

## Area Grief Coalitions

- ◆ Downtown Minneapolis Coalition:  
Marion Hollicky, 952-544-5365
- ◆ Edina Coalition:  
Ruth Lyons, 952-996-0565
- ◆ Richfield Bloomington Coalition:  
Rev: Otis Borop, 952-835-3088  
or 952-835-7585
- ◆ Southwest Grief Coalition:  
Kris Johnson, 952-975-1939
- ◆ Capital City Grief Coalition:  
Lois Knutson, 651-227-4430
- ◆ Crystal-Robbinsdale-New Hope  
Coaliton:  
Rev. Molly Cox, 952-925-2114
- ◆ West Metro Coalition:  
Darcie Rodman, 763-546-4404
- ◆ West Suburban Coalition:  
Alva Benson, 763-545-1108 (h)  
or 763-475-7124 (w)
- ◆ South Minneapolis Coalition:  
Norine Larson, 952-925-2437
- ◆ Hastings Area Grief Coalition:  
Marty McNunn, 651-437-6817

## Vegetarian Chili

from Barbara Koffel

**Editor's Note:** This was recently served at a MCDES board meeting



- 1 (2 pound) can tomato sauce
- 1 (2 pound) can kidney beans—  
drained
- 1 large green pepper, cleaned and  
chopped
- 1 med onion, peeled and chopped
- 3 fresh tomatoes cut in small chunks
- 1 carrot, cleaned and grated
- 8 oz Danish havarti, cut into chunks
- 2 T mild chili powder
- 1 T Spike (herbal seasoning)
- 1 T dried sweet basil

Mix all ingredients together in large stockpot or Dutch oven. Bring to simmer and cook 1½ hours, stirring occasionally.

## The Screen Scene: Images of Life & Death

### WIT

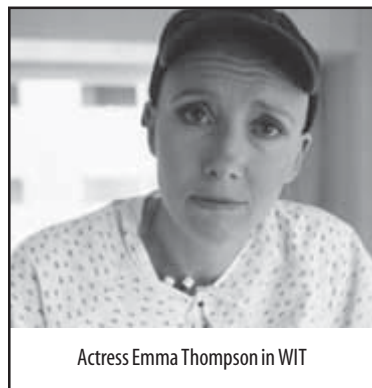
Directed by Mike Nichols ◆ Script by Mike Nichols and Emma Thompson  
Reviewed by Barbara Ziegenhagen

What is it like to be told you have stage-four-cancer? By a doctor who is more interested in his aggressive treatment of the disease for research than in you as a human being. What is it like to have your former student become one of your doctors? How do you handle the realization that the cancer tumor is spreading rather than shrinking? That the specialist had really not expected it to shrink.

These questions arise for the main character Vivian Bearing (played by Emma Thompson) in “WIT,” an HBO Special video. Dr. Bearing, a professor of 17<sup>th</sup> century English metaphysical poetry, has survived her fifty-some years “being steadfast, resolute.” She remains so when told she has stage-four ovarian cancer and she agrees to the heretofore untested, full dose, eight-month course of chemotherapy. She realizes early on that “the doctor prefers research to humanity.” Throughout the video, she looks at us directly and forthrightly, telling us her thoughts. Quite early she says to us, “What we have come to think of as *me* is actually, in fact, just a specimen jar, a white piece of paper that bears the little black marks.” This is a painful recognition for a woman acclaimed worldwide for achievements in her field.

Vivian has no family and because of the way she has lived, she has no friends and is alone. Her only companion is poetry. It is not the poetry of feelings, but of metaphysical thought about life and death. To this point in life, she has successfully denied her own feelings. As the side effects of the chemo become increasingly severe, however, she finds the poetry less helpful. The focus and professional achievement of her life is not useful to her now. “I’m having these doubts. I don’t feel so sure of myself anymore. I seek the touch of human kindness.” In flashbacks to her classroom she sees students who asked for compassion and support and her unwillingness to give it to them.

What she had formerly considered black and white in life merges to grayness. “I can’t imagine how time can be so still,” she says. “It goes so slowly and yet it is so scarce.” As her feelings begin to emerge she confides, “I see I have been found out.” She ruminates on a personal level about one of the first poems she studied in college by John Donne, *Nothing but a breath lies between death and eternal life*. Her professor and mentor had emphasized, “Stay with the text, Vivian, not with the feelings.” Now Vivian finds that impossible.



Actress Emma Thompson in WIT

Vivian’s direct comments to us, as if to herself, prove to be powerfully personal and engaging. This video is thought-provoking on an individual level and could be an excellent springboard for conversation about the meaning of life and death among friends, workshop participants and professionals in the field of dying and death. It is available at most local video stores.

“Nothing but a breath lies between death and eternal life.”

– John Donne