

**End of Life Care within a Palliative Care Setting:
A Consideration of the Theology and Praxis of Appropriate Pastoral Care**

Nigel Pierpoint

Abstract

This dissertation was formulated in my mind after over hearing people discuss the pastoral care offered by some ministers. They found it inappropriate for their needs and those of their loved ones. I am passionate about pastoral care, especially towards those who are suffering and in need of support. A priest in holy orders can find themselves called to offer such support to parishioners who are dying, and their families. What is considered appropriate for one family may not be so, for another. This thesis will consider pastoral care at End of Life (EOL), and how best to support those in need. The primary strand is pastoral and will focus on the research that was conducted during the course of writing this dissertation.

Within this work, theological, biblical, and liturgical interpretations of death will be investigated. It will further attempt to explore the difference between spirituality and religiosity within an Irish healthcare setting. In addition, it will aim to inform the reader how best to support people at EOL.

The primary research involved interviewing parishioners from various backgrounds who received pastoral support, either appropriately or inappropriately. Interviews were also conducted with clergy from various backgrounds and levels within the Church of Ireland. These clergy are currently involved in providing pastoral support to people in hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices. This dissertation will consider how the person is an individual and more than their illness, and how there is a need to treat people at EOL with dignity and respect.

The proposed outcome of this work will be to highlight the need for appropriate pastoral care at EOL, and to make recommendations as to how best the Church of Ireland can future-proof the role of Chaplain, in an Irish Health Care setting.