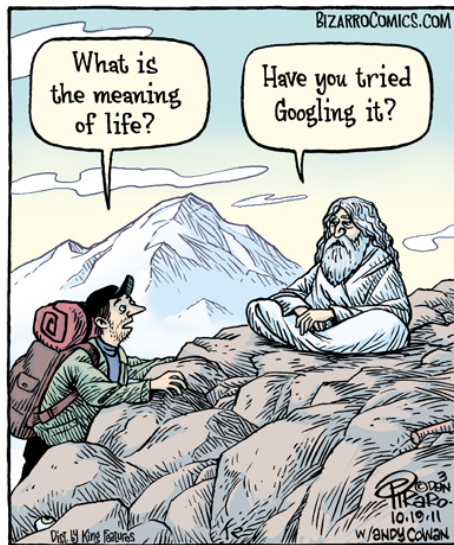


Report for CYM Education and Outreach, regarding my attendance at the Hospice and Palliative Care Ontario conference, 2018

By June Etta Chenard

Reluctant though we may sometimes be, the need to contemplate some of life's most meaningful questions insinuates itself increasingly into our lives as we, and those closest to us, are brought into contact with end of life concerns.



For many years now, I have worked as a hospice volunteer, accompanying people with life-limiting, life-threatening illnesses, as well as their families and other loved ones. Earlier this year, for my work, Hospice Niagara named me as one of the June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Volunteers. This award was to be presented at Hospice and Palliative Care Ontario's 2018 Annual Conference in Richmond Hill, north of Toronto.

I am always seeking further training to improve my support work as an in-residence hospice volunteer, especially since 2017 when I became a Quaker chaplain with a concern for end of life. I therefore wished to attend the whole conference. This was made possible by grants from Education and Outreach Committee (CYM); Pelham Executive Meeting (my Monthly Meeting); and Hospice Niagara, for which I will always be grateful.

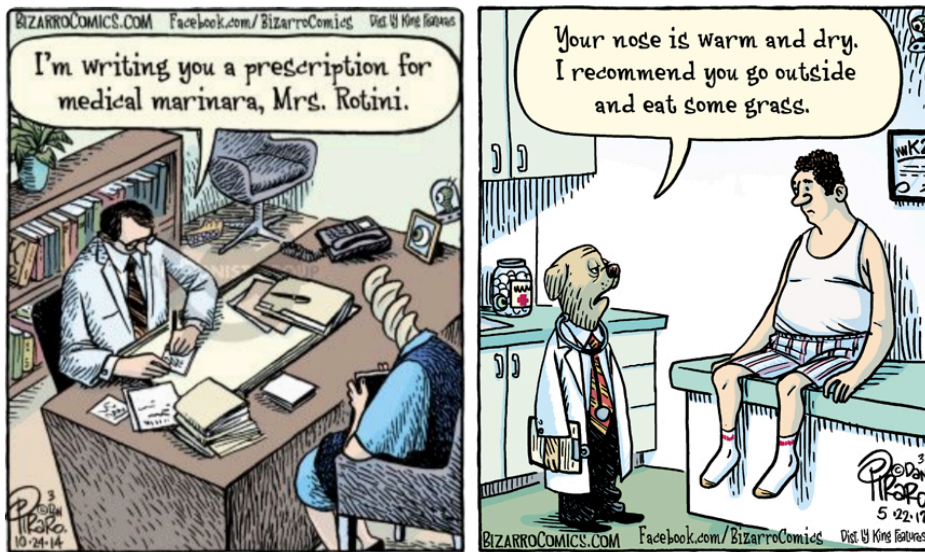


Gilles Dignard, my son, and Kathryn Parker, his wife and my beloved friend, accompanied me to the award ceremony (*photo by Geoff Straw*).

During the conference, in addition to conversations with various individuals that were often informative and at times, profound, I attended group sessions on: Listening and Responding Made Easier: Practical Tools for the Toughest Questions in Palliative Care; Compassionate Presence: Mindfulness Tools for Team-Building and Patient Care; Understanding

The Uniqueness of Paediatric Hospice Care; Spiritual Care in Compassionate Communities; and What We've Learned: Strengthening Palliative Care to the Homeless and Vulnerably Housed in Ottawa. Two of these presentations were given by hospice chaplains, and one, by a clergy serving as Spiritual Care Coordinator. I had also planned to attend another the next day by an Anishinaabe Aadziwin (Traditional Health) Manager, but these plans were changed by the horrific van attack, which made it complicated to get to our nearby hotel by public transportation.

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It was validating to hear these chaplains and spiritual advisors advocate using approaches similar to mine, many of which are based on my Quaker practice. (In addition, I learned of some novel and previously unknown ideas that might be of help to some people, at times.)

The theme of the conference was “Striving for Equity in Hospice Palliative Care”. So there was much information about new and exciting programmes and services for Indigenous people, for children, and for people living in great poverty and often without information or resources.

While at the conference, I wondered how my attendance might benefit Friends, as well as my work as a hospice residential volunteer. Two ways come to mind: I am listed as a visitor who might facilitate a workshop or retreat regarding end-of-life concerns for the CYM visitation programme. I recently led an impromptu brief discussion on this topic at Pelham Half-Yearly Meeting. It was well attended and, from it I continue to support a Friend from another Meeting. Secondly, Elaine Bishop had asked me regarding the possibility of perhaps giving the SPG lecture or leading Quaker studies. I would now feel more ready to accept should that be offered.

Of course, while it is of importance to contemplate and discuss end-of-life plans, for ourselves, for those we love, and for those we may accompany, it is equally important to remember that plans may not work out as we had hoped. Frank Ostaseski advises us to cultivate the “don’t know” mind, remembering that every person’s situation is unique and that we cannot know in advance how we may best be of service. By being quietly and simply present, we are freed to live such precious moments more fully.

Advices and Queries #30. Are you able to contemplate your death and the death of those closest to you? Accepting the fact of death, we are freed to live more fully. In bereavement give yourself time to grieve. When others mourn, let your love embrace them.

