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**We have now reached the post-Easter period in the church year, Ascension Day, and looking forward to Pentecost.**

**May gives us a warmer (and hopefully drier!) time of early summer with new life bursting out all around us in the garden and wildlife about us. A time for inspiration and hope you would think.**

**It might seem a little strange therefore that in the middle of May we have’ Dying Matters Awareness Week’. It is a national scheme co-ordinated by national Hospice Societies, MacMillan Nurses, and others. This week it takes place from 6-12 May, and offers people an opportunity to talk about death, dying and grief. This year’s theme, ‘The way we talk about Dying Matters’, focuses on the language that we use, and conversations we have, around death and dying.**

**As a palliative care community chaplain, people were referred to me by the McMillan nurses in Hull and East Riding for pastoral and spiritual care. It was a great privilege to spend time with people approaching and reaching the end of their lives, then take the funerals and offer grief support to families. These were frequently very moving experiences for everyone involved but it impressed on me the significance of bringing a sense of peace and hope. On many of these occasions the fundamental issue was just the opportunity for the person to talk and express their feelings, fears, sadness, and regrets from their lives and be given freedom to do so. Then, I would offer anointing and prayers of peace which brought great comfort in moments of mutual respect, trust, care and great blessing to everyone present. These moments, I will never forget.**

**It was my intention when moving to these parishes to offer similar ministry to anyone who would like it, not necessarily just at the end of life but on any occasion when life becomes difficult. There is great benefit in this expression of spiritual care, using prayer and sacrament as fundamentally when a person suffers in body or mind, they also suffer spiritually with what Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the Hospice Movement described as ‘soul pain’.**

**Often at these times and at funerals, I use some words from the Book of the Revelation, to hopefully evoke that sense of peace, “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”***

**I hope these words bring peace and comfort to any of you who may be suffering at this time. If I can help in any way, please get in touch.**

**Every peace.**

**Rev James**