

(Photograph downloaded from: <https://www.musicademy.com/stages-grief-process/>)

Claudia Brown: ‘The Angels (Peace)’: Ramryge Chapel; St Albans Cathedral

‘Peace’ is one of six Angels designed and made by Claudia Brown (they are ‘Denial’, ‘Anger’, ‘Bargaining’, ‘Depression’, ‘Acceptance’ and ‘Peace’). Each Angel was etched and heat-sculpted from sheet Perspex and then placed in the chapel niches. The Friends of St Albans Cathedral bought the Angels for permanent display and they have stood in the Ramryge chapel since 2007

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, author of the book ‘On Death and Dying’, identified a set of stages she termed ‘the grief process’. Her research in the 1960s suggested that most people shared a common theme that comprised of five stages: ‘Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance’. They were designed to give a framework and a hopeful shape to the confusion of the many roller-coaster patterns of emotions and thoughts experienced by a bereaved person. These stages may or may not proceed in the anticipated linear progression for any individual. They may be experienced in different ways because everyone’s journey is as personal to them as their DNA, their genetic finger-print. For some, it may be very difficult to progress between stages; they may also oscillate or switch back and forth between two or more. Sadly, a significant minority will not be able to progress and may become marooned or frozen at an earlier stage.

Peace is an extra stage beyond Acceptance. Having finally achieved acceptance of the reality of our present circumstances, of who we are, we can begin to find peace. Peace within ourselves, peace with others, peace in the joy of life and peace with God. We are not necessarily asked to forget the past, although we might be able to do so. However, where required, we are asked to forgive as we have been forgiven. Peace allows us to take the next important and positive step into our future, having been through any traumas and griefs we may have experienced.

Peace is an easy word to spell and say; we share the Peace in our regular Morning and Evening Prayers on a Sunday and in our Eucharistic Service (although somewhat differently in the current COVID-19 ear), but might it have become a reflex phrase or action that is hollow and without commitment..? Jesus, when he first appeared to his disciples following his resurrection greeted them with, ‘Peace be with you’, not once but twice to reassure them and calm their incredulity and anxiety (John 20: 19 and 21). We acknowledge that the peace of God ‘transcends all understanding’ (Philippians 4: 7) because it is different from the world’s peace (John 14: 27). True peace cannot simply be found in the absence of conflict or argument or by positive thinking or mindfulness, or just having good feelings. True peace comes from knowing that God is in control. The peace of God and of Christ provides confident assurance (or reassurance) in any situation. Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt and temptation fight for our souls on a daily basis; the peace of Christ in our minds and in our lives restrains these hostile forces and provides comfort and hope.

**The peace of Christ in your heart,**

**The peace of Christ in your mind,**

**The peace of Christ in your life,**

**The peace of the Lord be always with you, and those whom you love, today tomorrow and forever. Amen**