

Theme: Freetheme

Title of project: *God Has No Favourites*

The images included for this submission are taken from an intimate photographic document that explores our family's response to my Mother's diagnosis of secondary brain cancer through until her death. My parents were officers in the Salvation Army for 45 years; the majority of those years were served abroad as missionaries in Africa. They moved back to the UK in 2016 when my mother's cancer spread to the brain and my father became her primary carer.

The project in its nature was a therapeutic collaboration for us all and shows the intimate moments shared during this time. I hope that the images will reveal the loving complexion shared among our family whilst also exposing the struggles and pain caused by such an experience. Despite the subject being intensely personal, the images try to transcend this and speak of a more universal narrative about love, family, loss, strength and fragility that any viewer could understand. My family is a microcosm for this dynamic, occurring all too often within families who also experiencing much of the same struggle. Subsequently the work is raw, showing a certain vulnerability without aspiring to be sentimental.

Everyone experiences death alone, death separates us from everyone around us and it is an experience that we cannot share with anyone else. I have been forced to consider what makes death so hard to talk about? Why do people fear talking to loved ones about dying? Perhaps it is because death is so uncertain and uncertainty produces fear. Humans have had to face death and mortality since the beginning of time, but our experience of the dying process has changed dramatically in recent history. Death used to be sudden, unexpected and relatively quick, people did not fear death as much as they do now. Having conversations about death occur far too infrequently. Discussing end of life is such an important conversation to have and we need to change the culture of talking about dying as death is a very complex and layered subject. My mother believed that she was going to be healed by God until the day she died. When I asked my father why God would let mum suffer and die, he simply replied 'because God has no favourites.'