

Being the Tsunami: Spirituality and Instagram

By: Kelly Spahr

As a Chaplain I often work with patients and families who are navigating serious neurological illnesses. The word, “work” seems a bit odd because we are often together straddling the space of finding meaning in the midst of suffering. Clinically it is my work, personally it is a space where I learn, serve, and grow.

It was in my role as a Chaplain that I met Lisa as she had recently been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. As we began talking about what that meant in terms of her vision of herself and her life, there were so many other aspects of her that surfaced. She is queer, kind of femme, about my age, and, well, I’m queer, and kind of femme. However, now faced with a neurodegenerative illness, she had yet another layer added to her identity. She was scared, tired, and angry.

As we talked, she began to see the patterns in a lifetime of relationships and started preparing to let go of what was no longer serving her. Having a place to lay down the fears of the unknown around both her disease and her relationships was profound for her. She began exploring the intersection of generational health trauma, the messages that women receive about being “not enough” and, at the same time, “too much”; and the psychosocial-spiritual connections of physical health. She *craved* emotional and spiritual health as a path to being healthier physically.

Call it serendipity, a coincidence, or the universe sending us a message. But a couple of days before I met Lisa, a colleague had sent me an Instagram by Kweenwerk. Kween says:

“When you feel kind of wibbly wobbly and you’re like, ‘I’m not a girl, I’m a force. I’m not a woman. ***I’m a tsunami, OK?***”

While Lisa and I were talking, I was thinking about that Instagram post and how connected I felt to her desire to no longer identify as a victim, but as a survivor, and to embrace being a tsunami. She talked about how she was opening up her heart to God again, and how it was breaking her open in spectacular ways. Almost immediately, I felt so in tune with her; to know that as human beings, and as women in particular, we struggle with the messages that we get growing up, and from society as a whole, and that we can find solace in the divine, however we experience it.

I don’t usually share social media posts with patients, but this time I felt called. I pulled it up and we both laughed and yet also somehow got a little teared up at the last line:

“I’m not just a femme little queer babe, I am a natural disaster and also ***somehow a miracle.***”

And there it is:

We may be a lot.

And we may not always be enough.

But we are still somehow *a miracle.*