

This bimonthly newsletter, produced by Pastoral Care Services/Office of Diversity and Inclusion, will highlight some of the spiritual and religious beliefs held by patients and their families, providers and others in the MUSC community. It will offer strategies for staff self-care as well as information to better address the spiritual needs of the diverse patients and families that we serve.

#### Interfaith Calendar Highlights

- Oct. 4 **St. Francis Day/Blessing of the Animals** (Catholic/Christian). Recognition of service to people and the natural world, as embodied by the founder of the Franciscan order. Many churches offer blessings for pets and therapy/service animals.
- Oct. 5-11 **Sukkot** (Jewish). Feast of Tabernacles, remembering God's protection of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. Tents/outdoor dwellings are built in temperate climates to sleep under the sky.
- Oct. 19 **Diwali** (Hindu). Festival of Lights, symbolizing the human urge to move toward the light. Celebrated with gift exchanges, fireworks, and festive meals.
- Oct. 29/31 **Reformation Day** (Protestant Christian). Remembrance of reformer Martin Luther posting his belief statement on Germany's Wittenberg Church door on Oct. 31, 1517. The 500th anniversary will be observed in churches on Sunday, Oct. 29.
- Nov. 1 **All Saints Day** (Christian). A day for remembering saints, known and unknown.
- Nov. 12 **Birth of Baha'u'llah** (Baha'i). Celebration of the birth of the religion's founder. A day of rest from work is observed.
- Nov. 23 **Thanksgiving** (Interfaith USA). Day to gather with family for a feast and give thanks.

Source: <http://www.interfaith-calendar.org>

## Spirituality Spotlight: Bahá'í

by Chaplain Terry Wilson

As Christianity was born out of Judaism, and Buddhism grew out of Hinduism, the Bahá'í Faith has its roots in Shi'ite Islam. A major doctrine of "Twelver" Shi'ite Islam is the expected return of the 12th imam (successor of Muhammad), who will renew religion and guide the faithful. Today, the Bahá'í Faith has as many as 7 million followers worldwide and is the second-most widely distributed religion after Christianity. The principal Bahá'í tenets are the essential unity of all religions and the unity of humanity. Bahá'ís believe in the oneness of humanity and devote themselves to the abolition of racial, class, and religious prejudices.

The Bahá'í Faith is monotheistic, believing in one, all-powerful creator God. Bahá'ís believe that the founders of great religions were sent by the one and only God to reveal his attributes and will, in the terms that were appropriate for the time. The Bahá'í Faith places great importance on the relationship with God, but not on religious ritual. Bahá'ís have no priesthood or clergy, no initiation ceremonies, no sacraments, and no worship rituals.

Bahá'ís must abstain totally from narcotics, alcohol, or any substances that affect the mind. They are expected to pray daily, meditate regularly, and develop spiritually by reading the scriptures and practicing good actions.

#### Bahá'í and Health Care

**Diet:** There are no dietary restrictions in the Bahá'í faith.

#### **Childbearing and Family Planning:**

In addition to its purpose of improving the spiritual

life of husband and wife, Bahá'ís understand the purpose of marriage to also include the perpetuation of the human race; thus the rearing of children is an important responsibility. Each couple may decide on the size of their family and are free to choose a method of contraception. Bahá'ís believe that the soul becomes associated with the body at conception, and the deliberate taking of human life is not permitted.

**Prolonging Life:** The Bahá'í writings do not advise about withholding or removing life support in disabling or terminal illness. This decision is made by family members after consultation with appropriate health care professionals, and with due regard to the Bahá'í teachings on the sanctity of human life. It is left to the conscience of the individual whether or not to subscribe to a living will. Bahá'ís are counselled not to take their own life for any reason.

**Death:** Bahá'ís believe that the soul is eternal and that even after death the physical body should be treated with respect. Embalming and cremation are prohibited for Bahá'ís unless required by law. The body is to be buried within one hour's journey from the place of death, and as soon as possible after death.

**Donations of Organs and Blood:** Organ donation is allowed. Bodies may be donated for research but must be treated with respect and eventually buried within one hour's journey from the place of death. Bahá'ís can donate blood and receive blood transfusions.

For more information, visit [Bahai.org](http://Bahai.org) and [Bahai.us](http://Bahai.us).



This monthly program provides a forum for MUSC care team members to debrief difficult cases and share strategies to support families, colleagues, and themselves. One hour of Diversity Education training will be provided. Participants must register via MyQuest. The following programs are planned for October and November.

**Legacy: Transforming Grief at the Bedside**  
**October 10, 2017**  
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm  
300 Clinical Science Building (CSB)

**Veterans and PTSD**  
**November 14, 2017**  
1:30pm - 2:30pm  
300 Clinical Science Building (CSB)

## Get to Know a Chaplain

In each issue, we will focus on a different member of MUSC Pastoral Care staff.

**Came to MUSC in:** 2008

**Hometown:** Harlan, KY

**Education and training:** Bachelor of Arts from Transylvania University; Master of Divinity from Gardner-Webb University; Clinical Pastoral Education at Carolinas Medical Center (Charlotte) and Spartanburg Regional Medical Center.

**As a chaplain, what do you bring to the MUSC team?** “Skills in empathetic listening, a cool head in a crisis, and a passion for working with people from all different backgrounds.”

**What do you do to relax?** “I write, crochet, sing, or just spend time with my husband and our two boys (and two dogs).”

**What is one thing you wish people knew about chaplains that most don't?** “We're not only here for deaths. We can be helpful in many different kinds of situations.”

**Interesting/fun fact about you:** “I have a published book (under my maiden name), and a CD with the band Rogue Two (made up of my husband and me).”

**Rev. Stacy Sergent Lawton, M.Div**



### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

From which of these things do adherents of the Bahá'í faith generally abstain?

- A. Shellfish.
- B. Alcohol.
- C. Pork products.
- D. All of the above.

The first team member to respond with the correct answer will be recognized in a future edition of the newsletter. Send responses to [sergents@musc.edu](mailto:sergents@musc.edu)



Linda Howard,  
Administrative Coordinator

Correct answer from the  
[August-September issue:](#)

- C. Inviting them to tell you about their baby if they would like to.

## Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

by Chaplain Robert Nix

Many of us experience an occasional trying time. Sadly, some of us experience life-changing trauma. The end result can be post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a person is considered a trauma survivor when that person was exposed to or personally experienced a threatened or actual trauma event or events. These events can include, but are not limited to, death, physical injury, psychic injury, or sexual violence.

Some health care professionals differentiate PTSD between “Big T” and “Little T” traumas, which include, but are not limited to, grief, divorce, media exposure to trauma, or childhood emotional abuse. Not all survivors who are exposed to traumatic events will develop PTSD. Most persons have sufficient coping skills that help them recover from trauma. There are several therapeutic interventions to help a person suffering from PTSD. One is counseling. Spiritual counseling attempts to change the lens through which a

person interprets their trauma. Within the scope of spiritual counseling is the ability to provide words of hope to one who feels hopeless. Sometimes a person feels as if no one understands what they experienced because of the trauma. It is possible for a spiritual counselor, with words of hope, to instill the belief that a promise can become a reality.

The spiritual counselor guides the person to turn to their own inward resources to reinforce their hope—such as faith, belief in a higher power, community support, religious texts, and importantly healthy memories. Finally, a recording of one's personal story to a journal becomes for a trauma victim a step in the healing process on the road to recovery. Bad memories are slowly replaced with good memories. Hope becomes reality.



Do you have topic ideas for future issues or would like to provide general feedback about the newsletter? If so, send an email to [sergents@musc.edu](mailto:sergents@musc.edu)  
**Chaplain Stacy S. Lawton,**  
Editor

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## Chaplains are available 24/7/365