



# Spirituality & Aging News

## Where have you seen it?

by Cordula Dick-Muehlke, Ph.D.

When I was asked to respond to this question, my gut reaction was I haven't seen it – spirituality – not in the literal sense. But spirituality is palpable. In that moment when my “self” recedes, the never-ending tasks of life dissipate, my mind is calm and my heart is filled, an awareness of the spiritual arises. For me, that palpable quality of the spiritual is most present in my work with people who have Alzheimer's disease or another dementia and their families.

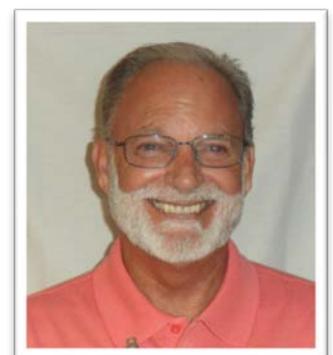


Here I recall two of the many occasions in which a person with dementia transcended their own limitations through spirituality and took me with them. Ron, who had mild cognitive impairment (MCI) at the time of our conversation, explained how his nightly chats with God helped him find peace with the MCI that has now developed into full-blown Alzheimer's disease. Ron noted, “I'm trying to find compassion for myself. I hope it will make the journey much easier, and that is what I ask that guy up there every night. Because I know there is going to come a time that it won't make any difference because I won't know who I am; I hope that I'm a good patient when that all happens.... It helps me when I'm lying there in bed talking to the man; it makes me feel good to be able to open up to him and ask him these questions. One of them, why is this happening to me? And, the answer I get back is, ‘It's happening to you because I feel that you can handle it.’” In this profound statement, Ron testifies to how knowing God never gives a person more than is bearable (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13) was helping him cope at the time of our conversation and would continue to do so in the future.

Such spiritual coping and transcendence above one's limitations can be realized in people with advanced as well as mild forms of cognitive impairment. My earliest experience of this came 34 years ago when I started working with people affected by dementia in an adult day center. Clearly lacking the knowledge and skills I have today, I struggled to soothe and keep Dean, who was pacing back and forth outside, from walking away. In the midst of his garbled, unintelligible speech, I unexpectedly heard him utter the words, “Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding” (cf. Prov. 3:5) as if out of nowhere. It was the day before Thanksgiving, and four days later, Dean did not come to the center as he would have normally. A phone call later, I learned from his daughter that he had died over the weekend. He gave me a spiritual gift that I hold in my heart to this day and continues to motivate my work. He reminded me that we only see dimly (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) when it comes to dementia. Perhaps as Coach Pat Summit, who died of Alzheimer's disease said in a March 18, 2013 interview with *People* magazine, “Above all, I know that Alzheimer's has brought me to a place that I was going to arrive at someday anyway. With or without this diagnosis, I was going to experience diminishment. We all do. [And] I know God doesn't take things away to be cruel. He takes things away to lighten us. He takes things away so that we can fly.”

## Meet Terry Barnett

Terry Barnett, Chaplain at Rosewood Terrace in Bakersfield, is the first *Spirituality and Aging Certificate* student to take advantage of an advanced degree opportunity through NTSWest. In cooperation with New York Theological Seminary, NTSWest offers a Doctor of Ministry degree (a three-year program). It is possible to “tailor” the focus of this program – as Terry has chosen to – on subject areas compatible with spirituality and aging. At the present time, the entrance requirements for this program are a Masters of Divinity degree (or equivalent) and several years of work experience in your field. For more information about this program, visit the



NTSW website at [www.ntswest.org](http://www.ntswest.org) or email Brian Symonds, the admissions director, at [bsymonds@ntswest.org](mailto:bsymonds@ntswest.org).

## 2018 Tuition

As of January 1, 2018, tuition for the Certificate Program is \$1,200. An increase in tuition was occasioned by the ongoing costs of the program combined with the anticipated student enrollment. There will continue to be scholarship funds available for those students for whom this tuition is prohibitive. Two grants for scholarship support to outside, but related, organizations are pending.

## Introducing Dr. Janna Gosselin

We welcome Dr. Janna Gosselin, who joined the program's teaching team this year, as a member of the Southern California Coalition on Spirituality and Aging. As NTSWest's academic dean, she will act as an additional representative for the seminary.

## Learn More About Aging Well

Susan Pinker, a developmental psychologist, explains how in-person social interactions are not only necessary for human happiness, but could also be a key to health and longevity in a research-based TED Talk at <http://t.ted.com/nMk9fKb>

## 2018 Course Dates

The Spirituality & Aging Certificate Program will be offered starting in September 2018 with a retreat, followed by four courses. Program location will be determined by registration and announced in August. Program dates are:

<b>Orientation Retreat</b>	September 8, 2018
<b>Course 1: Aging Defined</b>	October 13, 2018
<b>Course 2: Spirituality and Aging</b>	November 10, 2018
<b>Course 3: Aging in Context</b>	January 12, 2019
<b>Course 4: Spirituality &amp; Organizational Theory</b>	February 9, 2019

## Continuing Education

CEUs are available for MFT, MSW, LCSW, BRN, RCFE, and NAB. To receive credit, please confirm your need with Brian Symonds, NTSWest's admission director, at the time of registration.

## Let Your Colleagues Know

Help us spread the word about the Spirituality & Aging Certificate Program by sharing our work with your colleagues over coffee, at networking events, and through Facebook, Linked In or other social media! Talk up spirituality and aging wherever you can!

## This Program is Endorsed by . . .



human good

Contact us for more information or to register

## Certificate on Spirituality & Aging

Phone: 626.765.9500 Website: [www.ntswest.org](http://www.ntswest.org) Email: [info@ntswest.org](mailto:info@ntswest.org)

You can also learn more by visiting our program webpage at <http://sccsa.ntswest.org>