



Reflective Soulwork:

promoting meaningful and
meaning-filled

spiritual care practice

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Now this big westerly's
blown itself out,
let's drive to the storm beach.

A few brave souls
will be there already,
eyeing the driftwood,

the heaps of frayed
blue polyprop rope,
cut loose, thrown back at us –

What a species –
still working the same
curved bay, all of us

hoping for the marvellous
all hankering for a changed life.

From Kathleen Jamie 'The Overhaul' Picador (2012) p.3

Three ways of seeing

What do you **notice** within yourself?

Observation without interpretation/judgement



What do you **wonder** or are curious about?

Turning things over in your mind.

What do you realise or perceive?

Moments of insight when the penny drops and connections are made.



<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/vbrp/what's-on.aspx>



NAVY – reflecting on practice and in practice

N - Whose NEEDs were being met? (may not just be needs of people present, what about organisations, groups, teams?)

A - What does this scenario tell you about your ABILITIES, ASSETS?

V -, your VOCATIONAL CANON, those stories, experiences, people, poetry, art which inform your beliefs, worldview/frame of reference?

V – Whose VOICES were being heard/ignored/silenced here? (think to of voices of those not present – eg organisations, groups as well as individuals)

Y – What does reflection on this experience tell you about you?

So what/now what – influence on future practice

'The soul as ... shorthand for the seismic core of personhood from which our beliefs, our values, and our actions radiate.' (Popova cited by Stephens 2019)



Vocational Canon – an aid to promoting soulful reflective practice

Sacred stories/texts – religious texts, parables,
novels, poems, short stories, films, lyrics

Events

People

Art, music

Which drew me/you into chaplaincy in the first place and informed my/your initial vision of chaplaincy.....



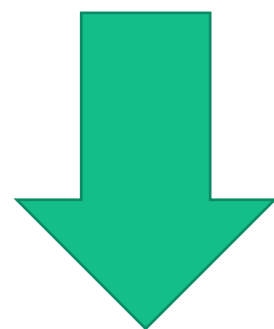
Vocational canon

Attitudes
And
behaviours

Values and worldview

Vocational
identity/character –
vocational canon

Eg Compassion,
Justice, integrity



Aspects of my vocational canon

- Job's friend's initial response to his suffering
- Henri Nouwen's concept of the wounded healer
- Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus and with the distress of his relatives
- Peter Speck 'Being There'



Aspects of my vocational canon

- Uncle and aunt – generous hospitality and unconditional love
- Leonard Cohen – ‘crack in everything’
- RS Thomas – ‘meaning in the waiting’
- Rembrandt’s Prodigal Son



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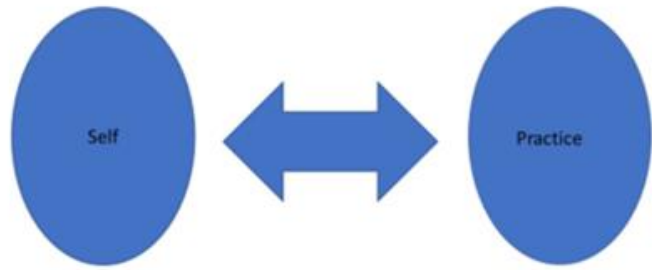
People


Art, music

Which drew you into chaplaincy in the first place and informed your initial vision of chaplaincy



Dynamic correlation between person and practice and its impact





‘They were like other young men , unknown to themselves. So much that lay within them they were now travelling to meet.’

The Narrow Road to the Deep North Flanagan
(2015, p40)





‘when I gazed long into the abyss, the abyss inevitably gazed back into me.’

Nietzsche cited by Gagnan, A. (2017) ‘Becoming a Chaplain.’ *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 37: 86-87

<https://journals.sfu.ca/rpfs/index.php/rpfs/article/view/486/470>

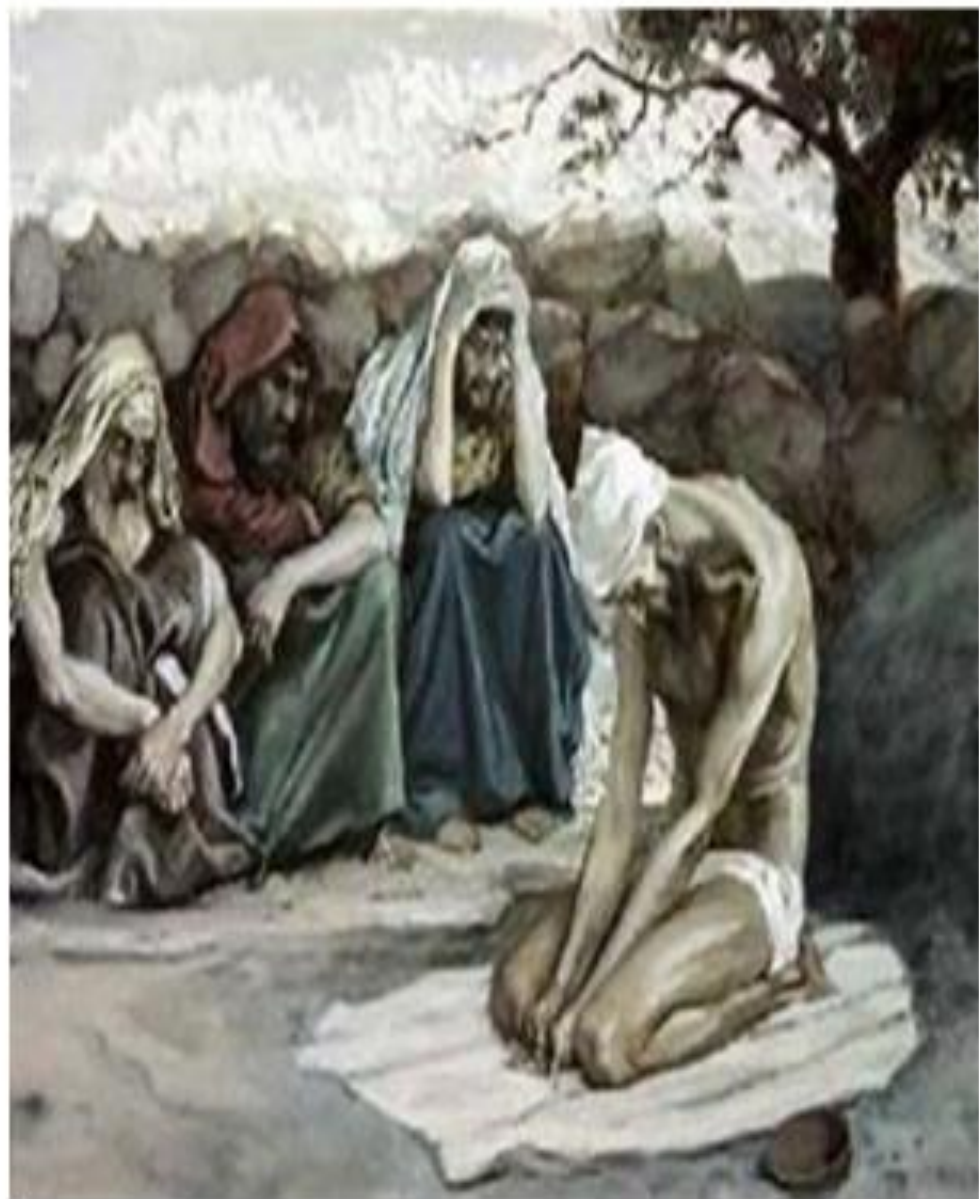
Aspects of my vocational canon which informed vision and behaviour – come to realise less than helpful

- Father's response to O grade prelims
- Parable of the talents
- 'Be ye perfect'
- In car going to university – 'make use of every second'



Deepened understanding of self in professional role of chaplain/chaplaincy educator







From embodying
God's love

to

Opening my eyes to the
God who is already there

From Cohen to Dylan – from offering to risking to receive and learn

‘There’s a crack in
everything that’s how the
light gets in.’



‘Anthem’



‘You open a door to a dark room
and you think you know what’s
there, where everything is arranged,
but you really don’t know until you
step inside.’



‘Chronicles’

In the pond of our new garden
were five orange stains, under
inches of ice. Weeks since anyone
had been there. Already by far
the most severe winter for years.
You broke the ice with a hammer.
I watched the goldfish appear,
blunt-nosed and delicately clear.



Since then so much has taken place
to distance us from what we were.
That it should come to this.
Unable to hide the horror
in my eyes, I stand helpless
by your bedside and can do no more
than wish it were simply a matter
of smashing the ice and giving you air.

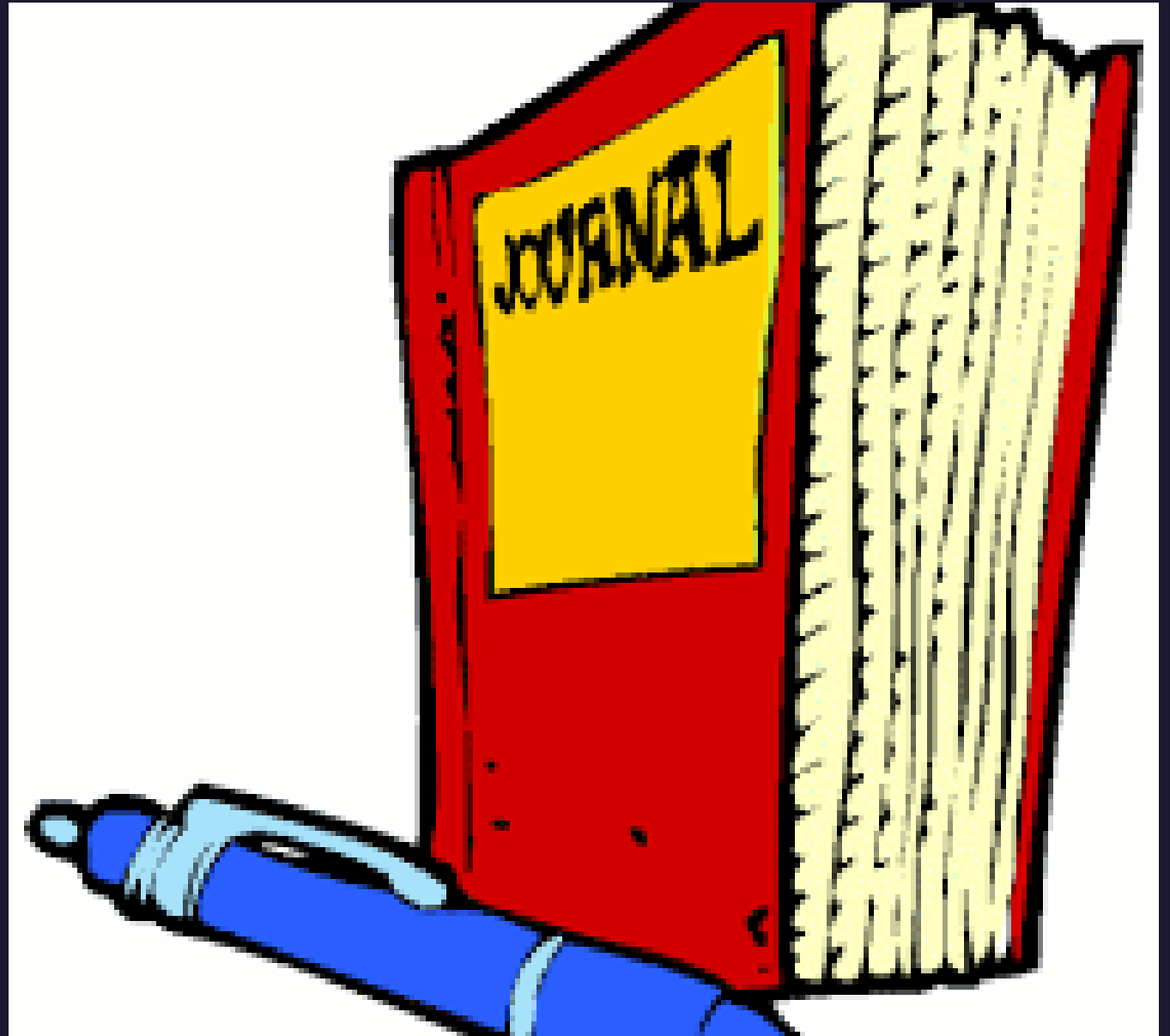
‘Visiting Hour’ – Stewart Conn

6 Minute Journalling

Write about a recent encounter which you struggled with/felt helpless.....

which has remained with you...lingered....

Continue to scratch....be a stone in your shoe



Write about what you experienced, what you felt and your gut response as well as your thoughts. What might be the impact on you– don't think too much – write if you can in the manner of a 'stream of consciousness'.

Now re-read your piece using

3 ways of seeing.....

What do you

- Notice?
- Wonder?

About your experience and its impact - NB avoid judging yourself or others, being critical, or thinking about what you might or might not have done if you had the chance again.....

Circle or underline – key words or phrases or feelings – that you are drawn to, that you particularly notice, or that make you wonder.....

WHAT HAS JOLTED OR AFFIRMED OR MADE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT AN ASPECT OF YOUR VOCATIONAL CANON AND/OR ABOUT YOU?

Sit with your reflections for a short while – **so what?** is there anything you WANT TO REFLECT ON FURTHER, REALISE WHICH WILL INFORM YOUR FUTURE PRACTICE



References

Kelly, E. (2023) Healthcare chaplain: harbinger of death or religious functionary? *British Journal of Nursing* 32 (1): 6.

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Stephens K. (2019) The demise of mystery, curiosity and reflective living. In: Ames S, Koh E (eds). *The mystery of God and the power of redemptive relationships*. Sydney, Australia: Morning Star Publishing; 2019

