

The proposed project aims to explore the Christian spirituality of Dr. Cicely Saunders, the pioneering British doctor, nurse and social worker who founded the modern hospice and palliative care movement. Despite passing away in 2005, Saunders' work and philosophy continue to profoundly influence palliative care globally. This includes her conception of "total pain" which emphasizes addressing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of patient suffering. While numerous publications examine Saunders' life and philosophy, this project will provide an in-depth theological examination of her spirituality through the lens of her own writings, references, and influences. It will draw primarily from sources she engaged with directly, such as the Bible, theological texts, quotes from particular writers, as well as her books like "Watch With Me." The goal is to produce an English-language publication appealing to an academic audience interested in Saunders' spirituality as well as broader theological and philosophical questions surrounding palliative care. Rather than merely recounting biographical details, the work will systematically analyze key spiritual and theological themes that permeated Saunders' approach. Potential topics to be explored include: the imago dei and human dignity, guilt/shame, trust/doubt, life after death, the significance of pain/suffering, the meaning of hope, questioning God, silence/listening, the incarnation of God, the spirit/Holy Spirit, death as enemy or telos, Christian discipleship and transformation, and the parable of the Good Samaritan as a model for compassionate care. The authors propose examining how Saunders integrated or responded to these concepts based on her experiences with patients, developing St. Christopher's Hospice, and her own spiritual journey as an Anglican with an ecumenical horizon. By illuminating the deep theological roots underlying Saunders' praxis, the book aims to shed light on the religious and philosophical foundations of her paradigm-shifting vision for patient-centered, holistic palliative care.

May 2024, Rev. Dr. Martina Holder-Franz – University Zürich, Rev. Prof. Dr. John Swinton – University of Aberdeen