

Spiritual Care at St. Paul's Towers

Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the **ways individuals seek and express meaning and purpose** and the ways they experience their **connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature and to the significant or sacred.**

Pulchaski, Vitillo, Hull, & Reller, 2014, p. 643

Spirituality is the need to **give and receive love**; the need to **be understood**; the need to **be valued as a human being**; the need for **forgiveness, hope and trust**; the need to **explore beliefs and values**; the need to **express feelings honestly**; the need to **express faith or belief**; the need to **find meaning and purpose** in life.

Narayanasamy (1991)

Research has shown that elders have specific spiritual needs as well as the ones most of us have:

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| ✧ For meaning, purpose and hope | ✧ For unconditional love |
| ✧ To transcend circumstances | ✧ To express anger and doubt |
| ✧ For continuity | ✧ To feel that God is on their side |
| ✧ For support in dealing with loss | ✧ To love and serve others |
| ✧ For validation and support of religious behaviors | ✧ To be thankful |
| ✧ To engage in religious behaviors | ✧ To forgive and be forgiven |
| ✧ For personal dignity and sense of worthiness | ✧ To prepare for death and dying |

(Harold G. Koenig. Aging and God: Spiritual Pathways to Mental Health in Mid-life and Later Years, 1994)

With all this in mind, our spiritual care services offer a variety of spiritual practices and groups. While some are lay-led, most are facilitated or directly offered by Rabbi Meredith Cahn, our board-certified chaplain. She serves everyone in the community regardless of spiritual practices, experience or beliefs. With groups and one-on-one, face to face meetings, she offers spiritual support.



Ongoing Groups include:

Let's Talk—Our Civil Conversations Project. Started in response to Charlottesville, this weekly group gathers to process what is happening in the news, whether it is climate change, racism, homophobia, antisemitism, impeachment, sexism in politics, homelessness, immigration—the news of the day. We meet Mondays at 3:30.

Wise Aging—A book discussion group on topics of...aging wisely. We have read *The Five Invitations*, *Wise Aging*, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, and are now reading *Ageless Soul*. The reading offers a springboard for rich and intimate sharing and spiritual growth. We meet Tuesdays at 11:15.

Jewish-Christian Discussions—A discussion group on the differences and similarities and beauty at the heart of these rich religious traditions. Sometimes we read a book, sometimes we share poetry. Sometimes we just share. It's the place where we get to talk about God in our lives. We meet on Wednesdays at 1:30.

Support Group—For anyone who needs extra support for their struggles. Rabbi Chaplain Meredith is NOT a therapist and much of the support comes from the other residents. We meet the second and fourth Tuesdays at 3:30.

Support Group for Spouses/Partners of People with Dementia—For anyone whose life partner is affected by dementia, anywhere along the continuum. We meet the first and third Mondays at 1:30.

Meditation Group—This lay-led group meets weekly, on Fridays at 3 pm.

Illness and End of Life

Chaplain Meredith makes hospital visits, visits residents when they are on our skilled nursing floor and visits anyone who requests spiritual support. When requested, she supports people through their end of life, helping them focus on what is important to them, helping to relieve anxiety or stress, and supporting their families.

After each resident's death, she facilitates an **Informal Gathering** to remember that resident. This offers residents and staff an opportunity to share their grief. We share poetry, stories and memories. Some residents have requested not to have one, a request we honor, reluctantly. Families are invited to attend.

Religious Services

Since St. Paul's Towers is strategically placed within short distance of several churches, we do not offer weekly services. We do offer transportation to them.

Ongoing

Communion—Eucharistic Ministers from Corpus Christi Church offer a weekly communion on Tuesdays at 1:15 pm. They will also visit residents who are unable to come, if they let Chaplain Meredith know.

Welcoming Shabbat—Once a month, resident Jews and friends come together to "light" candles, share kiddush and motzi (wine blessings and bread), some sharing and learning. Then many of us share a shabbat meal together in the dining room. Third Friday at 4:15 pm.

Seasonal

Advent and Lent—We have visiting clergy offer a brief service with hymns, prayers, scripture and a teaching. This is interdenominational Christian. These are on Wednesdays at 3 pm during Advent and Lent. On Ash Wednesday, clergy from St. Paul's Church come to impose ashes.

Passover and High Holy Days—We have a Passover seder one evening of the holiday, led by Rabbi Meredith and a musical accompanist/cantor. We have one service followed by a meal together during the High Holy Days, led by Rabbi Meredith. Music, teaching, shofar blowing and matzah ball soup.

Chanukah—We "light" candles each evening of Chanukah, tell stories and sing, more or less. In the second floor lobby at 4:30.