Six poems by David Buck reflective of moral injury issues experienced in a palliative care setting during the covid-19 pandemic.

The first five poems are framed within the themes found in a well-known Celtic blessing: **It Was a Difficult Path to Find That Day** looks at the shellshock and uncertainty of what was happening at the beginning of the pandemic. The learning curve experience of **The Wind Was Set to Be Against Us That Day** has an inevitable twist. Some hospices struggling financially to make ends meet are cutting chaplaincy posts despite excellent work being done by chaplains, **A Stone Cold Chill Touched Our Souls That Day.** The hospice where David works is called Wheatfields; **The Rain Fell Hard On the Wheatfield That Day** relates our feelings of discomfort at reduced visiting allowed for families. **Lament** speaks of separation. The final poem, **Da Day Dawn** (The Day Dawns) reflects resilience and hope observed in colleagues.

There are many different versions and sources for the blessing used. The one David has chosen is as follows:

May the road rise to meet you;

may the wind always be at your back;

may the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields;

and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Da Day Dawn is a tune from the Shetland Islands and is often associated with the turning of the year (New Year).

## It Was a Difficult Path to Find That Day

Stay was all I could do.

Watching, waiting, needed.

All around a wasting landscape,

bitter, bare, infinite.

From where will it come?

What will come?

And will I be enough

to hold and be?

We asked, but no one

said what they truly needed,

perhaps, because

they did not know.

So I said prayers,

reflections, meditations

for an empty,

virtual world.

I moved and met,

listened, moved on

and returned.

## The Wind Was Set to Be Against Us That Day

Had I been present she needn’t have asked,

“Are you still there?” So, on the phone,

I learned to listen more noisily.

Tacking to catch the wind

I learned that eyes smile

as much as lips (when hidden);

*hands free* meant just that;

home could be a comfortable

place for work and business;

we could meet at the press

of a button; be cleaner, safer

and get the job done, arrive.

But I was not there

and we were not together

and something was missing.

## A Stone Cold Chill Touched Our Souls That Day

“Money is short,” they said,

“And we don’t need that much religion.”

But have I not shown you

 that it is about the beginning

 and ending of all things;

 cruelty, pain, suffering;

 whys and what ifs;

 life in all its abundance.

And without me

 you do not have time or skill

 to attend the depths

 when they say,

 “Help me.”

And besides,

 those whose world I share,

 and who, truly, share mine,

 say I am essential,

 core, the essence.

“We hope it is clear,” they say,

“One month more only.”

## The Rain Fell Hard Upon the Wheatfield That Day

*But he’s my brother ...*

The limit is two,

 for an hour

 apart,

 and you are not designated,

 (footfall, risk, minimise).

*And my mother and sisters*

 *and all the rest of them ...*

So we discharged to the lesser pain,

home, away from our love and care

and skill that would bring peace.

“Rubbish”, we say,

“Call this a hospice?”

## Lament

I just want to hold her hand

and to have her hold mine

but our world will not allow it,

dis-ease separates.

If I could be there I could do

and love and speak for her

among strangers who will miss

the little, important things.

And not because they don’t care,

hell no, they do, but this is no way

to end your days, our days,

discovered too late, alone.

I hear no talk of God but

in the silence. That God

has abandoned us again,

left us, to be alone, un-held.

## Da Day Dawn

She stands looking into the distance

 which stirs,

 leavened,

 alive,

 breathed into.

The sun peaked the horizon

 (as they say).

She does not know what is to come

or whether what has been learnt

 is enough to sustain her,

but somehow the dayspring light

encourages her forward afresh, new.

“I will,” she says.

“We will,” we say,

“Just as in the beginning.”

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*David Buck is Spiritual Care Co-ordinator at Sue Ryder Wheatfields Hospice, Leeds, UK. His recently published collection of poems, ‘Can You Be the Air?’ is reflective of his work in palliative care chaplaincy.*