

*Perspectives on Healing*  
*Presented by the Allen Avenue UU Worship Committee*  
*October 9, 2016*

**The Button**

by Leslie McConnell

I think I came out of the womb multi-tasking and probably took on some type of leadership role in the nursery by the time I left the hospital. Part of it is personality. Part of it is other people sensing when someone else is willing to be the one to be organized and in charge. The hard part is learning to say no.

Fast forward through my life. It has included thirty four years as an educator – the last nine spent working with special needs preschool children and their parents. I joined the PTA and ended up being the president. I decided to be a 4-H leader and in no time, I was the president of the leaders association. We had some bad stuff happen in our neighborhood and there I was – heading up the Neighborhood Crime Watch group. In the midst of this, we were raising two boys, who I am happy to report have successfully reached the independent ages of 19 and 22.

A little over five years ago, I realized I had reached a state of exhaustion. A health care provider advised me to think carefully about what I had on my plate. I needed to find things to fill me and not deplete me. I decided to give up some of my commitments find things that brought joy. I joined the Lake Region Community Chorus and have loved being part of this group. However, three weeks into being there, I was asked if I would consider being the vice president. I was able to politely decline.

Last spring I was informed that my position with the school district was being eliminated. Instead of searching for a similar position, I decided to take a break and give myself more time to become replenished. So this fall, I am working at a call center for a large retail store based here in Maine. (I'm sure you can guess where.....) One of the things that I really like about this job is one of the buttons on the phone. It is called "ResQue". If I have any questions, if I don't know the answer, if I need help of any kind, I can put the customer on hold and call "ResQue".

One the way home after one of my first days, I began to think about this great feature. There were so many times throughout my life, at work or at home, that I would have loved to have a ResQue button. It's something we could all use. But then it dawned on me, I do have a ResQue button of sorts. Over all the years of being too busy and feeling overwhelmed, I have never given up coming here to this church. This is the place that has continued to give me quiet moments to reflect and think. It's been a place of healing for me: Hearing Myke's services, Dale's beautiful music, leading a group of children in RE, and being part of the Worship Committee. It's given me laughter, friendship, retreats, discussion, and meditation. It's a place for questions, for answers and for help when you need it. My real ResQue button.

**Finding Wholeness** poem by Erica Bartlett – to get a copy, please contact the author

**Energy ebbing and flowing**

by Keith Prairie

Energy ebbing and flowing

Electrons bolting

Circuits conducting

Insulating wires

Chasing ground

Western medicine seeing

Cause and consequence

Symptom and relief

Pain leaving ripples ripping

Cell and neuron

Molecules connecting elements but

Losing soul

Losing soul

Yin- Yang

Universal cosmic energy

Souls lining and aligning

Chi

Healing energy circling

Hands conducting

Spirit channeling

Chakras opening

Meridians mediate

Mind calms breathing slows.

Quiet inside innate flows

Cosmic energy touching

Healing

Coming to quiet the self

Quiet the self

## **Heroic Healers**

by John Howard

I heard a story on public radio news, an interview with a woman from India. Someone threw acid in her face and had become an activist working to end this horrifying but not uncommon occurrence in India, a type of punishment aimed at women who are seen as threatening the rigid cultural status quo. The act was intended to ruin her face, removing marriage as an option for her and therefore the only culturally acceptable value, at least as seen by many people in her culture. Part of her work as an activist was to help pass legislation that restricts the availability of the specific types of acid commonly used.

Her healing could have happened just in her body. Evidently she found the strength to not only recover physically, but to find a renewed purpose in living, and this reveals a courage and strength of personality most of us doubt we possess.

I try to imagine the shock of experiencing that kind of personal violence, but it's hard to even think about. I feel the same about anyone that has survived extreme violence – one wonders why the bitterness does not overwhelm them, why they don't just give up or give in to hatred.

Also participating in the interview was a man that she met as a fellow activist. They were now married. He did not rescue her, it was the other way around. He was drawn to her strength. This is why I like this story. As he explained it, he had felt insecure and unsure in his life, had many of the worries most of us carry that are invisible to others. Self-knowledge was his strong suit, and the humility to recognize that this person had something he needed. In this way the wounded one becomes the healer. And yet both people, the man and the woman, were healers in their own way. For him, it began with sensitivity to a deeper truth, and then simply going towards the light, being attracted, letting healing in as the third party collaborator so that healing could happen to both of them.

Few among us want this kind of heroism. The good news is that being part of a community of healing does not usually require heroics, just humility and paying attention. Humility because it is unlikely that any of us could extend kindness to the suffering person in front of us if we didn't first experience kindness from another. And paying attention because the starting point for offering healing is to be attentive. Each of us has a unique path to walk. Along that path, if we are fortunate, we have been loved. Our task is to keep walking with eyes open, recalling with gratitude the care we have received and then simply passing it on.

## **About pain**

by Rick Kimball

Good morning. I am Rick Kimball, and I rise to promote the acceptance of pain.

But don't be alarmed. I will not ask you to stand and pinch your neighbor or to slam your own head with a fist – although I could get great photographs if you did. And don't throw your

Tylenol out. I call you not to suffering but to exploring the important place of pain in our lives. Pain after all is an invitation to heal.

My 13-year-old grandson knows something about pain and relief. Tirrell and I called him last month after his beloved soccer coach died at 42 of a heart attack. Miles was hurting, he needed healing, and I asked him why bad things happen. "Because good things do," he replied, echoing thoughts we had shared a year before when he lost a cat, words of understanding I knew would help him heal.

Sometimes I have asked the kids in our junior youth group to imagine a perfect life with no illness, no pain, no death. Perfection, we soon see, is not so perfect after all. Living like lichens on a rock, we would all suffer profoundly from terminal boredom with no chance of termination.

Surely we would fight our way out of this Eden. We would pick and greedily devour our own forbidden fruit. We would rip open our own Pandora's box and fling all the world's troubles out to end the reign of boredom. We would set the opposites of pain and healing against each other, opposites like bad and good, opposites in interplay, stirring the winds that shape our lives and turn our worlds. Moved by those winds, we would evolve again from creations to creators.

Human life is the process of attempted healing, sometimes successful, sometimes not, healing from the trauma of birth, the hunger of infancy, the ravages of aging. And creativity is the source of our healing tools: Radiation and drugs to cure cancers. Counselors to bandage torn relationships. Peace centers and bumper stickers to fight against war. Religion to join us in love and hope. Healing tools galore.

All our wounds cannot be healed, for that is not the nature of life. Pain will always be with us, twisting us tighter and pounding us harder as we age. More and more I hear my own would-be healers speak of managing, not ending the pains that brought me to them. My physical therapist never says good-bye. "I'll be seeing you," she calls out, even as I end the current series of therapeutic sessions. She knows that I accept my pain well enough to become active again and experience more. How else can I keep on living? Others here do the same – recovering from a broken and painful relationship and moving on to risk another love. Healing from the sprained ankle and running again, risking new injury.

It is not my place to name people in this church who have come to accept and cope with pain, so heal in their own heroic fashion. But they are here. Look around and learn from them. And take an inner bow if you are one of them.

Accepting pain does not mean applauding it, though some do. "I like pain," says an anonymous quote from the Internet. "I like pain because it lets me know I'm still alive." Anonymous probably had a bottle of aspirin nearby, but the power of aspirin is minute compared to the power of the wondrous arts the creative force has produced in response to pain and suffering.

Do you need to recover from the trauma of a failed relationship? Stroll through a museum and bathe in the colors artists use to promote their own psychic healing.

Are you traumatized by political news? Crushed by a crumbling economy? Try a movie or play.

Are you beset by arthritis? Attend the Bates Dance Festival or watch the Olympics and celebrate what others can do with their still young bodies – even as you know they sometimes ache with pain, the price of their achievement.

Are you pained by the death of a loved one? I recommend requiem masses by Mozart and Faure and others.

As Tirrell's mother lay weakly approaching her own death, we sometimes brought her CD's filled with rich classical music. We watched as Connie closed her eyes and began gently to smile, transported by music away from pain into long, beautiful moments of joyful relief. Then we joined her in the smile.

She accepted her pain and moved beyond it. We all can do that, too, accept our pain and move beyond, into the arts, or sports, or circuses, or festivals, or games, or to the best human creation of all – humor.

"Thank you for coming," Tirrell's mother told me when we visited. "You make me laugh." That's what jokes and one-liners are for. That's what cartoons and late night comedy shows are about. Maybe they can't heal us, but they can give comforting relief.

Humor even helps with death. Some of the best laughs I have had in this room have come during memorial services. And I love to see others laughing at death – as in a recent New Yorker cartoon showing a tombstone inscribed with these words: "I can't believe I ate all that kale for nothing." I imagine the deceased lying under that stone or floating above it and thinking, "I fought the good fight. I accepted my life, my death and my pain, even the pain of eating kale. And now I get the last laugh."

Blessed be.

### **Closing words**

Let us open our minds and hearts to the place of quiet, to the silent prayer for the healing of pain, and the soft, gentle coming of love.