

Reflection for Light up a Life Service on 27th Nov. 2011

As I mentioned in my opening remarks we celebrated 25 years of hospice care on this site on 26th of April this year.

St Andrew's Hospice opened in 1986 as a fledgling hospice with 4 palliative care beds. Today 25 years on, St Andrew's Hospice is one of the leading hospices in Scotland

A centre of excellence comprising of a 32 bedded inpatient unit, a day hospice, and a family support service providing Specialist Palliative Care and bereavement care to the people of All Lanarkshire; from Cumbernauld in the north of the county to CrawfordJohn in the south, from Harthill in the east to East Kilbride in the west.

A specialised education unit has been developed providing palliative care education nationwide.

We have a team of medical experts who regularly visit all the District General Hospitals in Lanarkshire providing input into symptom control and pain relief. We have a specialist doctor who works in the community supporting GPs, Macmillan Nurses and District nurses in the areas of symptom control and pain management

There is also the 24 hour help line for healthcare professionals seeking support and advice out of hours.

All those years ago a light was lit on this site that was to bring light into the darkness of many lives. A light that over the last 25 years, through the dedication of the staff and the unbridled generosity of the people of Lanarkshire, has grown into a Lanarkshire's powerful beacon of **HOPE**.

Hope is often understood to be the desire of something together with the expectation of obtaining it.

Hope has the power to pull us through difficult times. It is usually described with light metaphors; a ray, a beam, a glimmer of hope; the break in the clouds; the light at the end of the dark tunnel. It is often discovered in unexpected places.

But a more common and very telling expression is "**Hope** for the best, but expect the worst." The more likely outcome, it implies, is the worst.

When we are without **hope**, we easily fall victim to such negative thoughts.

When the light of hope is absent, we are overcome by gloom and doom, despair and defeatism.

When we hear of the news of a life limiting illness how often have we heard or said those words ... "there is no CURE ... there is no **HOPE**" ...?

Cure for many people carries with it a sense of the end of trouble, there may be no cure but there still can be **hope**.

Hope that good ongoing care will be provided.

Hope, that pain and suffering can be relieved or minimized.

Hope that support is available to deal with the difficult questions and issues that a terminal illness presents to both patients and their loved ones.

And **Hope** in the knowledge that support will continue for our loved ones as they struggle to come to terms with their loss.

At St Andrew's the: **H** in **HOPE** stands for;

Healing that involves care of the entire being: it addresses the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual, dimension of people.

O Reminds us that;

Our services are available to patients, families of patients, hospital and community staff.

P Signifies that;

People in crisis often struggle with questions of meaning and identity. Good Holistic Care can assist them to mobilize their internal resources for healing and purposeful living.

E Reminds us that;

Experience of crisis is unique to each individual. Whatever your circumstances, we will seek to serve you in a way that suits your needs and preferences.

If you can look at the sunset and smile, then you still have hope.

If the smile of a child can still warm your heart, then you still have hope.

If you can see the good in other people, then you still have hope.

If the sight of a rainbow still makes you stop and stare in wonder, then you still have hope

If you meet new people with a trace of excitement and optimism, then you still have hope.

If you give people the benefit of a doubt, then you still have hope.

If you still offer your hand in friendship to others that have touched your life, then you still have hope.

If the suffering of others still fills you with pain and frustration, then you still have hope.

If you look forward to a time or place of quiet and reflection, then you still have hope.

If you can look to the past and smile, then you still have hope.

Hope is such a marvelous thing. It bends, it twists, it sometimes hides, but rarely does it break. It sustains us when nothing else can. It gives us reason to continue and courage to move ahead, when we tell ourselves we'd rather give in.

Hope is a wonderful thing, something to be cherished and nurtured, and something that will refresh us in return. And it can be found in each of us, and it can bring light into the darkest of places.

Never lose **hope**.

Reflecting on the developments of the last two and half decades, one can't but help but realize that **HOPE** in St Andrew's Hospice finds its root in no small way in the core values of Human Dignity, Compassion, Justice, Advocacy and Quality.

These are the core values by which The Religious Sisters of Charity our Founders underpinned the care provided at St Andrew's Hospice. These values continue to underpin both the ethos and the mission of the hospice today.

These values are seen by many Christians as Gospel values and rightly so, but they are also the values that are embraced by all major world religions and by the many philosophies of life, of people of good will.

Illness is not just a routine incident in a person's life; it is a real crisis that affects families and friends as well. People requiring hospice care are very vulnerable. We need to be able to affirm the patient's value, seeing the person not just the illness.

The more we are able to do that, the more the patient's sense of dignity will be upheld. Whether the patients are young or old or whatever their health problem, the core values of compassion, respect and dignity are indispensable.

To fail to uphold a person's basic Human Rights is ultimately to deny those human rights to ourselves.

The present hospice with its beds, day care, associated services and teaching

facilities is very different from the hospice that opened in 1986 but it is still very close in its values of caring, helping and healing that were the inspiration behind its foundation.

The commitment, enthusiasm, loyalty and support of all our staff are very much a part of the history of the hospice. The promotion of ethos and mission is the responsibility of all staff. The mission and values are the why and the how; our patients are our primary focus.

What does the future hold for palliative care?

One certainty is that we will continue to build on the foundations laid so solidly by our founders and hopefully leave a legacy of established good practice for our successors. It is my **hope** that we will continue to improve equity of access to palliative care for all.

Lanarkshire's beacon of hope will continue to shine brightly into the future long after the lights have been extinguished on our tree.

Tonight we are gathered here to especially remember our loved ones, family and friends, many of whom have died, in the **HOPE** that life will change and not end.

We've each experienced the emotions of grief but we also know that there is a light at the end of the darkness that we've known. And that's why the lights of our trees - here at the Hospice and across other towns and villages in Lanarkshire - can act as such powerful images of **hope** and comfort.

We remember so many individuals through those lights. Each of us knows what those lights signify and whom we remember through them.

Many of us know from the gospels that Jesus grieved his friend Lazarus and brought him back to life, but he didn't let him live in this world forever, he is no longer with us. Lazarus is the sign to us to trust in the God who gives eternal life for all who believe and place their trust in Him.

Jesus lit up the lives of his friends when he gave life back to Lazarus. May he also light up our lives through the Lights that we have placed here on our Tree?

George Beuken

Pastoral/ Spiritual Director