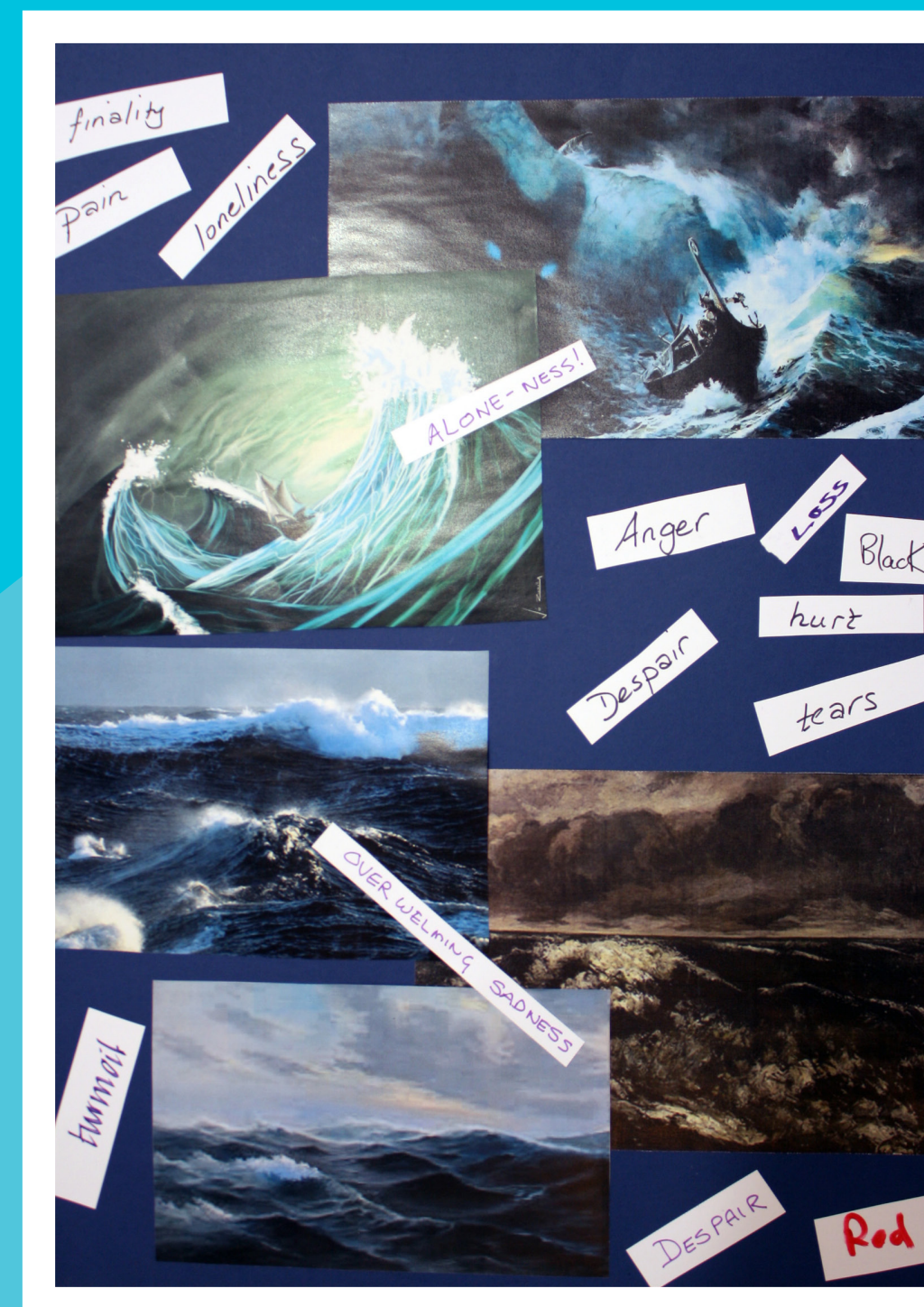


Art & Soul - The Coracle Project

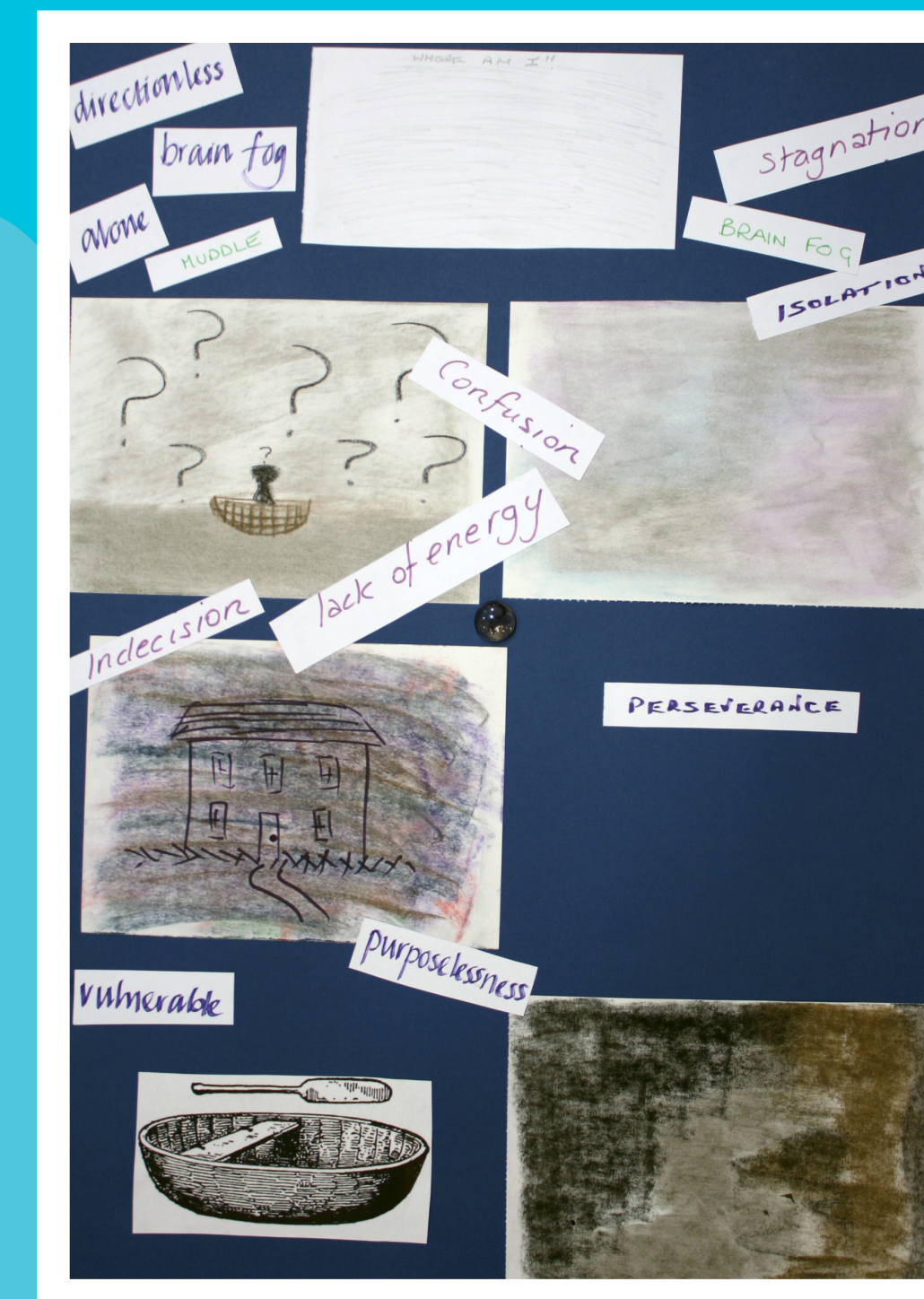
Art and Conversation - Painting a Grief Journey

Suzie Stark, Chaplain, St Columba's Hospice

A small group of people who had completed 1:1 bereavement support or counselling sessions at St Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh were invited to take part in an art-based group project. The Coracle Project consisted of six sessions facilitated by the chaplain. The group explored words and images that encapsulated aspects of a grief journey with which all agreed they could identify. The aim was to enable the group to discuss their experiences in a safe environment while producing original artwork that might be used to allow others to normalise their own feelings around loss and bereavement. The artwork depicts three different stages of a grief journey, noting that progress is not linear and stages might be revisited many times.



Mood Board 1: Raw grief, turmoil



Mood Board 2: Loss of direction, in the fog



Mood Board 3: Calm seas, a sense of hope

"I have never been able to express my emotions verbally but since I became involved in the Coracle Project I find I am able to express how I feel through art."

Participant in The Coracle Project

alone

Red

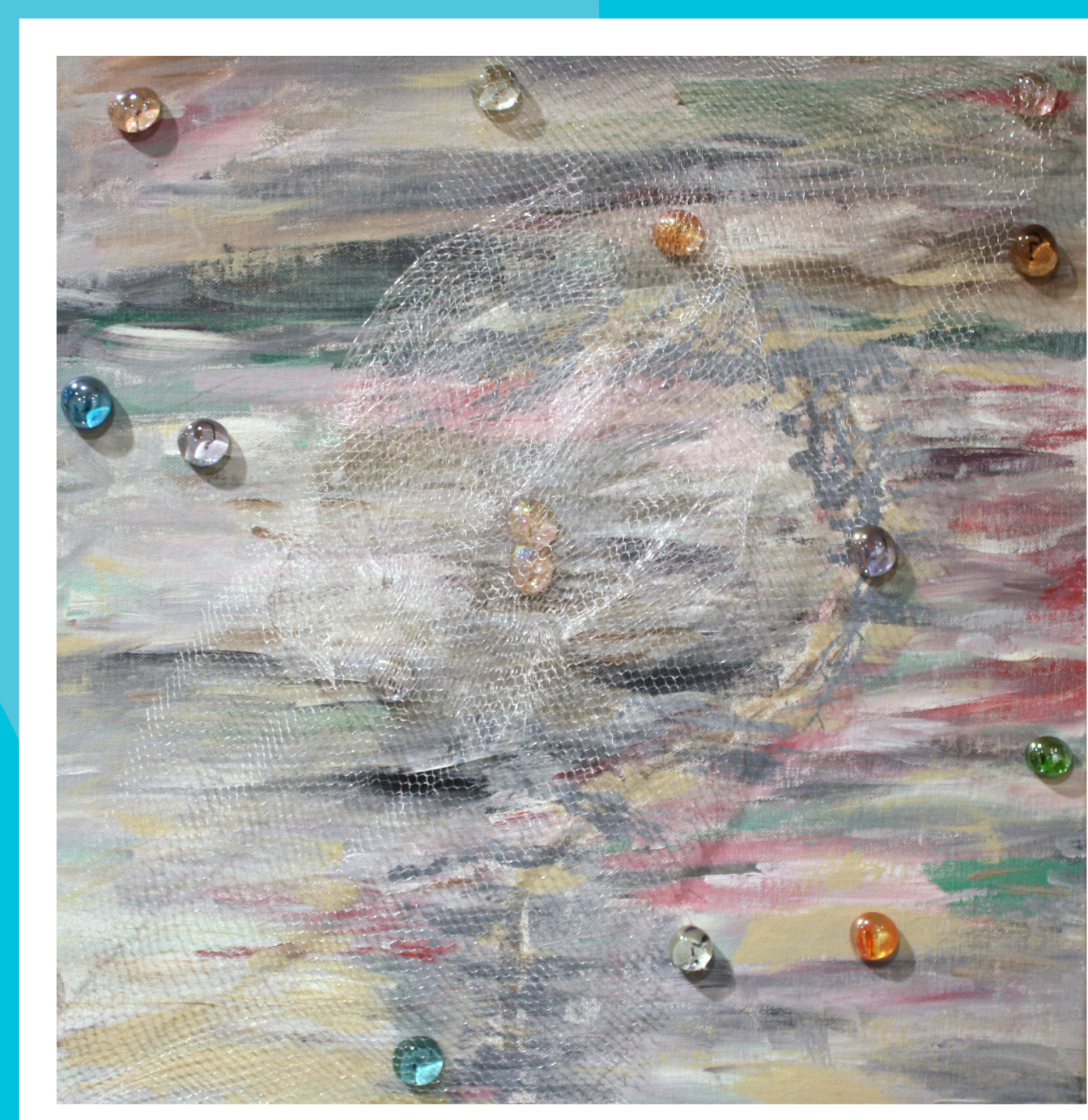
DESPAIR

Anger

Explored Words by Group



Painting 1: Raw grief, turmoil



Painting 2: Loss of direction, in the fog



Painting 3: Calm seas, a sense of hope

The analogy of being at sea in a small craft was used by the chaplain in 1:1 bereavement support sessions and was familiar to most of the group. Images, words and colours were collated onto boards. The group considered how a grief journey might be likened to a voyage in a small craft through the turmoil and storms of raw grief, through the mist and fog of uncertainty and lack of purpose toward the longed for, but often elusive, calmer waters where the little craft can be steered with intention towards a more hopeful future.

directionless

BRAIN FOG

Love

hope

ACCEPTANCE

Explored Words by Group

The paintings have been exhibited and also used as conversation starters to help others discuss their feelings of bereavement, demonstrating how conversation and art in a safe group environment can be beneficial for those taking part as creators and leave a legacy for others struggling with their own losses.

Group support continues to be offered to bereaved relatives by the chaplain and the Art & Soul group meets each Monday with membership changing as people come and go. Building on a successful history of the arts at the Hospice, St Columba's is delighted to be developing an in-house arts service to include the provision of Arts Therapies and a wider programme of arts activities and events.

Articles which may be of interest:

McGuinness, B., Finucane, N., & Roberts, A. (2015). A Hospice-Based Bereavement Support Group Using Creative Arts: An Exploratory Study. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 23(4), 323-342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1054137315590734>

Weiskittle RE & Gramling SE (2018). The therapeutic effectiveness of using visual art modalities with the bereaved: a systematic review. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 2018 (11), 9-24 <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S131993>