

Kailua Christian Church (UCC)
Sunday, November 20, 2022
“Read the Room: What to Say to Someone Who Just Lost a Loved One.”
Scripture: Matthew 25:34-43
Pastor Les Araki

Chaplain Clarence Liu

When I took my first CPE course from Pacific Health Ministries, I knew I had found my calling. I understood aspects of chaplaincy down to my soul. I was doing an internship at Pali Momi and Nathan Kohashi was my preceptor. We would prep and then debrief the visits. Sometimes I thought I failed and he would tell me that I actually did a great job. Like the first time someone told me that he didn't want a chaplain and I walked out the door with my tail between my legs. "How do you think you did Les?" I told him I failed and didn't have a good comeback that could keep me in the room. He asked me: "What did the patient want from you?" I answered: "For me to get out of the room." "What did you do for him?" Nathan asked. I left the room. "Then you gave that guy exactly what he wanted?" Yeah. "Then you did a great job!" I smiled and got it because chaplaincy came naturally to me. (Pat back of my shoulder)

That's why when Clarence Liu, long time chaplain, in fact one of the first chaplain in Hawaii, asked for a volunteer my had shot right up. We were in our weekly training and debriefing time at the PHM classroom. He set up the situation so we could picture it in our minds. I'm at bedside, my mother just passed away, a doctor, and two longtime chaplains are in the room, and I am the on-call chaplain that has been asked to make the visit. Let's begin

He sat next to an imaginary bed with his hands interlocking as if ready to or just prayed. I entered the room and introduced myself, in a soft reverent voice, as chaplain Les Araki and stuck out my hand to shake and to give my condolences. He politely looked up and said, "This is a sacred time, and I would just like to sit here quietly with my mother for the last time. He smiled politely then turned his attention back to his mom. (Pause and stand like I did in the pretend room.) After about a minute of me wondering what to say next chaplain Clarence broke character and had me take a seat. He then asked me "Les, why did you think you had to introduce yourself or even say anything? I said I just thought I could be of help. What was going on in the room? Did you notice my two longtime colleagues and friends standing with my doctor friend who were silently mourning with me? Did you see that I was having a moment with my mother? Did I look to you as if I needed you to speak to me? No, I had not. That day Clarence went on to teach me a basic but important life lesson. "READ THE ROOM."

Who greets you at the door? What pictures or relics are in the room? Where are the people sitting in the room? Who is in charge? Is there anything different happening in the room? How are people reading to that difference?

Reading the room is a skill that sharpens over time and practice.

Matthew 25: 34-43

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison, and you came to visit me.'

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

Are you comfortable with visiting the sick or a Prisoner? How do you know whether the person asking for food on the side of the road could use something to eat or even money? When was the last time you invited a stranger to share a meal or clothe someone in need? Some of you do this naturally. Thank you.

I got called out to Waianae, for a death visit for “Charlie,” and arrived forty-five minutes after I got the phone call. I witnessed a very loving family hugging and kissing each other. Charlie was moved from inside the house and was carefully laid on a decorated bed under a covered area that was connected to the house. Susie, Charlie’s daughter, was in charge. She looked up and asked if I wanted to start. I told her no, I’m not in any rush, you guys just do what you’re doing and when you are ready you can give me a nod and I can start. After more people arrived, she nodded. I told everyone that I didn’t know Charlie and if they could please tell me a little about him. Then I read Rev.21:1-5. No more pain, sorrow, tears, or death. (Pat self on the back again)

Misreading: (Bernie) talking UH football with a man in care center. Or Lazarus: the man who I did a death visit with and prayed an awesome prayer only to be told, “Chaplain, my father is still alive”. (No back patting). I didn’t read the room.

Korean woman that thought I was her son. When at a care center in town I met a woman who brightened up and thought I was her son or husband. This woman didn’t speak English but kissed my hand and rubbed it on her head and cheek, as if I was dear to her. The best ministry I could do was to just be quiet and be there with her. **The Power of Presence and silence.**

- Young wife dying. Do you need a chaplain? Either way it doesn’t matter. Stayed in view but didn’t engage. Was seen but didn’t move in.

Don’t say:

“I know what you are going through.”

“God must need him/her more than we do?”

“Let me know if there is anything I can do?” “Do or do not. There is no try.”

Man, who could only move thumb and groaned. Closed ended questions for over an hour to discover that he still hasn't forgiven his brother over money issues. **The Power of Patience. Or another way to spell love is TIME.**

Woman gospel music: **The power of Music** finding the right song

- "Miss Sunshine" The miracle of music: Jesus Loves me. Came back to the future. Yes, Jesus loves Us.

"Mr. Aoki" Chaplain, Chaplain, I don't need no stink'en Chaplain.

OK but what do you think about UH football team this year? After an hour and fifteen minutes later, after talking sports, importance of family, and eating some local food, we prayed together. **The Power of Common Ground.**

During Covid... "Shirley" I want to be baptized. I want to do MAID. (Medical Assistance in Dying)

The Power of the Word of God.

Blind woman: "I want to see Jesus."

I'm afraid of dying. Love for the Bible. Can I have a bible? He couldn't read. Got him a paper bible. Hugged it so much that it started falling apart. Got him a leather bible.

The power of permission: Mable Araki – her real name... It's Ok to go mom. We will all be OK. Go to Jesus. Two breathes and went to see Jesus.

Boy, get my Guitar from the truck. "They didn't need a chaplain." got them cookies, juice, and some chairs and left.

(Reread Part of Matthew 25. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison, and you came to visit me.'"

We are all at different comfort levels with Jesus' story about the King.

So... What are you going to say to someone who has lost a Dear (Spouse, child, parents, etc.)?

I don't know. I suppose you will have to read the room for yourself.

END

Friendly Reminder _ADVENT begins next Sunday.

Join us for Informational Meeting following worship next Sunday.

Sign up to be a reader for Advent Candlelighting and Christmas Eve Service.

Christmas Eve Service this year will be at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend!!!!