

# CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  November/December 2005

## The Wintered Spirit

Strange as it seems, I am writing this article when thoughts of winter are far, far off. I have just returned from the downtown farmer's market with bags of the season's beautiful bounty ~ melons, peppers, tomatoes, corn, beans. In addition, today is one of those perfect days with a clear blue sky, a lovely breeze, and lots of sunshine and delicious warmth. A part of me longs for these kinds of days to last forever - such a natural aspect of our human nature to want to cling to what we deem as perfect. But another part of me knows more wisely. Over time and quite subtly, I would begin taking it for granted, no longer savoring its gifts in a grateful heart.

After all, I'm a born and bred Midwesterner. The rhythms of the seasons are part of my make-up. Just as the seasons are necessary to nature's movement from one stage of growth to another, so it is within me. I have my own seasons that are equally essential to my growth and maturing. If summer is the season of flourishing, and fall is the season of letting go, then winter is the season of going deep within and waiting.

Whether in metaphorical or literal terms, we all deal with winter. The well-known hymn/poem, "In the Bleak Midwinter," evokes common images of the season. "In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,/ Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;/ Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow..."<sup>1</sup> Gratefully, I know that winter is just a season, and remembering this, I can deal with most of what comes my way on the journey to spring.

A similar mindset is needed when it comes to the winter of the spirit. At the Center, certain conditions may appear more commonly at this time of year. Depression and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) are among these. Depression can be a winter of sorts in which people might find themselves living in a bleak darkness that feels like it has no end. It can be a challenge to determine what part of depression is a natural process that one must wait with until resolution comes and/or what part is a medical condition that needs treatment.

A January 2005 article in the Des Moines Register, "Darkness Dampens the Spirits," quotes Dr. Dan Oren, associate professor of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, defining SAD as "a recurrent pattern of major depression in the fall and winter season returning to normal in spring and summer on a regular basis."<sup>2</sup> It is a condition that has become associated with a lack of daylight and is more common in parts of the country that experience diminished daylight. Iowa in the winter would certainly fit that criterion. The common theory is that a lack of sunlight may cause hormonal changes in the body, specifically that levels of the hormone melatonin increase with growing darkness. When individuals notice becoming more tired, having less energy, wanting to be less active and to sleep more, feeling blue, irritable, or depressed, the conventional health-care perspective these days is prone to "medicalize" these symptoms into a psychiatric disorder, treatable with drugs.

However, I personally wonder about this "medicalized" approach to SAD, which appears to be a very contemporary affliction. Up until the 1900s, when the widespread use of electricity became a part of everyday life, society followed the revolutions of light through the seasons in determining the levels of human activity. For centuries, people entered quieter activities as the light waned, went to bed when the light was gone, and arose when it came up again. The light of summer allowed for long days of work and productivity, while the diminished light of winter allowed for rest, not only for the land, which went into dormancy, but also for people. These rhythms of the cycles of day and night and of the seasons were honored as the natural course of life.

Recognizing this history as a part of our cultural landscape may help in understanding that becoming more tired, having less energy, wanting to be less active and to sleep more are still very embedded in the human neurology and physiology. In the winter, there is a very real tendency to simply want to slow down and become quieter. In the animal world, it's called hibernation. In the plant world, it's called dormancy. In the human world, I call it wintering ~ the urge to lie low, read a good book, have a cup of cocoa, and take a nap or go to bed early.

In today's world, artificial light, overextended schedules, and environmental over-stimulation have altered this natural course, keeping people going way too fast and for way too long in their levels of activity. These factors have also worked away at the nervous system, keeping brains in a constant hyperactive state, and have had adverse effects on the innate capacity and need for rest, being quiet, slowing down, and going within. The needed rest that I am talking about is not simply a physical one. A psychic or a spiritual rest is needed as well ~ a *resting* that is essential to growth and restoration on all levels of being.

Silence, solitude, simplicity, and slowing down all seem anathema to contemporary culture, yet are essential for individual health and well-being. This dichotomy is exacerbated as winter coincides with the frenzied glut of expectations and activity that have come to be associated with the holiday season. Commercialism extols the virtue of buying and acquiring in order to be happy and loved. Advertisements show glowing faces and happy family gatherings that belie the experience of many as the holiday season approaches and feelings of aloneness and sadness abound and depression flourishes.

I've come to believe, through my own experience and that of the clients with whom I have been privileged to work at the Center, that true health, healing, and growth often come only when we begin to see that the path to an authentic and full life is counter cultural. When we can recognize and own our deep desire to become our truest selves, we are given the grace and the courage to take those baby steps (or giant leaps!) to reclaim ourselves. What better time than winter to step off the beaten path and to simply wait a while

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in our reclaiming. The seed needs time in darkness to allow the Holy Mystery to work in its core of potential. It takes large doses of faith to let go of the bounty of our lives and enter into darkness and stillness in order to be tended by a greater process than we can understand. It takes hope to trust that spring with its promise of awakening newness and summer with its bounty of fruits will follow.

Joyce Rupp, in her poem, "The Wintered Spirit," which I have used to title this article, concludes with, "It is in the winter of our lives that the enduring Voice within coaxes us along, nudges us into belief, urges us to stay in the dark for as long as it takes for re-birthing to occur. In our wintered time, it is this One who draws us close, nestles us near to heart, breathes strength into our spiritual bones, and assures us that we are growing wings under the frozen land of our desolate and emptied self."<sup>3</sup> As nature dims her lights, may you open yourself in trust to the promises of hope, goodness, potential, and new life held in the creative and compassionate spirit of winter.

**Kathy Reardon, R.N., M.S.**

*Kathy Reardon is a holistic nurse, spiritual director, and Certified Healing Touch Practitioner. She holds a bachelor of nursing degree from the College of St. Scholastica and a master of arts degree in counseling from Drake University.*

*Kathy combines healing touch with other holistic approaches to assist her clients in growing in self-responsibility, empowered well-being, and wholeness. She has a special interest in working with those in trauma, life threatening illness, grief and loss, and critical life transitions.*

**References:**

- 1 Christina Rossetti (1872) wrote these words in response to a request from the magazine *Scribner's Monthly* for a Christmas poem.
- 2 Ray Hogan. "Darkness dampens the spirits," *Des Moines Register*, January 17, 2005.
- 3 Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr (2005). *The Circle of Life: The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books.

**Additional Reading Suggestions:**

- Kathleen Fischer. *Autumn Gospel: Women in the Second Half of Life*.
- Gail Fitzpatrick. *Seasons of Grace: Wisdom from the Cloister*.
- Sue Monk Kidd. *When the Heart Waits: Spiritual Direction for Life's Sacred Questions*.
- Thomas Moore. *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life*.

## DMPCC Satellite Offices

### Ankeny

If you live in the Ankeny area, try the Center's services locally. The Center has a satellite office in the First United Methodist Church, 206 SW Walnut Street, Ankeny. Lisa Streyffeler, Ph.D., will be seeing clients there on Tuesdays. Afternoon and evening hours are available. Lisa works with adults on the broad spectrum of life issues. She has a special interest in counseling pregnant and postpartum women. Call the Center's main office to schedule an appointment, 274-4006.

### Lenox, Leon, Mt. Ayr, Osceola

The Center's "southern circuit" is growing. The Center has satellite offices in four southern Iowa locations now: Lenox, Leon, Mt. Ayr, and Osceola. Call the Center's main office to learn more or to schedule an appointment, (515) 274-4006.

### THANK YOU!

Thanksgiving is a good time for US to express our gratitude to YOU for your interest in and support of the Center.

## C.O.O.L. Corner

Children Overcoming the Obstacles of Life

### Keeping the Winter Blahs Away the C.O.O.L. Way

- ▶ Bundle up and play outside!
- ▶ Hot cider, hot chocolate, and hot lemonade are treat alternatives to soda pop.
- ▶ Bake cookies together.
- ▶ Turn off the electronics and turn on the board games.
- ▶ Set up a family jigsaw puzzle
- ▶ Learn to play charades.
- ▶ Assign age-appropriate household chores to everyone.
- ▶ Go to bed earlier.
- ▶ Read to your children.
  - ▶ Dust off an old classic.
  - ▶ Get a new book that's a little too difficult for your child to read independently.
- ▶ Read to each other.
- ▶ Change light bulbs in bathrooms and bedrooms to full-spectrum bulbs.
- ▶ Set up a craft / art area that allows for mess.
- ▶ Start early to make holiday gift wrapping paper and/ or holiday gifts.
- ▶ Create opportunities for plenty of daytime physical activity ~ dancing, wrestling, swimming, indoor playgrounds.
- ▶ Encourage quiet on-your-own time with no distractions ~ just reading a book or writing a letter to grandparents or working on an art project.

## How do we get children turned on to health?

Our fall 2005 community education series will help you do just that. If you are a parent or grandparent, or have a special connection of any kind to a child, check these out! You are invited to bring your school-age child with you.

All events take place the first Tuesday of the month, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., at Plymouth Congregational Church, 42nd and Ingersoll in Des Moines. The events are free, but please call or e-mail the Center to let us know you will be attending or to obtain further information (274-4006 or info@dmpcc.org). Request our newsletter or visit our website, www.dmpcc.org, for more information on these and other events sponsored by the Center.

### November 1 "Martial Arts: Healthy Kicks for Kids"

Lance Farrell

This presentation will demonstrate how martial arts can teach children to set and achieve goals, to concentrate better, to practice self-control in different situations. By developing self-confidence in their own abilities, children develop the self-esteem to walk away from confrontations.

### December 6 "Yoga for Kids: You Be a Mountain, I'll Be a Tree"

Patty Dornacker

Yoga can be as beneficial for kids as adults. Yoga helps develop better body awareness, flexibility, and coordination. Yoga can also aid relaxation and creativity. Simple ideas on how to incorporate yoga techniques into family life will be shared. Wear comfortable clothes and be prepared for fun! Bring your school-age child with you and share the fun!

## Temporarily We're ^ Moving



We have some exciting news to share with you! The Center is moving!

Beginning November 21st the Center will have a new primary location. The Center's main offices will soon be located at **2929 Westown Parkway, Suite 110 in West Des Moines**, just east of Valley West Mall, on the north side of the street.

This move is **necessitated** by the sale of the building that currently houses us (at 39th and Ingersoll) and the decision made in August by the new owners to take over the space the Center has occupied for nearly 20 years.

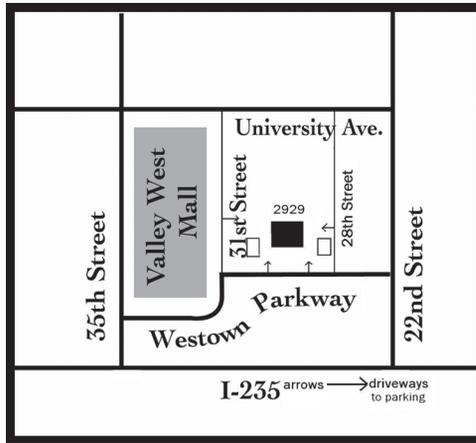
This move is **temporary** because the new location at 2929 Westown Parkway, while very professional, is very limited in its ability to accommodate our Ingersoll staff and clients. We will continue to see clients at our satellite office, 3408 Woodland Avenue, Suite 210, in West Des Moines. And we will continue to plan for a new, larger facility for the future.

The **sublease** on this space is for a period of 3 1/2 years. This gives the Center the time frame to conduct a capital campaign and to build the appropriate space.

Our phone number will remain the same ~ **274-4006**.

We can hardly wait to show you our new digs! We are beginning to plan an open house for early in 2006. We'll keep you posted via the newsletter.

In the meantime, if you would like to take part in formulating the plans for the Center's solid future, please give Ellery Duke, the Center's executive director, a call at the Center.



## Chakras and Healing ~ Getting to the Core

Another Evening with Anodea Judith, Ph.D.

Date: Wednesday, November 16, 2005  
 Time: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.  
 Location: Plymouth Congregational UCC Church, Greenwood Room  
 Fee: \$15 pre-registration; \$20 at the door, if space is available

In March 2004, the Center sponsored *An Evening with Anodea Judith* speaking on "Everything You Wanted to Know about Chakras." Anodea is returning to Des Moines to take us to the next level of understanding. This evening talk will go into the developmental psychology of the chakras, and how you can use this ancient system for self-diagnosis and treatment of common imbalances and problems.

Anodea Judith, Ph.D., is the country's foremost authority on the relationship between chakras and western psychology. She has written numerous books, including *Eastern Body/Western Mind*, *Wheels of Life*, and *The Sevenfold Journey*, and gives workshops and trainings worldwide.

## Trauma in Close Relationships: Understanding and Treating Trauma Disorders

A 10-week course

Dates: December 9, 2005 – February 24, 2006  
 Time: Fridays, 8:15 – 9:45 a.m.  
 Location: Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  
**NEW LOCATION**  
 2929 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines  
 Cost: \$200 plus optional textbook(s) if desired

Registration deadline: December 2, 2005  
 Instructor: Susan Pierce, M.S., M.S.W.

This course will explore interpersonal trauma related to childhood abuse and neglect from a developmental perspective with emphasis on the role of attachment in relationships. The effects of trauma on memory, consciousness, self-regulation, and behavior will be addressed. The course will provide a treatment framework for working with complex trauma disorders in adults, with specific focus on PTSD, dissociation, self-injury, and relational dynamics.



Susan Pierce is a staff psychotherapist at Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center working with individuals, couples, and families. She is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and a Licensed Independent Social Worker. Her areas of interest include attachment dynamics and development of the "self."

To register, call (515) 274-4006 or e-mail info@dmpcc.org. This course provides 15.00 hours towards the continuing education requirements of the Iowa Board of Social Work Examiners and the Iowa Board of Behavioral Science Examiners.

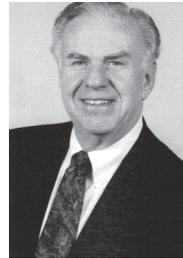
## Taking Your Church to the Next Level

Rev. Dr. Rodney E. Wilmoth

If you find yourself resonating with the need for something fresh to energize and revitalize your congregation, come join us for either or both of the following sessions as we pursue what it means to *be Church* and to *do Church today*.

### Taking Your Church to the Next Level

Thursday evening, November 10, 2005, 7:00 — 9:00 p.m.  
 Grace United Methodist Church, 37th & Cottage Grove  
 \$10 fee payable to DMPCC



This is a seminar designed for clergy and key lay leaders – those individuals involved with growing the church. The first part of the seminar deals with 12 critical trends that have a significant impact upon the church. The second part deals with the specific steps that a church can take to move to the next level and/or to turn things around. These steps are based on awareness regarding the impact of the critical trends locally. Come prepared to renew and retool for taking your church to the next level if it has been in a holding pattern and/or turning your church around if it has been in a declining pattern.

### The Place of Preaching Today

Friday morning, November 11, 2005, 9:00 a.m. — 12:00 noon  
 Grace United Methodist Church, 37th & Cottage Grove  
 \$10 fee payable to DMPCC

Dr. Wilmoth will share what he has learned along the way of 47 years of preaching, including such topics as:

- ~ the place of the sermon today,
- ~ crafting the sermon,
- ~ long-range sermon preparation,
- ~ resources that are theologically sound,
- ~ keeping one's preaching alive.

Rodney Wilmoth has a bachelor of arts degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln and a master of divinity degree from The Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO. He is an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. He has been serving in United Methodist churches for over forty years. He is the author of [How United Methodists Share Their Faith](#).

## Holiday Gifting

- ♥ Making a gift to the Center puts care and compassion at the core of your holiday giving. A holiday gift with real thoughtfulness would be to remember or honor those on your gift list through a tribute gift to the Center. Making such a gift extends your care and esteem far deeper than material objects.
- ♥ The holidays are times when memories of the departed come to heart. A memorial gift would give special honor to those people who are no longer with us, and bring hope to someone who is struggling in life on limited resources.
- ♥ Any gift to the Center – memorial, tribute, or outright contribution – would benefit those less fortunate that may be having a difficult time emotionally at the holidays. Call Kathleen Murrin at the Center to help with gifting at the holidays (515) 274-4006.
- ♥ Are you looking for a unique gift with purpose and meaning for some special person(s) in your life? Consider the gift of relaxation, peace, and health promotion through Healing Touch. Gift certificates are available through the Center. Contact Kathy Reardon, R.N., M.S., Certified Healing Touch Practitioner at the Center (274-4006).

## Matching Gifts for all Seasons

When an individual or couple makes a gift to the Center, many employers will match that gift. If you or your spouse is employed by a company that matches their employees' charitable contributions, your gift could be worth more than you think. Please check with your human resources office to see if your employer offers a matching gift program.

### Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center Foundation

Please consider a bequest to the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center Foundation when writing or reviewing your will. Help secure the Center's commitment to *future* generations. Together, we are sure to make a difference in the lives that follow ours.

[www.dmpcc.org](http://www.dmpcc.org)

Visit the Center's website for more information on the Center's counseling services and staff, special events and classes.

## CONNECTING

is a publication of the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, an independent, interfaith, not-for-profit organization. For over 30 years, the Center has been providing counseling and educational services to adults, families, adolescents, and children for the purpose of enhancing emotional, spiritual, and relationship health. The Center has satellite offices in West Des Moines, Altoona, Ankeny, and Urbandale.  
Editor: Kathleen Murrin

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