

Sacred Stories



Prayer Shawl

By Nosheen Rafique

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
- Matthew 18:20

At our facility, we cared for Rod for a couple of decades, as he endured many surgeries and procedures.

Rod finally decided his body could no longer fight, and he requested comfort care. So many on our staff had worked with him and knew him. He had become part of our hospital family, and our staff was grieving.

To allow time for our staff to say goodbye, with his permission, I arranged a prayer shawl ritual. Our staff wheeled Rod in his hospital bed to the window by our meditation room, where he was surrounded by nearly 50 members of his family — both his birth family and his adoptive family, the facility staff.

People from Pre-op, OR, Inpatient Care and Ancillary Services visited. There were doctors, nurses, laboratory techs, RTs and more. There were people who were working their shifts, and people who came in on their day off. There were even people who had left the organization but came back to say goodbye.

We created a space where people could engage in whatever way was right for them.

We each had the opportunity to hold the prayer shawl and express whatever way felt right in the moment. Some prayed silently, others prayed aloud. Some prayers were Christian, others were not. Some offered words of encouragement, others offered their emotional goodbyes. Through it all, God’s healing presence was made known not just to Rod and his family, but to our staff.

Rod’s life came to an end the next day, and his family asked me to lead them during his funeral service, which I agreed to do.

I believe that our care for Rod is a testimony to the commitment we have to our patients, that we are people who see our patients as people with whom we can develop personal connections.

Our mission statement emphasizes caring, especially for those who are vulnerable, and I believe we do that most authentically when we engage with our own vulnerability individually and collectively. What a treat it was to see that on display.