

Counselor's Corner by The Rev. Dr. Leta Herrington

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I know this remarkable woman. She didn't speak in complete sentences when I first met her. She'd been so badly abused by numerous people that she no longer risked sharing complete thoughts with anyone. This woman now owns and operates her own café. It seemed that if listened to, this woman could talk. Once fed, she now is the one doing the feeding.

I mention this woman to highlight at least three ways that help is often offered to someone when they are in distress. If we were to imagine the person who is in distress to be in the bottom of a deep hole, one way to offer help is to simply stand at the top of the hole and yell down to the person different suggestions or pieces of advice; "Why don't you just...take a walk, take a pill, get out a little more often, do some volunteer work, look at all you have to be thankful for, think happy thoughts, get over it," etc. While these suggestions may work some of the time, most often they do not and frequently, the person in the hole feels worse assuming that there must be something wrong with them that the suggestions are not working.

A second way of attempting to help is to jump down in the hole along with the person in distress. You listen to their pain, and feel their pain, and may find yourself stuck with them in their pain. While the person at least has company, if you're both stuck, you're both left feeling helpless and miserable.

A third option in offering help is to jump down in the hole along with the person in distress. You listen to their pain, understand their pain, and then begin to discern with them how to move out of the pain. While people who are in a hole are not there by choice, neither are they without their own wisdom and resources. They are gener-

ally in a hole because they are attempting to deal with a situation they have never faced before, one in which their usual responses are not working anymore, or one in which they are not sure how they got there and therefore are at a loss as to how to get out.

Part of therapy is about helping people get understanding and clarity. Where are they feeling stuck, frustrated, pain, or dissatisfaction? How are they wanting to function and what is getting in the way? What is preventing any movement or relief or resolution?

I have a book in my office entitled, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. The book tells of a song that was sung among the people that identified various sites along the Underground Railroad. The song included instructions to follow the "drinking gourd," that is, the Big Dipper, and that it would lead them to their eventual freedom.

"Follow the drinking gourd" is my instruction and metaphor for doing therapy. When I meet someone, I do not know what they or their life or their choices are going to look like when they finish therapy. I do know that if we honor where their "gut" is leading them, if we notice what is bothering them even if it happened years ago or they thought they were over it, if we listen to what they are *really* thinking and feeling rather than to what they *think* they should be thinking and feeling, if we pay attention to what is fitting for them and what is not, we will be following Spirit and the results will be life giving. In tending to these sites along the way, we will be following the Drinking Gourd, and will find our way to their eventual freedom.

You can contact Leta Herrington at 612.332.7743, ext. 404 or by email, lherrington@wpc-mpls.org.

Are You in Need of an Angel?

by Ann Bursch, Pastoral Care Assistant

Westminster Angels are volunteers trained to provide practical, emotional and spiritual support for our members with relatively short-term needs.

What do the Angels do? Our main purpose is to be a source of secondary care. The activities of the Angels are based on two criteria: what your needs are, and what the team is able to offer based on availability and skills. We have three teams of angels ready to help. They have been trained to function effectively as a team, to understand the practical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of living with a long term ill-

ness, disability, or family need, and to serve the care-partner in a confidential and compassionate way.

Many have used the angel teams for short and longer term assignments such a rides to an appointment, meals during a family crisis, help with shopping, errands, visiting, listening and house keeping chores. The Angels are available to respond to the real-life needs of our congregation.

If you have a need for an Angel, or have any questions please call Ann Bursch, 612.332.3421, leave a message and we will get back to you ASAP.



IN MEMORY OF

Helen M. Romer
died January 3, 2005

Philip B. Harris
died June 6, 2005

Gertrude R. Finrud
died June 8, 2005

Kathryn Marshall McCune
died June 24, 2005

I am the Resurrection and the Life

