

CONNECTING

Healthy Information from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center  March/April 2006

Threatened with Resurrection

I was introduced to the book, *Threatened with Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan*,¹ during Holy Week 2001, a sabbatical time that I spent at a Benedictine monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania. The author, Julia Esquivel, writes poignantly and profoundly of her personal experience with the suffering, agony, and death in her beloved homeland, Guatemala. She witnessed firsthand the torture and pain encountered by the people of Guatemala, whose shedding of blood and tears echoed the despair of the Gethsemane night centuries earlier that is central to the Christian story.

Esquivel weaves into her writing her personal experience with Christ, “the One who was misunderstood, whose love for the oppressed was so great and whose teachings on justice so radical that he was hung on a crude cross, suffered and died for us all.” In her prayers and poems, agony and faith converge to lift up a deep hope “in the One who persists in love, who will never rest until transformation has come and justice reigns on the earth.” This hope is so strong, so indomitable, and even so improbable given the cruelty and inhumanity that pervade the world, that it can only be named “resurrection hope.”

Esquivel's use of words is beautiful, evocative, and full of symbolic meaning. The title itself is captivating - to be threatened with resurrection. The word “threat” typically carries a negative connotation, e.g., *to declare an intention of hurting or punishing or to express intention to inflict injury, retaliation, etc.* (Webster's Deluxe Unabridged dictionary 1983). So it takes work (quite a bit of work) to get my mind around Esquivel's juxtaposition of these two words, “threat” and “resurrection.” They simply do not seem to go together.

However, that seeming dichotomy becomes more of a holy paradox when I reflect about it in terms of the people we serve at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. People usually come to us in crisis: a relationship ending, a child out of control, the diagnosis of a serious illness, a layoff from a long-held job, domestic abuse or other trauma, a depression or anxiety that becomes incapacitating. Sometimes people come not because of an acute, immediate situation but because there is a restlessness, an unease, a sense that something is not right in themselves or in their lives, a longing for something more. Whatever the case, the person who comes to the Center is reaching out and taking a bold step on his or her own behalf. Desiring help, desiring to move through and beyond turmoil and pain, to grow as an individual, to seek peace, wholeness, health, hope — this is the desire for “resurrection,” the desire to enter into something new and improved.

This desire for healing and hope (*for resurrection*), however, will not go very far unless it is acted upon. Taking action is “the yes,” the consent to doing whatever it takes to move the desire toward being/having that which is desired. Healing and hope and resurrection require action steps. In the case of Center clients, *what it takes* is making the phone call to schedule an appointment and then showing up for the appointment. *What it takes* is returning time after time to do the sometimes hard work of therapy. It takes all of this to move from desire toward healing and hope, toward resurrection.

As in the Christian resurrection story, we too grow by dying and rising again, by dying to where we are now and being resurrected in new ways and to new levels of living life. This is where healing calls us, to step into the journey of our becoming, through our own personal dyings and risings. This requires some amount of trust. Life circumstances may have shattered trust for many of us. But we can learn to trust again and/or to trust more deeply. Observing the process of life that is constantly unfolding around us can help to teach us about trust.

The seasons inform us best about the rhythms of life. Winter lets go into spring, spring lets go into summer, and so it goes. One day lets go into the next, one week into another, and so it goes. Our bodies teach us as well - one breath lets go into the next, and the next, and the next. There is no other way for life to be. It wants to go on. Even if we hold our breath like an enraged child, that breath will come to an end because the body will demand the next breath. Life is the process that wills itself into continuing. Even at the end of life, there is the belief in many religious traditions that we let go of our physical life to enter eternal life. Life affirms itself through its continuity. It wants more. Life itself longs to go on, to grow, and become.

And so it is with us. There is a longing in us to go on, to grow, to become, despite painful and difficult circumstances. This is what that first phone call to the Center affirms, and what the on-going commitment to one's own personal healing through the process and work of therapy continues to affirm.

In the end, it seems that the despair of Good Friday with its message of anguish and impending death lets go somehow, mysteriously, sacredly, into the realm of alleluia and resurrection. Life bears witness to this process over and over again. It takes tremendous trust for clients embarking on journeys of hope and healing to share with us their stories, pain, longings, and dreams. At the Center, it is our mission and our deep desire to walk in sacred trust as we companion our clients through the terrain of

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uncertainty and unknowing, wanting with them and for them, often in spite of difficult and despairing circumstances, a “resurrection hope.” A resurrection hope that will carry them from bleak and seemingly lifeless terrain to a vision of a place where they will stand stronger, breathe deeper, and live with a new sense of self and being in their world.

*“Accompany us then on this vigil
and you will know what it is to dream!*

*You will know then how marvelous it is
to live threatened with Resurrection!*

*To dream awake, to keep watch asleep, to live
while dying, and to already know oneself resurrected!”²*

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 science 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. As a spiritual director, Kathy plans and facilitates retreats, and presents programs on prayer, spirituality, and adult faith formation.

References:

¹ Esquivel, Julie. *Threatened with Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan*. Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1982.

² Ibid, p. 63.

Recommended Reading:

Keating, Thomas. *Journey to the Center: A Lenten Passage*. NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1999

May, Gerald, M.D. *The Dark Night of the Soul*. San Francisco: Harper, 2004
Rupp, Joyce. *Little Pieces of Light: Darkness and Personal Growth*. NJ: Paulist Press, 1994.

C.O.O.L. Corner

Children Overcoming the Obstacles of Life

- ▶ Spring at C.O.O.L. means renewal and new growth.
- ▶ We renew our relationships with our children.
- ▶ We recharge our efforts at turning off electronics and turning on to each other.
- ▶ We participate together in activities outdoors.
- ▶ We take nature hikes to witness the greening of the earth.
- ▶ We turn soil and plant bulbs or seeds.
- ▶ We watch the full moon rise in a sea of stars.

When You Name It

by Susan Pierce, LISW

When you give the thing a name
It looks different somehow.
Pain becomes longing.
Busyness becomes grief.
Irritability becomes fear.
Silence becomes shame.
The tension inside takes on form and expression.

When you give the thing a name
It seems more manageable somehow.
Like me thinking about “it”
Not “it” controlling me;
Me claiming the unknown and “unknowable”
And it informing me.
From this new vantage point I see more clearly.

When you give the thing a name
It creates somehow
Options for choice
The possibility of change
Nutrients for growth
Avenues for hope.
Silent stirrings are able to blossom into action.



Susan Pierce, LISW, was honored at the Center’s annual meeting, February 9, 2006. After 10 years of service, Susan is moving to the Southwest. Susan’s poem, *When You Name It*, captures her sense of what happens in counseling. She shared it as part of the blessing she gave at the end of the annual meeting. Jeff Means, Ph.D., was also honored at the annual meeting for his 25 years of service at the Center.

Educational Events for the Community

The Body Talks

The Center is once again this spring sponsoring free community education events to explore the variety of complementary therapies available in the Des Moines community. The spring series is focusing on *The Body Talks*. All events take place on the first Tuesday of the month, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, 4126 Ingersoll Avenue 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).

April 4, 2006

Valerie Skow, D.C. **Chiropractic Conversation**

On April 4th, come learn how chiropractic care and proper nutrition can lead to optimal health. Valerie Skow, D.C., received her B.A. from Drake University and went on to Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, MN, to become a chiropractic physician. Additionally, she obtained pediatric and prenatal certification from the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association.

May 2, 2006

Greg Seiler, L.M.T. **BodyMinding Massage Therapies**

On May 2nd, the evening will focus on using various massage therapies to listen to our bodies and to find ways to assist in our own healing processes. Greg Seiler is a licensed massage therapist (L.M.T.), trained in Santa Fe, NM, with extensive training in CranioSacral Therapy and Myofascial Release. He brings a holistic approach to his work and enjoys sharing his experience and knowledge in a relaxed atmosphere using fun and humor.

Women Helping Women Annual Luncheon

Friday, March 10, 2006



Speaker: Barbara Robinette Moss

Iowa Author, *Change Me into Zeus's Daughter*, the brilliant memoir about growing up poor and undaunted in the South

Topic: *Worth Anything At All?*

Date: Friday, March 10, 2006

Time: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location: Hotel Fort Des Moines, Grand Ballroom
10th and Walnut, Des Moines

Tickets: \$30

Contact the Center, (515) 274-4006, to make your reservation.

Since 1999, the Center has sponsored an annual luncheon to raise awareness of our work counseling women struggling with the challenges of life on limited resources and to generate funds to help subsidize counseling for moderate- and low-income women and girls. This year's featured speaker draws upon her own bottom-line struggle with whether she was "Worth Anything At All."

Annual Meeting Recognition Awards



Harry and Starr Hinrichs with Ellery Duke



Linda Sears, The Vicky Daniel Real Estate Team



Pete Brantner on behalf of United Christian-Presbyterian Church – Bedford

Each year the Center recognizes an individual(s), corporation/foundation, and church that have been outstanding in their support of the Center. In the candlelit ambience of the annual meeting, we let them know how important they are to the Center and to the people the Center touches because of their support.

This year, Starr and Harry Hinrichs were honored for their individual contributions of time, talent, and treasure to the Center. Starr has been particularly active on the committee that helps organize the Women Helping Women luncheon over the past three years.

Vicky Daniel and Linda Sears of The Vicky Daniel Real Estate Team have generously increased both personal and professional commitments to the Women Helping Women fund over the past several years.

United Christian-Presbyterian Church of Bedford has stepped up to help support the Center's emerging satellite offices in the underserved southern tier of Iowa counties.

New Board Members

Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center welcomes four new members to the board of directors: Meg Murphy Joseph, Jeannie Latenser, Larry Sheldon, and Kim Waltman. We are delighted to expand an already excellent active board with the energy and skills of these fine individuals.

Beginning their second term on the board of directors are Tim Diebel, Kyle Gamble, Mark Haverland, Jane Knaack-Esbeck, and Bob Mann. New board officers are: Jackie Goettsch, President; Sid Ramsey, Vice-President; David Witke, Secretary; and Cheryl Rigler, Treasurer.

The Center thanks retiring board members Bill Cotton, Jan Franck, and Larry Hartsook for their years of service and dedication to the work of the Center. The Center's board of directors is the Center's greatest asset for ensuring that the Center is a place for healing and hope ~ for everyone.

Foundation Board

The Center's Foundation board of directors welcomes two new members: Ginny Hancock and Ivan Lyddon. Both have served two terms each on the Center's operating board prior to their nomination to the Foundation board.

In 2005, the Foundation received cash gifts from Jan and Greg Franck, Owen and D.J. Newlin. We extend our sincere gratitude to these individuals for their foresight. The Foundation is the Center's guiding light for securing the Center's future by maintaining and growing its permanent endowment fund through gifts of cash, bequests, and other planned or deferred gifts. Please remember the Center when reviewing your will.

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 nearly 35 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 Ankeny, Lamoni, Lenox, Leon, Mt. Ayr and Osceola.
Editor: Kathleen Murrin

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