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HOPE is a Change Agent by Rev Jim Innes (as printed in the Lakeshore Advance)

In the upper and lower atrium at the LHSC Cancer Clinic, occupied at its busy times by hundreds of individuals, there stands a tall gong and a smaller bell. Countless times each day, the atrium will be filled with their tolling. This marks the completion of either a course of radiation, or many weeks of chemotherapy. It is a hardy note closing a race filled chapter in one's journey with cancer. And for those in the vicinity, patients, family, nurses, and doctors alike, there is a renewed Hopefulness.

Hope thinks beyond the negative and, when Hope is infused with a trust in something greater than yourself, dissipates undesirable possibilities, just as light dissipates darkness. Hence, we hear in our funeral liturgies these words, even at the grave we make it our song "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia."

We chose to undergo immediate struggle or pain because we chose to believe in a future that accounts for the present stresses. And so, Hope also includes faith. Not just faith in a future free of stress but faith in a future that will make absolute sense of the present stress.

As a pastor, it is interesting how many couples begin to feel Hope as early as calling for an appointment. They have taken the future in hand. The same can be attested when we initially call the dentist with a toothache, or the doctor for an ailment. Through that modest act we have gained some relieving control, even if we don't have an actual easement to the immediate struggle or pain.

I have often recommended that sleepless folk, especially those with anxious thoughts, push themselves to get out of bed and write down their needs. This simple act though not always an easy task, enables the control to be felt, a better future to be mapped. And in turn, a settling of the central nervous system, and quite often, a return to sleep.

Hope is everything to folk who struggle. How we get it, and where it comes from is important. When we Hope on our own resiliency, we are limited. When Hope incorporates others, though humbling, the potential has increased because people are God's gift to us. Community is built into our DNA. Hope is a treasure built deep within the one experiencing it. Not always noticeable, not always seen, it is not easy to unearth and take as our own. For example; For many people, disability is a "bad" word (something considered undesirable or unfortunate). It may surprise you that many who have a disability do not share that opinion... In fact, it is proven that such negative judgement may contribute more to the person's "disability" than the actual impairment.

Hope will resist being marginalized. And is the sentiment underlying that well-loved scene early in 'Forrest Gump' where mother said, "Don't let anyone tell you that they are better than you Forrest. If God intended everybody to be the same, he'd given us all braces on our legs."

Hope affects change, even if hope is but a simple thought or feeling. I believe that spanning all of space is a great variety of different energy fields that are prone to what we are thinking about. Hope fills these fields with positive energy... and according to Systems Theory, anything positive added to any part of the shared experience, affects everyone in a healthy way.

As I see it, Hope can drive the melody of the subatomic symphony going on about us all the time. We can never say, despite any limitations, that we are rendered helpless to change the world. Hope is a change agent with limitless personal and global possibilities.

Submitted by Melodie Northey

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

