



PRESIDENT'S LETTER
NOVEMBER 2023

GRIEF AND COMMUNITY

This is the final month of our curation of resources under the theme IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL. Throughout this year, we've been exploring aspects of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health, and accompanying spiritual practices. The themes of Grief and Community resonate deeply in my life, as I've been journeying through grief continually since losing two family members five days apart in 2021.

Community can mean different things at different times. We are nourished and supported through many communities. We have communities of friends and family, faith communities which we serve, broader communities of interconnectedness. There are communities of learning, and communities of careers, and communities of common interests. Our churches and neighborhoods help to develop our practices of welcome, inclusion and hospitality.

I've moved around a lot in my life, and my most recent move was from California to Idaho in 2016. Seven years later, I remember clearly how several neighbors welcomed us and brought us food. We joined the congregation where we felt most welcomed. The first time we worshipped, it took us over an hour to leave, because we were greeted and introduced to different groups of people. We didn't like all the elements of the worship service, but we knew this was a congregation that would affirm and support us.

We are living through a time of increased loneliness, isolation, and division. We have an opportunity as faith formation leaders to teach people interconnectedness, and especially our connection to God. When we teach and learn about these connections, we live into the sense that all parts of life and faith are interrelated. It is amazing to see the Spirit at work in people who are discovering this for the first time.

Community at its best provides healing in times of grief. I've experienced the sustaining power of others as I mourned the death of my mother and my brother-in-law. The strength of others held me when I was weak, prayed for me repeatedly, and circled me and my loved ones when we needed it. I thank God for the communities where I can share my stories, affirm my faith, and experience grace.

You are a part of the community of the Christian Education Network. Throughout the last several months we've been evolving into something new to further our mission and have a strong future. More details about a new partnership will be shared soon. As faith formation leaders, we have the chance to build communities all the time, to create more and more circles of love and grace.

Living in community with you,

Deacon Diane McGeoch

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"...that they may be encouraged
in heart and united in love..."
Colossians 2.2 (NIV)