



Congregation for Mental Wellness

Welcoming | Inclusive
Supportive | Engaged

Important Phone Numbers

National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line

1-800-950-6264 <https://www.nami.org/help>

Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800.273.TALK

Veteran's Crisis Line 800.273.8255 *press 1*

Pastoral Care—Pastor Jim Alexander 623.792.5295

<https://thepalms.org/Tools2Thrive>

We are excited to announce that The Church of the Palms is now recognized nationally as a WISE Congregation for Mental Wellness. Our church will be listed on the [United Church of Christ Mental Health Network website](#), we will be introduced as a WISE Congregation at the 2021 General Synod of the United Church of Christ and, most importantly, we will continue to grow into the congregation that God has called us to be: Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged.

In the weeks ahead, our WISE Steering Committee will be putting together some Tools2Thrive materials along with some support activities that will be available on our Bridges platform. We pray that these will be helpful as we continue to navigate through the challenging times in which we find ourselves. Until then, I offer you this article from Rev. Dr. Rachael A. Keefe. She is an author, blogger, and pastor within the United Church of Christ. May we all be mindful and careful with ourselves and each other.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. —Romans 15:13*

My baseline of existence is fairly accepting of people, places, and circumstances. I have little patience for technology that doesn't work the way it is supposed to, and even less for individuals who are purposeful in causing harm. However, I've recently had cause to remember just how many things contribute to our sense of emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. Usually, February is a hard month for me. This year, January was rough.

In early December, I became the proud owner of a pacemaker. By January, I had recovered sufficiently to be miserable. I wasn't recovered enough to go to yoga classes or shovel snow or pick up grocery bags. There were physical limits while my body continued to heal. In addition, January was the cloudiest month on record in Minnesota and I felt the lack of sun. And then there were all these unanticipated feelings about needing (and having) a pacemaker at the age of 52. Throw in hot flashes, and we'll just say that January was an unpleasant month.

In short, I was impatient with everything and everyone. I was irritable and irrational, and I knew it. I was, and continue to be, grateful for the technology that brings my heart rate into normal range and the access I have to healthcare. Yet, nothing really soothed my

disturbed being. I couldn't help but think about the fact that some other human being had touched my heart, and my heart responded poorly. There were complications during this routine procedure that surprised the surgeon and distressed my wife. I didn't know about this for a few days, but once I knew, I couldn't let it go.

As the month wore on, I relaxed a bit. I've adjusted to dietary changes (mostly) and I've been able to resume yoga. I still experience some physical discomfort as I continue to heal. What I've noticed, though, is how many factors there were in my grumpiness. I was physically recovering from surgery. There was a lack of sunlight. My hormones were shifting. I was adjusting to a new diet. I had unexpected emotions about the pacemaker. In the midst of this, one of our beloved cats died which added a layer of grief. I kept saying that I didn't know what was wrong or why I was so impatient with the world. Looking back, it seems obvious that there was just too much going on for me to find any kind of balance.

As frustrating as it was to be so unsettled in mind, body, and spirit, it reminded me of just how little control we have over life. Even positive events can cause stress. Even successful, necessary medical treatment can provoke unwanted feelings. Healing takes time, and it has many dimensions.

There's no lesson here, really, except to remember that there is little we can actually control in our lives. Sometimes too much piles up (physical health issues, grief, gray winter weather, hormones, dietary changes, etc.) and our sense of wellbeing tips over. It's okay. We are all human and more fragile than we would like to admit.

February is an excellent month to be to be mindful and intentional and extra careful with our hearts, our minds, our bodies, and our spirits.

—Rev. Dr. Rachael A. Keefe