

# How Do We Care For The Nation?

*Spiritual Care Association CEO: When overall picture seems big & hopeless, it is possible to find glimmers of meaning & purpose, to take steps toward healing*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, July 13, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "I've been wondering lately what we might learn if we looked at the nation as if it were a patient, a person diagnosed and receiving care. What understanding might we glean from a spiritual and clinical care perspective on our nation's current ills?" asked The Rev. Eric J. Hall, CEO of [Spiritual Care Association](#) and [HealthCare Chaplaincy Network](#).

He continued, "On the surface, we see issues of racism, the economy, and the coronavirus pandemic roiling the body of our nation. Any one of these would be incredibly challenging to address, but all three raging across the country at the same time put us in new, uncharted territory. I hear a lot of talk about ways we should be dealing with this to 'fix' the problems, as if there were some magical cure that somehow would return life back to



Eric J. Hall

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normal, however that might be defined. The present moment calls for a much deeper reflection on the painful birthing process our nation is going through.

"When a person arrives in the ER for treatment, we need to do more than stop the bleeding and control the pain. We need to discover the unaddressed undercurrents that contribute to the conditions we are trying to fix. Underlying the surface of our present national malaise, bigger

systemic forces might be at work. The fundamentals of life that many of us took for granted have been shaken. We thought the economy was solid and would continue to do well. We believed we had made much progress on issues of race, equality, and social justice. We were confident that

our government and our national healthcare infrastructure would protect us from the ravages we saw the new virus causing in other countries around the world. Painfully this is not so.

"Our nation has received a massive, traumatic blow to body, mind, and spirit. But before we can fix what is broken, we may need to begin to heal where we can. I believe the nation has a fundamental longing for change, transformation, and growth that can be best understood existentially. COVID-19 has exposed our basic human frailty in ways many of us have never experienced before. We are all aware that we're going to die some day, but our spirits have likely never been afflicted by such a constant barrage of sickness, death, and dying.

"How can we begin to heal? Is it even possible to talk about healing when we can't agree on what needs to be fixed? In healthcare, there's a model for finding healing in the face of illness we cannot fix: palliative care. When patients are afflicted with chronic, life-limiting conditions, palliative care teams come along side to help them tease out and reconnect with the fundamental human values that make life worth living. Values like hope, meaning, a sense of purpose, reconciliation of relationships, and absolution from guilt. Attending to these issues in a patient's life can bring healing of mind and spirit when curing of the physical body is not possible.

"If our nation were a patient who showed up in the ER, battered and bruised, angry and anxious, jobless and afraid, sick with a long list of chronic ailments, clearly in existential crisis, how might the wisdom of a palliative approach to care inform our treatment options? When the overall picture seems too big and hopeless, is it possible we can still find some glimmers of meaning and purpose, to take some small steps towards healing?

"I believe we can. Author Henri Nouwen shows us a way when he writes, 'The more I think about the human suffering in our world and my desire to offer a healing response, the more I realize how crucial it is not to allow myself to become paralyzed by feelings of helplessness and guilt. More important than ever is to be very faithful to my vocation to do well the few things I am called to do and hold on to the joy and peace they bring me. I must resist the temptation to let the forces of darkness pull me into despair and make me one more of their many victims.'"

Reverend Eric J. Hall, DTh, APBCC, is President and Chief Executive Officer of HealthCare Chaplaincy Network, Inc. and the Spiritual Care Association. He is also Chancellor of the University of Theology and Spirituality. Hall serves as pastor of the Eastchester Presbyterian Church and the Lincoln Academy for early childhood learning. Formerly, he was the founder, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America. He can be reached at



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