

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

In the End, Empathy

BY JER

We are moving into the hectic season of the academic year. Many are studying for exams, writing papers, and putting finishing touches on portfolios or presentations. Some members of our community are excitedly awaiting graduation and the chapter that begins as soon as degree touches hand. Deadlines become urgent. Planners, both paper and electronic, grow fat with reminders and meetings. In all of this exigency, it becomes easy to lack compassion for ourselves and for others. Let us not forget to treat both ourselves and other beings with kindness and respect.

One of the Ten Commitments for Humanists is *empathy*, the outstanding ability not only to *understand* but also to *share* other people's feelings. What does this mean? I often think of empathy as requiring both the willingness to listen without judgment and the ability to be present for a person experiencing difficult times. This may be as simple as listening on the phone to a loved one stressing about unforgiving deadlines and saying, *I hear you*. Empathy, to me, isn't just about crying when someone we love cries. Rather, it's about compassionately lending an ear, a hand, or a kind word while understanding another's pain. It's sitting with them, being present.

We should not forget that as we find ourselves in this busy time, we are also living lives that are full of both stressors and blessings. While the stress may cause us to be cranky, even disobliging, I urge us to

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remember our common humanity. I urge us to remember that each person is doing all they can to thrive. And I, dear reader, am abundantly proud of you for showing up each and every day.

During the last year and a half, my faith in humanity has immeasurably grown. Our gift of understanding and sharing the journey of being human is almost incomprehensible. I am reminded of Zen Master and Buddhist leader, Thich Naht Hahn's quote, "People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth...." I would humbly add, to walk together on earth.

While we are taking exams or marking them, let us remember the blessing of those who walk with us, those who listen. Let us be present for those who are struggling during this busy time. Let us take a deep breath, give ourselves permission to rest. Let us remember to text the friend in need, or to put food in the food pantry, or to say thank you to the supervisor, coworker, or professor who has been compassionate. In the end, dear ones, both understanding and sharing in the journey of being human is such a treasure. Let us finish this academic year strong, and let us do so together with hearts operating with empathy.

Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

Our sympathies are extended to:

- **Tracey Garrett** (Business Office) on the death of her aunt and the death of her husband's step-sister.



SPiritual LIFE SERVICES
are live-streamed via
YouTube, Facebook and
Twitter



Date to Remember

Wednesday, May 19
4 p.m. - Snidow Chapel

Baccalaureate Service and Blessing of Graduates

Will include presentation of
2020 honorary degrees.
Chapel seating by
reservation only.

Livestream link available
soon.

The Chaplain's Corner is a newsletter published by the Spiritual Life Center (SLC) at the University of Lynchburg. We share campus concerns and updates, spiritual life events and activities, and words for the journey. If you have a joy or concern you'd like to share, reply to this message, email the SLC office - spirituallife@lynchburg.edu, or call 434.544.8348. We only share with your permission. Current and previous issues are on the SLC page of the University website - www.lynchburg.edu/spiritual-life.

For a list of regularly scheduled fellowship group meetings, go to the [Spiritual Life webpage](#) and click on "Spiritual Organizations on Campus." Helpful Links on LinkTree at - [SpiritualLifeCenter](#)