

One of Us: Brette Petway writes about the power of prayer

By Charlie Patton

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Brette Petway's younger sister, Mandi, was a junior in high when she got devastating news: she had Hodgkin's disease.

Petway didn't handle the news of her sister's illness well.

Her "grief, pain, anger and depression" led her to drop out of college for a time and return to Jacksonville, although she would later earn a degree in health and nutrition from West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Mandi lived with the disease long enough to graduate from the College of Charleston. But ultimately she died in 1992, sending her older sister into a tailspin.

"I found myself expressing the pain I was feeling in my journal and I'd draw my feelings as well," said Petway, who has a home in Atlantic Beach.

Ultimately she realized that the acts of writing about and drawing her feelings were a form of prayer.

There was a certain irony in prayer becoming her coping mechanism.

When she was a child, her parents attended church regularly and expected their children to do so as well.

"I resisted," Petway writes in the introduction to her new book, "Prayer Is Good: A Path from Grief to Peace." "I pitched a fit and avoided church as much as possible."

Today she not only prays regularly, she actively leads others to pray.

“That young girl who kicked and screamed to avoid perfunctory religious learning now helps others to open their lines of communication with God,” she said.

In “Prayer Is Good,” Petway not only argues for the value of prayer but sets out guidelines on how to make the experience most meaningful. Journaling, painting and collaging are all part of her approach to prayer.

Petway’s parents are Episcopalians and she sometimes attends an Episcopal church. She also regularly attends The Church of Eleven²².

But she said her approach is non-denominational. She’s a certified practitioner of Ho’oponopono, an ancient Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness.

“Prayer Is Good” consists of a series of chapters on the topics of prayer, courage, hope, comfort, light, truth, peace, faith, grace, love and gratitude.

Each chapter includes a black and white image of the word to be colored by the reader.

Each chapter also includes a recommendation for setting up a prayer altar using a candle, a colored pencil, a flower, an essential oil, a stone, incense and tea. In the courage chapter she recommends an orange candle, an orange pencil, an orange Gerbera flower, wild orange oil, a Carnelian crystal, patchouli incense and Chai Rooibos tea.

A copy of “Prayer Is Good” is \$14.97. A bundle that includes the book and a “Prayer Is Good Journal” is \$23.95. Postcards for coloring are \$12.95. They can be purchased at prayerisgood.com. There is also a “prayer is good” Facebook page at facebook.com/prayerisgoodco/.

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