

## IN MEMORIAM



*Peter Yuichi Clark*

On December 1, 2019, the Rev. Peter Yuichi Clark, PhD, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) certified educator, died of complications from an insidious and persistent form of cancer. He left hundreds of friends, family members, colleagues, and former students. He also left more than a thousand handmade origami paper cranes made by well-wishers in hopes of his recovery and peace. We believe he is at peace.

Both of us knew Peter from the time he moved to Atlanta, Georgia, after seminary to do clinical pastoral education at Emory and to begin his PhD there. Maureen was in his residency group (1992–1993), and Amy and Peter attended the same church, Oakhurst Baptist. Peter's process of becoming an ACPE educator overlapped with Amy's in the late 1990s. His achievements were many, culminating in his years as director of spiritual care for the University of California, San Francisco. In this brief memorial, we will focus more on who he was than on what he did.

There are so many qualities that Peter embodied—warmth, humor, creativity, humility, helpfulness, intellect, faith, loyalty, courage. In everything he did, even in sickness, he did his best. He was true to his deepest values to the very end.

I (Amy) first met Peter when he came to Oakhurst, but our first conversations came about because he contributed artwork to the small independent Baptist newspaper that was housed in our church building and for which I worked as associate editor. His penmanship was like him—neat, fastidious, creative, but also warm and welcoming, not mechanical. His handwriting was calligraphy—it was “beautiful writing.” Even his seemingly casual notes were in this same meticulous script. I would find myself thinking, “Who has time to write like this and still get everything done?” Peter did, because he *took* the time. His beautiful artwork still graces the cover of this journal.

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I (Maureen) first met him when we were both residents in the same peer group in Emory's CPE program. This was the year that Peter's father went through significant health challenges. We all discussed the fragility of life and offered one another comfort, theological wrestling, and space for laughter (Peter had a wonderfully contagious laugh). Peter was able to interweave his insights from his wrestling with theodicy and suffering beautifully and meaningfully into his offering of care to those around him. I can vividly see his face as he listened intently to whoever was before him, as well as the grin that was never far away.

When I sat for a consultation that year with peers (including Peter) and certified educators, I remember being struck with Peter's capacity to offer generous support and care while pointing to the heart of the matter with directness and clarity. I kept his notes on my reflection document and read them again recently. He wondered with me, "Will you live life embracing risk or live life dreading risk?" Great question, Peter.

I so appreciate that during our nearly thirty years of friendship, Peter and I engaged this question in many different ways. I saw him consistently embrace risk, and I witnessed his resultant embodied wisdom as it unfolded and manifested in the world to all of our benefit.

In 2007 Peter joined the newly formed Editorial Board for *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*, and in a magical moment he single-handedly designed the cover of this journal. (He has also designed the logo of the Association of Professional Chaplains). He served as the editor of the ACPE Theory Paper of the Year for *Reflective Practice* until 2014. In that capacity, he invited me (Amy) to join the group, and I was deeply honored to work with him on this important aspect of our profession for the next few years. We both felt passionate about the need for our own internal literature, particularly in the realm of theory, because our work was (is) unique—not simply theological/philosophical or educational or even psychological/developmental. Peter was easy to work with and supportive. I especially appreciated the professional way he handled a delicate ethical case involving plagiarism. Peter, as the writer, understood completely and fought for the situation to be handled justly.

Peter's work with the Organization Design Work Group will live on permanently in ACPE. That group's work is the foundation for all the changes we have been engaged in over the past few years. His ability to be both

loyal and visionary helped ensure that our beloved institution will remain relevant well into the twenty-first century and beyond.

Peter lived into the blessing of the unknown in his leadership with honesty and integrity. A quote that I heard him use a number of times from Dag Hammarskjöld was, “For all that has been—Thanks! To all that shall be—Yes!” Peter lived into this quote with humor and with “engaged hope.” He used his gratitude and his vision to participate in life with groundedness and intentionality.

As we think about the future of our organization, we can’t help but feel cheated of the contributions Peter would have continued to make. With his deep commitments to professionalism, multicultural awareness and competency, ethics, and ongoing learning, he would no doubt have continued to function in leadership for many decades. What we can hope and aspire to is that all the students and colleagues he impacted will live those values as passionately as he did. Our thoughts and condolences are also very present with his wife Tilly and his son Adam.

Peter did his best at everything he did, even illness. His willingness to engage in a rigorous and difficult clinical trial for bile duct cancer (cholangiocarcinoma) was, in his own words, an act of faith that it might advance scientific knowledge that would help others, even if not ultimately himself. I am grateful that he allowed me (Amy) to interview him last summer for the ACPE newsletter.<sup>1</sup>

His wise words will live on.

Amy Greene  
ACPE Certified Educator  
Cleveland, OH  
and  
Maureen Shelton  
Emory Healthcare  
Atlanta, GA

#### NOTES

- 1 Amy Greene, “Clinical Trial Indeed,” *ACPE News*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.acpe.edu/ACPE/News/Stories/2019/ChairsArticle060319.aspx>.

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