

When I missed my bottom step at home on my way out the door this past May, I fell and broke my foot in 2 places. I was both shocked and disappointed. One minute I was gleefully skipping out the door to go sailing at Lake Calhoun for the first time of the season. Woo hoo! The next minute, what was to be an evening of sunshine, relaxation and fun on the water had turned into a night of x-rays, crutches and pain in the Emergency Room.

I have a friend who does acupuncture. She came over the next day, assessed me and said, why did you need to do that? As you may know, in Traditional Chinese Medicine, the concept is that things occur because of an imbalance. So she asked me, what are you trying to draw into your life that you didn't already have? I was confused by her question, and said, I just tripped, it was an accident.

Another friend had teased me in the ER: did I just need some attention, or what?

When I finally returned to work, someone asked me, now just what did you learn from breaking your foot? These questions made me think.

I realized, like many people who have experienced an illness or an accident that there were things I did need and that I did learn.

For starters, I learned that it really does make a difference to have people checking in on you. When you're feeling isolated, lonesome or sad, or scared because you don't know what the outcome of your injury will be, someone sending you an uplifting card in the mail, or hearing that they said a prayer for you at church, or someone from your church calling you to check in on how you're doing, truly has an impact. You feel the power of those prayers by knowing a community of people is sending healing love your way.

Sometimes when I share with my friends or coworkers that I'm involved in a church, people look at me and try to put me in a box. Am I a fundamentalist? Why do I go? Why do I volunteer? Am I going to judge them now, or try to convert them? Don't I wish I could just sleep in on Sunday morning?

When we've had meetings here at EMC about "Why do we come to church?" I have had different answers depending on where I was in my life at that time. During this time of healing, I found I really valued the

relationships, the concerns, and the prayers from all of you, and I was very grateful for it. It's a beautiful and comforting part of belonging to a church community, like an extended family.

At the same time, when I was recovering from my injury at home and off from my work at the Cancer Center, the horrific massacre in Orlando occurred. 49 young people in the LGBT community, as well as the shooter, who happened to be Muslim, lost their lives. While I realized that support is tremendously important when you're physically compromised at home and in your own world, so is having a place to go to grieve and search for meaning when a tragic situation occurs in the outside world that seems both senseless and hopeless.

No one would ask the bereaved family members, why did you bring this situation in to your life? Why did you need this? What have you learned from it? No, this was no mere broken bone that would heal in a matter of weeks. We were once again as a county all in shock from another senseless mass shooting. We needed a way to come together, to pray, cry and heal, with friends, both old and new, at the tragic loss of life.

I had an opportunity to give back - I started calling people I knew to ask: would you like to offer your prayers, your words, your voices, in healing with us at Edina Morningside?

As those of you who were here that Wednesday night in June know, we were blessed to assemble a diverse and heartfelt group of presenters and attendees for a Commemorative Service for the Orlando victims.

A minister from Spirit United Church, another community I am involved in, came and invoked the energy, spirit and peoples of the 4 directions: We called them in from the East, South, West and North, a ritual which is seen in Native American and other indigenous communities as well as far Eastern cultures. We had a plea from a young female Muslim activist to ask us to just say, "Stop!" when we hear prejudicial statements being thrown around.

We had poems and readings from a holistic nurse, a domestic violence victim's advocate, and a young mother who is a volunteer with an Edina chapter to end gun violence. We heard voices lifted in song from a feminist choir who had also been looking for a way to grieve and give back, as many of their members are a part of the LGBT community.

We heard from a church on the North side of Minneapolis with this plea: as you're grieving for lives lost in other places, please don't forget what is happening right here at home as well.

Our own Chancel choir and music director offered their voices and talents. Our UCC conference minister was present, both to comfort and to be comforted as well, as this was not the only memorial service she was attending.

We were blessed to have our wonderful interim minister, Howard, present a healing circle, where we had 100 people holding hands and circling the sanctuary, in a ceremony he had offered before when he led groups as the executive director at Pathways, a healing Resource Center. We came together as Christian, Muslim, Native spiritual traditionalists, as complementary healers, non-believers, gay, straight, in a little church on a rainy night, to light candles for people we didn't know, and to lift up one another in love and hope with people that we did know, or had just met.

This is what a church is to me: a place we can receive comfort and support when we miss a step and get temporarily knocked off our feet, as well as a place where we can go to grieve and give each other a hand up in hope and healing.

I feel blessed to have all of you and this beautiful church home that is open to a wide variety of ideas and ways to celebrate, worship, find joy, beauty, hope and peace.

As we now transition and say goodbye to Pastor Howard in gratitude and love, and begin another new adventure together, I know how grateful I am to God to be a guest in the house I share with all of you.