



THE UNITY MESSENGER

Unity of Santa Rosa
4857 Old Redwood Highway
Santa Rosa, California 95403



The Smile

By Harker Brautighan

The smile went all the way to his eyes.

Some thirteen years ago, I was walking around Seattle's First Hill neighborhood having just finished what I felt was an appalling doctor's appointment. My doctor at the time seemed to be someone who had no empathy or sympathy. As Rev. Margaret Flick always says, "If you spot it, you've got it," so I was a bit short on empathy that day too. I had plenty of self-pity in my heart, though.

I was walking the neighborhood, working up a rage as I thought about my doctor and how terribly the appointment went. I could feel my heart beating faster, my breath becoming shallower. I was sweating despite the cool day, and I'll bet I was muttering to myself. If I wasn't muttering out loud, I surely was rehashing in my head all those vicious comebacks I wished I'd had while in the doctor's office. Oh, the names I wanted to call him!

On this day, I was certainly receiving a demonstration of the idea that what you put your attention on increases in your life, because I was just getting madder and madder, finding more and more fault with the doctor. I use the word madder rather than angrier for a reason. For my anger was a sort of madness, a blind and hurtful sort of anger that really was only hurting me. As Margaret also likes to quote, resentment or unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

Well, I certainly didn't want to kill my doctor with my thoughts, and if I'd considered it, I would not have wanted to be drinking poison either. However, there I was with my poisoned thoughts. Those thoughts were not only making me angry, they were exacerbating my depression. I felt so glum and blue, I almost had to keep feeding my rage to avoid those darker, more despairing feelings.

Suddenly, coming around the corner, came two men in scrubs. While they could have been in some other medical profession, something about them just screamed "doctors." I was immediately prepared to hate them. The last thing I want to see, I thought, is another doctor.

The shorter doctor was a handsome man who looked a bit like a neighbor I'd had who had died in a house fire. As I saw him coming toward me, and remembered my neighbor, my destructive thoughts were interrupted. As we passed each other on the sidewalk, he paused, made eye contact with me, and smiled. It was a whole-face smile, maybe even a whole body smile, the kind that makes your tummy warm. It almost felt as if he'd touched me. Without meaning to, I found myself responding in kind. All thoughts of hatred, anger, and blame melted away. As joy and pleasure filled me, I felt my soul softening, opening. (continued on P. 2)

Upcoming Events

May 2020 (All events and services via Zoom until further notice)

- Sunday the 3rd: Rev. Margie Brach; Music by Robin O'Brien

Sunday the 3rd: Writing Group from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday the 6th: Prayer & Meditation Circle from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m.

- Sunday the 10th: Rev. Dr. Patricia Keel; Music by Star Tom
- Sunday the 17th: Karen Drucker; Music by Karen Drucker
- Sunday the 24th: Rev. Margaret Flick; Friendship Sunday; Music by Star Tom
- Sunday the 31st: David McNair, LUT; Music by Cricket



The Smile (cont'd)

As he smiled at me and I smiled at him, the fear that had been at the root of my rage evaporated. The familiar labels of “us” and “them” —in this case “patients” and “doctors” —evaporated too. There was no us and them, only we. We, these two people having a moment on the sidewalk. We, those of us who wear scrubs and those of us who do not, we, all of humanity, one. That man (I like to believe he is a doctor) in that one gesture that lasted perhaps three beats of the heart, changed my day, and changed my life.

Now, more than ever, we need to acknowledge the gestures that keep us human and make us one humanity. Now is the time, as Rev. Dr. Barbara Leger says, to do our part to facilitate the second coming. Metaphysically, I think that means we do our part to usher in the Christ consciousness within us. Our doctors and other medical professionals are hurting now. They are working tirelessly to save us, risking their own mental and physical health, or they are experiencing economic hardship because they've had to shutter their practices. All of those among us who are unable to shelter in place, but instead have to face the front lines of the covid-19 pandemic, need our smiles, our empathy, our prayers, and our counsel. We are called more than ever to erase any boundaries that lead to an “us” and “them” mentality. We are a global community, as this pandemic shows us. There is one power and one presence and one life. May we learn to recognize and love each other as one community.

Board President Meg McConahey told a passerby recently, “I’m smiling at you under my mask.” Remember, if all you have to give is a smile, even if you have to convey it verbally, as Meg did, do not worry that it may not be enough, that you wish you could do more. Make sure that smile goes all the way to your eyes, all the way to your heart, and give it freely. Your smile may just change a life.

