



Newsletter to the change of the year, 4.1.2017

Dear members,

I am writing this newsletter from the place I am spending my holidays at. We are in Weggis, near the lake of Lucerne for a week. If we look back on 2016, we are happy that Canada, this great country, legalized assisted suicide, as well as two states of America (assisted suicide is now legal in six US-states). Unfortunately, only terminal cases are taken into account in the United States as well as in Canada. It is an improvement obviously, but remains unacceptable from the perspective of self-determination. This freedom only exists in Switzerland. Theoretically, even psychiatric cases and dementia can get assisted suicide in Switzerland, if they ask for it. But to get it, they need the approval of a neurologist or a psychiatrist, who must write a certificate that the patient is lucid and of sound mind. I say "theoretically" because it is nearly impossible to find a neurologist or a psychiatrist, who would agree to write such a certificate. They invoke "ethical reasons" when a patient needs it for an assisted suicide. Swiss societies who campaign for self-determination at the end of life, are fighting against this unfair and irrational attitude of the psychiatrists. We will go on fighting, but it might take some time until we succeed.

I would like to tell you about Canada and about our holidays at Cindy's. She wrote us something very beautiful: one of the white head eagles, which Bill had found wounded and incapable to fly, spread its wings and flew back into the wilderness, healed by Bill. Before it started off, Cindy spread some of Bill's ashes onto its feathers between his wings. Thus, Bill could fly up into the sky with his beloved eagle. We often experience beautiful farewell moments such as this one. A proof that letting somebody go, who is suffering from an incurable disease, has something to do with love.

Another piece of news you will like: we are very happy with this new and large apartment in Liestal. It is still difficult for me to accept that a gentle death should have to be banished to an industry zone. When a journalist asks me (as they often do) if it is not difficult for me to accompany up to 2 people a week for an assisted suicide, I nearly always answer the same: it is a mixture of sadness and of gratitude, sometimes even happiness. I would like to describe a case I had a year ago. It was a man, who came with a "doctor". In our apartment, where you can find no else than peace, this "doctor" suddenly started to express his negative feelings towards assisted dying. I was wondering how to get him to leave the room without causing more disruption. And suddenly the patient said that the "doctor" was going to speak a last prayer for him. To my great surprise, the preacher held a totally tolerant speech, lacking the controversial tone he had held before. This tolerance for assisted suicide impressed me a lot. I often see that the relatives or friends who accompany a dying person have problems with accepting the wish for death of their relative or friend. It is important to relinquish one's wish to see somebody alive, when that person has decided to die. The preacher preached so beautifully that I would like to have the same speech the day I decide to die.



The “day of the open door” was a great success. We had reserved two afternoons, one for the authorities and the physicians, another for members and people interested in what we do. Both days were successful and many interesting discussions took place.

After the days of the open doors, I could give a conference in a clinic for home care. We are not only devoted to helping patients die, but also to keep them alive as long as it is bearable for them. Private and public palliative care units who do visits at the homes of the patients are a great help. I would like to thank Spitex (private care at home) for its devotion towards suffering patients. It is only when the suffering becomes unbearable and the wish to die so relentless that an assisted dying should be possible.

We were able to organize a workshop in our apartment at Liestal. Those who took part in the workshop showed a lot of interest and the discussions on advanced directives and planning in case of loss of mental capacity were useful.

We would like to remind you that we have wheelchairs and walkers at the disposal of our members. You can ask us by electronic or normal mail for help in case you are interested.

So all I have left to say is that I wish you a happy and successful 2017.

Dr. med. Erika Preisig  
Hausärztin und  
Präsidentin des Vereines „lifecircle“  
Und der Stiftung Eternal Spirit  
[www.lifecircle.ch](http://www.lifecircle.ch)

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’ *Margaret Mead*