



Joseph's House

A welcoming home. A place to rest. Compassionate care for the dying.

Christmas 2011

Dear Friends,

On my office phone a friend left me this message, "In times of deep turbulence and extremes, the wind blows! It's hard to keep our own small candle burning just for this moment. But in a time of ever lengthening shadows, we are the Light".  
We are the Light.

.....



Angela, our young chaplain, stood at the threshold of Winston's room. The door was open, it was late afternoon and the Christmas lights framing his windows made the dark room inviting. Winston was beginning to clean up his space after his roommate, Jerome, moved out. This is an excerpt from Angela's notes to me:

*Chaplain Notes for December 7, 2011. Winston: Invited me into his room. He was beginning to clean the space after Jerome left. I watched. He asked for a broom. I found one. He began sweeping. I thought of ritual clearing of space. I went and*

*got the symbols book and read to him about the symbol of 'broom'. It talked all about cleansing and clearing space. There was something about the wise sage holding the broom. I took a picture of Winston holding the broom and the light shone behind him. It was a beautiful picture of him as the sage holding the broomstick.*

*Winston showed me where he writes a note to himself every day, to remember to pick up tissues and such because it clutters a space. I said that this space was now perfect to do things like yoga. I stood on my head in the middle of the room.*

*Then somehow he started singing the Gambler song. (You've gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run...) At this point Cameron, (a nurse's aide) came in. We both sang with him and we acted out the words. Winston also got into it. He said that now with this cleansed space, people would come to him. I said we could set a donations bowl outside the door where seekers of wisdom would come and sit with the sage. They must take their shoes off outside the door; bow, cross the threshold, sit down and listen.*

In my mind's eye, I see Winston and Angela in that sacred space... the slow sweeping, the headstand, the singing – the recognition of his wisdom, all in the soft glow of multicolored lights in the room of a recently homeless man very close to death from pancreatic cancer. I see grace and death sharing the space in harmony, in beauty.

Those times when we can allow ourselves to pause, enter fully, and even honor as sacred our ordinary life – the world gets turned upside down, something is set free and our Light shines and is seen, felt - almost heard.

I heard the bells on Christmas day  
Their old familiar carols play  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to all.

At Joseph's House this evening our House is full. The twinkling lights and the darkness invite deep quiet. Upstairs Winston is now confined to the bed and he is sleeping deeply. A volunteer keeps vigil beside him. He has a new roommate who too, as he can, watches over Winston. We are the Light. Silent night, holy night... It feels that way. It is that way.

Everywhere there are so many needs, not only at Joseph's House.

Yet, if you feel called to support the Light as we at Joseph's House seek to embody it; if your heart joyfully attunes with ours and you want to turn the world upside down for Love, finding grace even in the shadow of death - we give thanks for you.

Gratefully and with love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Wudel  
Executive Director

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