary spiritual care colleagues, in addition to my collegial relationships with administrators, doctors, nurses, social workers, cafeteria staff and environmental services, to name a few.

I wanted to spend a few paragraphs talking about the care and feeding of your body and spirit. Not #selfcare, but what *real* self-care might look like during a pandemic. We are all here on the front lines fighting COVID-19, but other illnesses have not stopped presenting themselves. We all continue to care for patients who have chronic, acute, or end-of-life conditions that persist and appear despite our unrelenting focus on the pandemic in front of us.

There is too much to do, not enough time to do it in, and despite our best intentions to stay focused and in the moment of dealing with what is right in front of us, it is easy for our minds to become distracted by worry, anxiety, and fear – for ourselves, for our co-workers, for our patients, and for our own families. Ignoring those nibbling and nagging thoughts and feelings will not make them go away.

I so appreciate the mindfulness suggestions at the bottom of the COVID-19 Toolkit, and encourage you to check them out. It may sound like crazy talk to spend time doing what may seem self-indulgent when we are being asked to do so much right now, but, just like we are taught by the flight attendant when we take a plane, in an emergency, it is necessary to put your own oxygen mask on first, before helping

the person next to you. We all risk compassion fatigue and burnout in this work, and never so much as right now, during this time of crisis.

Please remember that the chaplains across the system are available to support you during this time. If you need a caring ear, reach out to us. If you are able to squeeze a half hour into your schedule at 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, Bereavement Supervisor, Adrienne Daniels, MSW at Lifetime Care, has arranged for facilitated daily mindfulness opportunities via Skype.

We are all good at keeping busy, distracting ourselves and staying focused on the task at hand in healthcare. But what happens when there is a break in the action, and anxieties and worry rise to the surface? We can't run forever without wearing out.

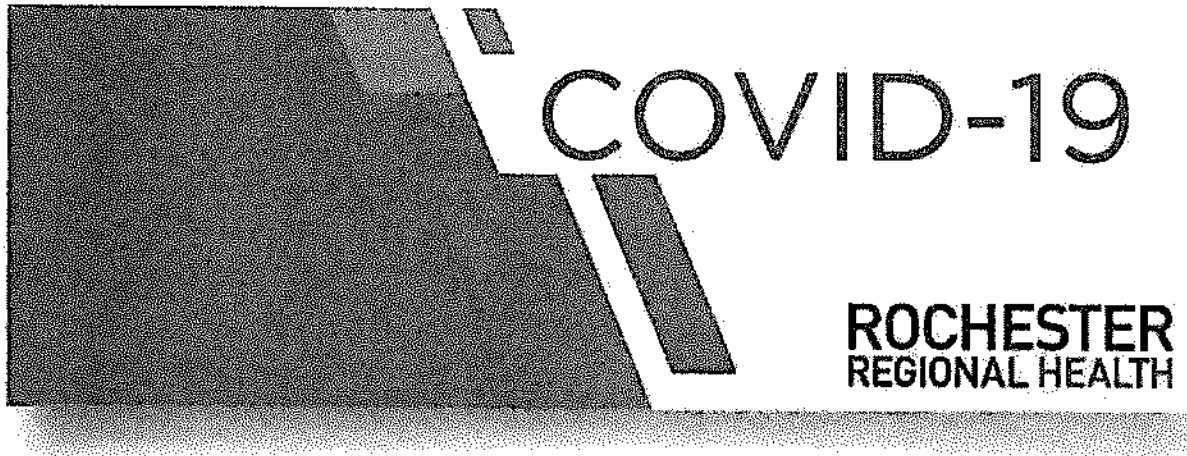
So take a minute. Lean into those feelings. Acknowledge them. Welcome them in. And then breathe them back out again. Get some sleep. Eat well. Do something you love (besides work!). If you can, hug your child or your partner or your mom. FaceTime or Skype with a friend. Read a book. Do a puzzle. Pray. Meditate.

And remember that you are not alone. We *are* in this together.

Rev. Kelly Spahr
Pastoral Care Supervisor
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A PRAYER FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

To those who care for us
When our bodies grow weak
For those using all their love and skill to keep the
vulnerable alive another day.
For those working without enough protection this
morning, without masks or gowns, re-using
yesterday's mask with a silent prayer that it still
works, or using only a bandana.
Who may be frightened of what is coming
Or who are already working around the clock
We send our deep love and gratitude.
May you be safe.
May you be well.
May your family be well.
May you be nurtured yourself by family and friends.
May you feel and know our wholehearted prayers
and appreciation.
We send our blessings.
—Rev. Florence Canlaw



To: Rochester Regional Health Employees
From: Christine Baker, Chaplain
Subject: Chaplain's Message: The Soul of Rochester Regional is Commitment.

The Soul of Rochester Regional Health



Here we are, some five months into this pandemic, and to some it feels as if it's been more like five years. It can be hard to imagine that a mere six months ago life was "normal." Nurses, techs, providers, etc. didn't need to wear hair coverings outside of the OR. And no one needed to don two pairs of gloves, a gown, a facemask, goggles, and a face shield just to walk into a patient's room. Any patient could have pretty much any visitor(s) they wanted, any time day or night. And, particular security/behavioral issues aside, no family member was ever told they could not visit their loved one. What's more, we didn't need to worry about bringing some deadly virus home to our families.

Once we were home, our options were almost limitless. We could go just about wherever and whenever we wanted. Our kids were in school, and we could blow out candles on our birthday cakes! We could attend worship services. Stores, gyms and restaurants, were all open for business. Was it really only five months ago?

My, how our worlds have changed! And with all these changes has come tremendous amounts of stress, of worry, of anger, and fear, and myriad other emotions. This summer has brought us racial and socioeconomic strife, and significant election drama. To paraphrase William Shakespeare, this truly seems to be our "Summer of Discontent."

And yet, for all of us here working in hospitals, clinics, labs, and medical offices, we are expected to continue to provide unparalleled care, compassion, and service. And from where I sit, we are continuing to do just that. Are we doing it perfectly? No. We are human, after all. But are we doing our very best to continue to give our very best? Yes, I do believe we are.

The "why" of what we continue to do is easy. We are committed, dare I say called, to this work of caring for people and doing what we can to bring them healing. It's the "how" of what we do that I believe makes Rochester Regional Health unique.

Within the Christian tradition, parishioners will speak of the "soul" of their particular church. One church may focus on overseas mission, providing care and supplies to Third World countries. Another may provide local mission, tending to the poor and disadvantaged of its own community. Yet another may focus on social justice or educational concerns. It is said that the focus of any particular church, synagogue, temple, or mosque defines its soul.

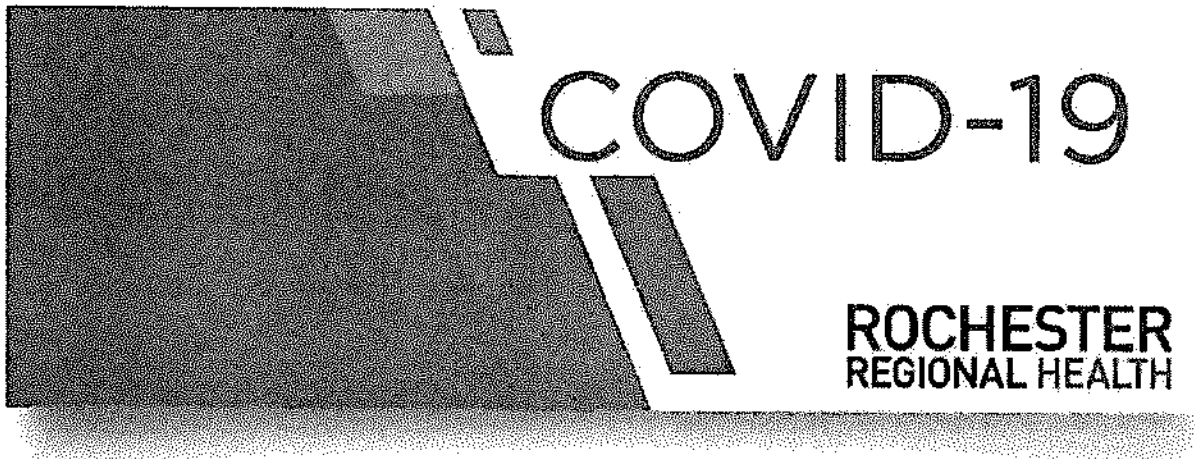
And what defines the soul of Rochester Regional Health? I believe we are defined by our commitment, our compassion, by dedication, and by hope. In my twenty years here I have seen Rochester General experience some significant crises. I was here the night Officer Tony DiPonzio was brought in, having been shot and nearly killed. Employees from every department, at every level were doing everything we could to find space for the many police officers gathered here to support their brother. Room arrangements were made, food arrangements, anything that needed to be done was done, willingly and efficiently. I remarked to one of our senior leaders at the time how amazing it was how everyone was coming together to do what needed to be done. His response to me was, "This is what we do, Chris." He was absolutely right. I've seen it happen over and over again. When crisis hits, we move into action. We do what we can to help those who come through our doors, and to help one another when crisis hits one of our own.

There is a spirit, a "soul," of Rochester Regional Health that in my experience is like no other health system's in this community, perhaps in this state. I am proud to be a part of it.

As we move through these days, weeks, months of COVID, I know we will do what needs to be done for the sake of our patients and their families, as well as for one another. To paraphrase Charles Dickens, these are the best of times and the worst of times. We are in the midst of the worst pandemic of our lives. We are the best at what we do.

Chris

Christine Baker is a Pastoral Care Chaplain at Rochester General Hospital



To: Rochester Regional Health Employees
From: Clif Genge, Palliative Care Chaplain, Rochester General Hospital
Subject: Chaplain's Message: The Heart of the Matter

May 28, 2020

The Heart of the Matter

As I reflected on the task of preparing this message, I recalled the words of a mentor: "Write from your heart, that's a powerful thing." And it hit me: It is all about the heart. Not the heart that our medical staff attends to with medicines and monitors, but the proverbial heart that we lean on for inspiration and strength. The heart that pours out, gives its all, that roars like a lion, that breaks for you and with you, that joins with others to overcome. You overcome so much every day – things I will never see, hear of, or know because you put them aside and get to work. I write this from the heart to share what I see, what I have learned, and to honor you and all you give every day.

What do I see?

I see you giving until there is nothing left and somehow finding more. I see you working with tears rolling down your cheeks. Extra protocols, precautions, steps, and procedures that seem to change all the time. Sometimes you may feel like you are running in sand—going places and doing things that make you feel uneasy or even frightened. But you keep going, keep doing your best.

Every day I see hearts crying out in pain, breaking with and for one another. This crisis has magnified our emotions and need for connection. It also has magnified our gratitude for one another, our teamwork and mutual support, our individual and collective strength. It has magnified how big our hearts are and how much they give every day.

Thank you for the huge heart you put into all that I see, even in the face of things I may never see.

What have I learned?

As much as we are individuals, we are all part of a collective whole that wants to be connected. Even the most solitary person cannot go through trials alone. We all long for connection in some way. The isolation and separation from COVID-19 have magnified this need, and you have responded to it in many wonderful ways—reaching out to families, facilitating calls, social media support, and more.

I have learned from our masks. When we all wear masks, it is hard to tell who is who. Sometimes I am afraid to call someone down the hall by name because I am not sure who they are. It reminds me how much more alike we are than different. The masks reveal that our similarities are vast and our differences few—and that makes us stronger. Our similarities provide a foundation on which we can build, but our differences are the materials we use to build a stronger whole.

I have learned that it is not one act that makes us great, but a collection of little things. Mother Teresa said: “Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love.” When people do things out of love, it adds to the greatness of our whole. Every day I am impressed by the little thoughtful things people are doing for each other—not because they have to or for personal gain, but from a heart of love.

Thank you for teaching me more about your heart and my own.

How do I honor this?

How do I honor all of you who are giving so much of yourselves every day? By getting up and doing my best every day. By pouring my heart into all that I do. By caring with you and for you. We honor one another by getting up every day and giving our best, together.

Thank you for all that you do and all that you are. Each day I am blessed to work alongside some of the strongest people I have ever met. Thank you for the honor of working with you. Most of all, thank you for pouring your huge hearts out every day.

YOU ARE AWESOME!

To: Rochester Regional Health Employees
From: Alma McKee, Chaplain, Rochester General Hospital
Subject: Chaplain's Message: Calm Me My God, Keep Me Calm

June 10, 2020

Calm Me My God, Keep Me Calm

In the past we have all tried hard to fit in. We would go the extra mile by going above and beyond the call of duty just to get a seat at the table. But when I saw the horrific footage of George Floyd being slowly killed with my very own eyes, I can't describe the anger I felt. Watching a privileged white man kneeling in the neck of a black man. The white officer looked so empowered and victorious to be crushing the life out of a black man. I heard some say, "Don't all lives matter?" I'm here to say that all lives won't matter until the black life does. As we watched this man plead for his life, "Please, I can't breathe!" And the officer continued to kneel in this man's neck with his hand in his pocket!

Something has to be done, and we the people have to do it now. The first thing that needs to happen is we are going to have to make some space for all of this anger in order to calm down. There is no one on this green earth that can calm us down like God. This thing is big, and right now, this is a God problem. We are all at a fork in the road where we are going to have to deal with the hurt, pain and anger that we are wrestling with. In the book of Proverbs it says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty." How do I react as an African American/Chaplain/Christian? If I get angry as a Christian somebody will say, "And I thought they were a Christian." In the book of Ephesians 4:26 the Bible says, "Be angry, but sin not." So there is a right and a wrong way to express anger.

Actions should be based on principles. Anger should produce positive, productive action. We need to express anger in a way that hurts others the least. To forgive someone effectively, one has to transfer the system of injustice over to the system of justice, and that system is God. When we do this we are ready to be transformed. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of you mind then you will know my perfect and pleasing will (Rom. 12:2)."

