



From the President's Desk...#8...Christmas, 2018

Dear Homeowners,

Before retiring in 2015, I spent six years as the Hospital Chaplain Supervisor at Banner Boswell Medical Center in Sun City. In addition to supervising the chaplain staff and volunteers, I made daily rounds visiting patients who were actively dying and their families. One could say that that sounds depressing and at times it was, but for the most part I considered it a privilege to spend time with patients who had lived long and noble lives, patients often times with tremendous faith, who were now ready to meet their God. Many family members found it hard to say goodbye or let go. And for others, they knew it was time.

Sometimes my ministry would be to the patient, many times to the family and, at times, both.

During this holiday season I wish to share a story with you of an encounter that I had with a patient and his wife.



## Christmas Lights

*The patient in his late sixties, having been diagnosed with stage four cancer with only weeks to live, decided to forgo any treatment and choose to live out his final days with whatever time God was going to give him. A spiritual care visit was requested by his oncologist.*

*Walking down the hall I observed the maintenance staff putting up the artificial Christmas tree in one of the waiting areas. As I walked into the room, John, the patient, and his wife were having a lively conversation that ended with my appearance.*

*Looking at the patient, one would not think that he was in the final stage of his life. His wife appeared more upset than he did. During our conversation, she expressed her frustration that she simply did not know what she would do without him. "He does everything. He pays all the bills, takes care of the house, the yard, the car. I can't imagine what I'm going to do without him," she bemoaned. John tried to comfort her by telling her that she was stronger than she thought.*

*After the two of us quietly listened to all her concerns and carrying on, I asked if I could offer the two of them a prayer. They agreed. As I was walking out of the room I stopped and turned around, looking back. I said that I was wondering what the two of them were discussing when I walked into the room.*

*With total frustration, she said, "Oh, he wants me to put the damn Christmas lights up on the outside of the house." Pointing to him, she continued, "With everything going on, he's dying and he wants me to put the Christmas lights up! The last thing on my mind is Christmas. Can you believe him?" Looking at him and then her, I said to her, "Do John and me a favor. Put up the damn Christmas lights!"*

*My look of determination was not weakened by her look of shock. Smiling, I said, "I'll stop by tomorrow" and I turned and left the room.*

*The next day while I was making rounds I stopped by. As I entered the room the two were in conversation. Both were talking and there was even some laughter. It was apparent that they had moved beyond the doctor's news of the day before of John's diagnosis and her initial shock and panic. I also noticed on the bed tray positioned over the bed a nighttime picture of a house with outside Christmas lights shining brightly.*

*After a few minutes of conversation, I pointed to the picture and inquisitively asked, "What's that?" John, with a big grin on his face, immediately grabbed the picture and handed it to me. "It's a picture of our house. After Mary left here yesterday, she went home and put the Christmas lights up. She took this picture for me. Don't they look great. I'm so proud of her."*

*Mary went from smiling at John, to looking straight at me with a certain amount of thinly disguised anger and said, "So, tell Father, why did you want me to put up those damn Christmas lights?"*

*I calmly said "Mary, it wasn't what I wanted, but what John wanted. Yesterday you were fearful. You shared that John does everything for you. He pays all of the bills, takes care of the house, the yard, the car. You questioned what you would do without him. John knows that his days are numbered and despite how you are feeling right now, he needs to know*

*that you will be ok when he's gone. Something told me that John felt that if you could put up those outside Christmas lights, you could do anything. You did it, and I believe you can do anything. You have given John the best Christmas present ever, to know that when he is gone, you will be ok.*

*John held Mary's hand in his one hand and in his other hand held the picture against his chest. With tears running down her face, Mary looked away from John at me. "Thank you. Father, you do understand."*

*We said a prayer together and then I left. As I was walking down the hall, with a grin on my face, I thought to myself, "When am I going to put the Christmas lights up on my house?"*

May we never underestimate our own inner strength to persevere and survive.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year.

Larry Weidner, President

The Christmas lights of Juniper Ridge Resort.