

Our mission statement at Belleville Church says we strive to be a healing congregation. Not only does the world always need healing, but Jesus, our Teacher, Lord and Savior made it a central part of his ministry, and he sent out his disciples with the mandate to be healers. The many gospel stories of Jesus healing people speak of various kinds and methods of healing. We learn that Jesus healed from afar, praying from a distance for someone’s family member, yet he also healed close up, touching a person’s eyes or ears for example. In many cases he would make the comment, “Your faith has made you well” meaning that our participation and attitude are part of healing, our open minds and open hearts.

Let’s remember that it is not good logic to say that if your sickness lingers or leads to death you did not have enough faith. Even with faith, hope and love, sickness and death are stubborn facts of life; We remember the famous story of the Apostle Paul’s “thorn in the flesh.” Now Paul obviously had lots of faith; yet he asked God over and over to heal some “thorn” in his side, and the response he heard was “my Grace is sufficient for you.” Not perfect cures, perfect health, nor invincibility, but Grace (or Love!) for the journey. Faith hope and love surely bring *some* healing to all situations. Even in death, our faith assures us that God or Divine Spirit goes with us to the next world, a from of *ultimate healing*. (Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...Thou art with me, Ps 23)

So Jesus brought healing to the world in *many* ways. And we surely know of *many* ways that we have experienced healing in our lives. Let me just mention a few. Surely LOVE is at the top of the list. If a child falls and scrapes a knee, what is the best medicine? Yes, some disinfectant and a bandaid are needed, but the most powerful and lasting remedy is the arms of love which stop the crying and give needed comfort to carry on. And we don’t outgrow this. Love is always a key ingredient to our well being!

Another great medicine we know is HUMOR! Laughter has long been associated with tears, and both emotions erupt spontaneously as God’s natural remedies for pain. We say, “you may as well laugh as cry!” Both are healing. We say we need “comic relief.” (yes, especially in these tense

times). So I like to read joke books, and jokes were a part of our church Variety Shows (to be held again after Pandemic I hope). A nurse wrote a little book called *Heart, Humor and Healing*, after 40 years of nursing. She insists that lifting the Spirit brings increased life to *every cell* in the body. One entry: George Burns, at age 90: “At my age it’s nice to have birthday parties: All my friends can stand around the cake and keep warm!” Another entry in her book: “A chuckle a day may not keep the doctor away, but it sure does make time in the waiting room more bearable!”

Let me move on to MUSIC, as one key vehicle of healing. Our renowned soprano that is coming this afternoon, Alexa Cedolin, is also quite the spiritual seeker. She designed the concert flyer that says at the top: “*Music touches our hearts and resonates within our bodies.*” Well, I resonate with that (pun intended!). I often feel something resonating, or reverberating in my entire body, listening to our pipe organs, both in our little chapel and here in the large Meetinghouse. Medical doctors have written entire books on “Vibrational healing.” I’ll never forget one healing experience I had, now 14 years ago, in the fall of 2006. I lost my voice, and was unable to lead Sunday worship for a couple of months. To make a long story short if I can, I contracted adult whooping cough sometime in August. I knew it was bad when I was swimming in the middle of the river and started wheezing and gasping for air, as if my air pipe were the size of a small straw. Since I had almost no breath, I remember actually thinking I might not make it to shore, and began to dog paddle, breathing oh so slowly, so as not to tighten and close off my wind pipe. I made it to a neighbor’s dock and held on for dear life while my breathing slowly relaxed. Well, I’m still here, and my Thanksgiving sermon that year started with thanks for breath, for being alive, and for healing therapies.

Here’s something that amazed me about the *many* kinds of healing. One day when I was feeling really desperate, and sick and tired of coughing uncontrollably despite a couple rounds of antibiotics, I saw a sign in a window in Lanesville that said “Sound Healing!” Why not? It couldn’t do any harm! So I went in and met a guy with long hair and a

Hindu name. I saw all sorts of cymbals from small to large, and Tibetan bowls everywhere. Again, I thought, well, it couldn't do any harm, and they ARE musical instruments after all! Well, to make a long story short(!), I remember that I could not lie down on the table without breaking into fits of coughing spells, so I told him I would just sit on the edge of the table while he did whatever he did. Well, he proceeded make the little bowls sing, and huge cymbals gong, all around my head, and around my chest and back, and Wow... I started coughing ... and crying... uncontrollably, doubling over, trying to expel whatever had its grip on me. You get the picture I think. This sound healer also had asked me what was going on my life, and I recalled that my Dad had died suddenly the previous October, so it was my first summer without him. He explained to me that many healers have related the lungs and breathing problems with the grieving process. Wow... Grief, release of tears, is surely one of the ways of healing! Some spiritual teachers speak of the “Gift of Tears.” And we know that our Lord Jesus has been seen as the “Man of Sorrows,” or the One “well acquainted seen with grief” that Isaiah 53 speaks of. There is something healing and redemptive about grief, something cleansing about tears.

So healing does indeed come in many forms. We may want to ponder the five basic senses: Yes, healing through sound, through vibrations. Healing through what we see, beautiful art and mountain or ocean vistas! How about smell and taste? Wow, how I love to walk into a kitchen and smell onions simmering in olive oil... and the taste of certain foods that make you smile and utter all kinds of praise!... And what about the sense of touch? Massage, or Riecki, or Cranio-sacral therapies, just to mention a few, have wonderful results of greater peace and feelings of wholeness. (I must add, however, that most of these therapies involving touch seem to have beautiful, peaceful MUSIC, which I think does a lot of the healing!)

I have a song for you that I hope will have a healing and encouraging quality, about keeping or strengthening our faith, a natural need for people of all time, and Jesus did indeed point to Faith as a key component in making us well. Jesus knew that our faith may be small, like a mustard

seed, but said it can be enough, and can grow! I wrote this song this past summer while on vacation, based on a sermon I wrote about Faith, and challenges from friends and church members to “keep the faith” and write a song about it. I wanted the song to say that the Spirit of God, like healing, is always available, and does truly come to us in *many* ways. One way I like to strengthen my faith is by singing about it! Faith linked to music. We can sing or listen with open minds and open hearts... and the words and sounds can reverberate deep within us. Here’s the song I wrote, called “Keep the Faith.” I hope it “resonates” within you as well.

1. Where is God, we want to know; why do answers come so slow?

God is here, although not seen, in our hearts and in our dreams.

God is Trust in Love’s Way, and Hope for each new day,

God is present, every hour, as Grace and Healing power!

CHORUS: Let’s keep the faith, let God in, let in Goodness and Light.

Live in hope, live in trust. God is Love and New Life!

2. When the sun cannot be seen, we still know that it is there.

When the wind cannot be seen, we still feel it everywhere.

God is Love, God is Peace, and the Power to set free,

So keep the faith in Holy Spirit, always here for you and me!

CHORUS: Let’s keep the faith, let God in, let in Goodness and Light.

Live in hope, live in trust. God is Love and New Life!

3. We would like a crystal ball, we want answers for it all.

But the word that we hear, is be patient, “God is near.”

We hear of Goodness and of Mercy, and gold to refine,

So take it one day, even one step, one step at a time!

CHORUS: Let’s keep the faith, let God in, let in Goodness and Light.

Live in hope, live in trust. God is Love and New Life!