

Showing our support for palliative care

As an expression, the word *palliative* has its origins in *palliare* – to cloak – and therefore conveys a sense of sheltering, protecting and caring for one who is making their journey through the wind and waves of one of life's storms. These experiences are often deeply private to a person, their family and those who are providing care and support to them, but they are also shared by many other people, indeed in every community and at many different stages of life. The journey and experience of each person and their loved ones is unique; yet there is a shared commonality of anticipatory grief, changed perspectives and 'living as well as possible' albeit with a life-limiting diagnosis.

The Church of Ireland's Chaplaincy Accreditation Board is supporting Palliative Care Week which will this year take place from 11-17 September 2022 on the theme of *Living as well as possible*. Palliative Care Week aims to raise awareness of the difference that palliative care can make to people with life-limiting conditions, and their carers and families, throughout the island of Ireland.

What is palliative care?

The All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIHPC), which has facilitated Palliative Care Week each year since 2014, explains that palliative care:

1. Helps to improve the quality of life of a person with a life-limiting illness;
2. Provides a care plan tailored to the individual needs of the person including the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the person, their family, carers and those important to them;
3. Enables the person to continue to do some of the things that they enjoy, such as hobbies and spending time with family;
4. Supports people at any age and at any stage of their illness; and
5. Helps people to talk about what is important to them and to make decisions about their care and their wishes.

Palliative care provides both physical support, to help the person with their symptoms, and practical support to enable them to maintain or indeed regain a good level of independence.

A number of myths around palliative care persist, and mean that some people who could benefit from it are less willing to seek it, and are potentially missing out on an improved quality of life. It is often imagined that to receive palliative care means that the person with the condition can no longer receive treatment or will die soon, or that this form of care is only something that is there to help older people or people who are living with cancer. Most palliative care is provided in a person's home and local community.

How can I show my support for palliative care?

A range of events for the week are listed [at this link](#) and include webinars, conferences and an exhibition of photography; some events will need to be booked in advance and the relevant information is included in each notice.

You may wish to read and share some of the leaflets and posters provided in the [Palliative Care Hub](#) – a website which also serves a gateway for information about all aspects of this form of care around our island.

You can also check out one of the many videos on the [AIHPC YouTube channel](#) to share some of the personal stories of people receiving palliative care, their families and carers. And please do tell friends, relatives and colleagues about what you learn, and consider how you can best support and take an interest in hospices and other organisations providing palliative care.

How do Church of Ireland chaplains help with palliative care?

Spiritual care is an integral part of holistic palliative care and each palliative care team includes the provision of spiritual care supported by professionally trained healthcare chaplains/pastoral carers integrated within the multi-disciplinary healthcare team. Speaking of this care, Daniel said: "Ireland is a wonderfully diverse place and the provision of sensitive professional pastoral care that cherishes the breadth of religious, spiritual and philosophical diversity of those we care for is a lifegiving honour to be part of. Serving alongside wonderfully gifted colleagues helps us to serve patients and their loved ones to live as well as possible amidst challenging times." From a Christian perspective, palliative care is a poignant expression of Christlike care and compassion where the focus of care is enabling each patient to live the fullest possible life with dignity. In recent years, there has been a growing focus from faith communities to ensure that palliative care is available to all.

The Chaplaincy Accreditation Board provides a robust accreditation process for healthcare chaplains in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As a professional body CAB, through a Code of Conduct promotes the highest standards of professional practice in pastoral care and this includes a requirement for regular professional supervision for each chaplain/ pastoral carer.

As part of Palliative Care week 2022, Dr Daniel Nuzum has contributed to a podcast series with the AIHPC where he speaks of the place of pastoral care in palliative care. Daniel was awarded an Educational Fellowship from the AIHPC in 2021-22 for his work in specialist palliative care at Marymount University Hospital and Hospice, Cork, where he serves on the specialist palliative care pastoral care team. In addition, Daniel is a certified supervisor/educator in Clinical Pastoral Education with the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (Ireland) Ltd. at Cork University Hospital, and he also teaches on postgraduate palliative care programmes at Marymount University Hospital and Hospice and University College Cork.

The Chaplaincy Accreditation Board (CAB) is an All-Ireland Accrediting Board for Healthcare Chaplains, established by the House of Bishops to provide professional accreditation for healthcare chaplains across the island of Ireland.