

God's beautiful music

Let me share with you this story by Pat Foertsch. Last year Pat participated in an ecumenical pastoral care course held at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. At the end of the course, participants were asked to write a personal reflection. Here is what Pat wrote:

Early last year I had a nasty health scare. Totally out of the blue I was given the probable diagnosis of a severe, debilitating, incurable disease. There was no test for it and I was told that I would just have to wait and see how the symptoms progressed.

I panicked! My world seemed to be falling apart. I wasn't at all ready for this. I'd planned on at least another thirty years of healthy life – my plan, not God's. Happily, with the help of some wonderful pastoral care that I received in my parish and the support of my family, I came to accept that if this was God's will for me, I could bear it.

Then I began to think of all those things that I was going to do One Day, when I had more time, money, the children grew up, and so on, and I realised that maybe Now was all the time I had. So I decided to start doing those things immediately. Amongst other things, I bought myself a cello and began to take lessons.

Well, it soon became apparent that learning to play the cello was not such an easy task as

I'd envisaged. I had to get my fingers right, my hands in the right position, pull the bow at a certain angle, speed and slope, before I even made a sound, much less a tune.

As time passed, either by a miracle or because of a wrong diagnosis, my symptoms began to diminish and then disappeared. I was given a reprieve! I didn't have the disease! Of course I was greatly relieved, but the experience left me with an enormous feeling of compassion for those who were less fortunate, and had to face disease, disability or death. I remembered, with gratitude, the gentle and sensitive help I'd received when I was in crisis, and I wanted to do something to help others. Just at this time I saw a notice in our parish bulletin asking for people to train as Pastoral Carers. It seemed like a sign from God.

Meanwhile, I'd been struggling with my cello and coming to the conclusion that maybe it wasn't the instrument for me. Then it struck me! Perhaps I was the instrument that God wanted to play. I began to see that, as a musical instrument must be cut to shape, the wood stressed, bent, then planed, sanded and polished, the strings stretched, and tuned before it can play its beautiful music, so through the pain and stress of life God is also lovingly shaping us in the way He wants us to be. To play His beautiful music – each of us making our own unique sound, different and yet just as beautiful.

The wood doesn't understand why it is being made to suffer, but if it is not pliable and won't accept the shape that the Master Instrument Maker imposes on it, then it may split and break. So, if we are to be whole, we must accept the way God wants to shape us.

So, when I started the Pastoral Care Visitor's course, I saw myself as a very roughly shaped instrument. As the course progressed, I began to feel the planing and the polishing progressing. It was wonderful, but not always an easy experience. There's still a long way to go before this instrument will be able to play the beautiful and intricate music that it needs to be part of a symphony orchestra—but the journey has begun! •

