



LUMUNOS

FAITH & LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

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Doug Wysockey-Johnson

Have you seen those ads for cold medicines, sleep aids, and mattresses? I'm speaking of the ones where a person wakes up after a good and restful night's sleep due to Nyquil, melatonin, or that fantastic new mattress they just bought. Usually, the sun is streaming through gauzy curtains. The person smiles and stretches, excited to engage the day.

I cannot relate. I don't wake up easily or well. For the most part I feel tired, cranky, and sore. It doesn't really matter how much sleep I have gotten the night before or whether I have followed the rules for "good sleep hygiene." Waking up is just not one of my gifts.

Switching to waking up as **metaphor** doesn't improve the situation much. I tend to let things slide or hope they will get fixed on their own. Whether the problem is mine, the organization, or the world's, I tend to diminish the challenge in hopes that it will go away. In my younger days, I called this the "Doug Johnson School of Auto Mechanics." Roughly translated, this means if your car doesn't start, don't do anything. Leave it alone and maybe it will start later. This worked just well enough (and only when the engine was flooded) to allow me to sleep through the fact that it was a lousy philosophy of auto mechanics, let alone other challenges.



Life has required that I become more proactive in many ways, but there are still times when the "Doug Johnson School of Auto Mechanics" is at work.

When Did You Wake Up to the Needs of Your Neighbors?

I have very slowly been waking up to the needs of the world. If we are honest, many of us have been asleep to the harshest realities of what other people are going through. If you are white (as I am), it is hard to understand what it is like to grow up black in the world. If you are male (which I am), you haven't experienced the pay inequities that exist in this world for women. If you live in Vermont (which I do), you are somewhat protected from the worst impacts of climate change. This is not unhealthy white male guilt. It is just the God's honest truth. I am privileged in many ways, and my life has been a slow process of waking up to that reality.

Because the Lumunos theme for the year is *Loving our Neighbor*, we have been asking the questions:

When did you wake up to the larger needs of the world? When did you first become aware that you were incredibly fortunate to be born with a roof over your head or not to live in a war-torn part of the world (or fill in the blank)? When did that awakening happen for you?

The stories have been wonderful, and some of our staff have shared their stories in this issue of the newsletter (see p. 7). For some folks it was a mission trip. Others had parents or mentors who exposed them to the needs of the world. For me it was my mom, who brought me to her workplace as a nurse on the Burn Unit of Cook County Hospital on the South Side of Chicago. What kind of mom exposes her children to that kind of devastating world of hurt and pain? Moms like mine who want their children to have a broader view of life. It was an early experience of waking up and I am grateful for it.

Waking Up is Hard to Do

Woke or Waking?

"Woke" has become a controversial word—yet another tool politicians use to drive a wedge between us. I do understand that it is frustrating if you feel you can't say or do anything without getting in trouble. And I understand the feeling of loss that accompanies societal change. Most of us don't like it when we feel we are losing something, whatever that something is. So, forget "woke." How about "waking up" instead?

All of our best spiritual and mindfulness teachings have stories about the importance of waking up and paying attention to the needs of those beyond ourselves. Sometimes I practice Metta Meditation—a practice of cultivating compassion, first for ourselves, and then moving out in expanding circles to others. And in my own faith tradition, there are countless stories of Jesus encouraging his friends to wake up. Sometimes he meant that literally, other times it was a metaphor. In all times, it was about becoming more aware of the values and vision that he lived. It is hard to love our neighbors if we are asleep to their needs.

The Earth Wakes Up Too

Where I live and as I write, the earth is waking up. The frozen ground thaws and the landscape goes from white to brown to green. It is one of the things I love about living in Vermont, this opportunity to see nature waking up again. It also serves as a visual reminder to me about the importance of waking up in all ways. How does the land wake up where you live? And how and when did you first wake up to the needs of the world? Let us know your answer to that question by going to <https://www.lumunos.org/waking-up> or by scanning the QR code with your smartphone.



Doug Wysockey-Johnson is the Executive Director of Lumunos. He lives with his family in Richmond, VT, and can be reached at doug@lumunos.org.

Love Your Neighbor— As Yourself

By Jim Brommers Bergquist

The core words of two of the Abrahamic faith traditions—and a basic tenet of many others—are “Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

And then there is the Golden Rule: **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

But what if I don’t love myself? What if I am filled with a smattering of self-loathing, a sense that I’ve never amounted to what I should have, a belief that I am not nearly as good at my profession and various interests as others, consternation that my face, body, and brain don’t measure up with others, and self-flagellation over the ways I’ve let life pass me by? Do others really want me to love them in the same way I love myself?

A core question arises when we are asked to love others: “Do we love ourselves—with all our faults, failings, insecurities, and misgivings?” We know ourselves better than anyone else, and hence, we know all the ways we’re imperfect. Can we truly believe that the love of the Divine can be in us and around us? Can we truly love others if we can’t love ourselves first?

I used to teach parenting classes, as a trained facilitator of the *Love and Logic* curriculum. A key component of *Love and Logic* is learning to start with empathy. The premise is simple: We have a hard time hearing what someone has to say when it is not accompanied by true concern. You can tell me all the things I should do, but if I don’t trust that you truly feel my pain, concern, or discomfort, your words will likely not sink in.

Case in point: Annie is sad that she got a C- on her test. What opening sentence leads to further conversation and openness? 1. “That stinks. You doing okay?” or 2. “Geez Annie. What have I said about using your time wisely? It’s no wonder, given that you’re on your phone more than in the books.”

Once, when teaching the material to a group of teachers and social workers, one of the moms (a social worker) exclaimed, “I am so embarrassed. This is one of the first things we learned in graduate school. And yet I haven’t ever thought to apply this to my relationship with my own children.”

Compassion, from the Latin, literally means “to feel with” or “to suffer with.” Henri Nouwen reminds us that “Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish... Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.”



But first, we need to learn to love ourselves, and be compassionate and forgiving with ourselves. “The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent; the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult; the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.” (Alden Nowlan, *Between Tears and Laughter*)

At the core of the word “forgive” is the emphasis on “give.” Forgiveness is not rational and sensible. It is not two adult siblings dutifully giving each other Amazon Gift Cards at Christmas (which could also be deemed to lack rationality and sensibility). Rather, it is largesse of grace with oneself or another.

Living in a world of resentment—meaning literally “to feel again”—does nothing to help our spirit. Nor does it bring us any closer to who we are called to be. Rather, it keeps us on the fringe, away from where wholeness and peace exist.

One reason I remain connected with Christian ideals is that Jesus knew this to his very core. Person after person heard the line “your sins are forgiven.” There was something to his words, and to his way of being, that loosed people from being chained to their past. A consistent message of Jesus was, “You are made for something so much more. So let go of what’s holding you back and start moving toward something new.”

Fredrick Buechner once wrote that “Grace is something you can never get but can only be given. There’s no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your birth...” (*Wishful Thinking*).

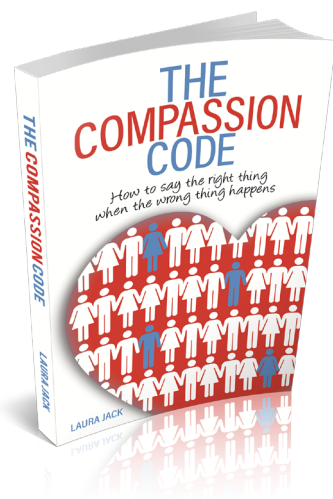
Scripture is filled with those who come to Jesus, just to touch the hem of his garment. The lepers, the withered, the manipulative tax collector, the woman caught in adultery, the

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Compassionate Communication Without Words

Excerpted from
the book “The
Compassion Code”

By *Laura Jack*



I remember a time when I was hysterically crying and my friend gave me a hug. His breathing mimicked mine for a few moments and then he slowed his breath. I matched him, and I began to calm down and feel better. Later, when I arrived home after hearing the news about my mom, my dad was in a similar position of hysterical crying, and I did the same thing my friend had done for me. It felt so good to have a tool I could use without having to use any words at all.

Rapport is simply a friendly relationship, and according to Merriam-Webster it means, “a relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity.”

Something I heard that has stayed with me is that we are attracted to “like kind.” What that means in this context is that human beings who are suffering relate more easily with others who have suffered. As we have all suffered some kind of loss, we are all of like kind because we are human. Because of this, building rapport is not only possible, but can be easy.

We are drawn toward others who are like us, but we also want people to know that our experience is unique and different. Oddly enough, we spend our first eighteen-plus years conforming, trying to fit in and be the “same” as others, and then we spend the rest of our lives striving to differentiate ourselves.

We all want to be the same and to be different—meaning, we want to know that we are not alone AND we also want people to know that our experience is different. At the Grief Recovery Institute, we talk about the importance of uniqueness and not comparing. But we as humans also feel isolated, like no one in

the world has ever felt what we have. So while our experiences are unique, and no one can completely understand what you are going through, feeling hurt, heartache, pain, loneliness, guilt, shame, longing, abandonment, anxiety, and sadness are feelings that we as humans all get to/have to feel.

Let’s circle back to rapport, a friendly relationship marked by harmony, and how it relates to body language and thus acting compassionately.

When it comes to rapport and acting compassionately, there are a few simple tools that you can start with.

1. Offer good eye contact. You don’t have to stare without blinking, but when you look at someone in the eyes, it lets them know:
 - You care.
 - You are paying attention.
 - You aren’t afraid to be there with them.
2. Have your body language match your words. If you are saying you care, face them and look at them.
3. Keep an open posture. If you are sitting or standing, generally keep your arms and legs uncrossed (see an exception to this in the next section about matching). When your arms or legs are crossed or you are facing away from the person, it sends a communication that you are closed off.
4. Stay present. Try to stay with them and focus on the words they are saying. If you look away or zone out, they will likely shut down and feel as if you don’t care.
5. If you accidentally become distracted, zone out, or find yourself thinking about something else, tell them. You can say, “Hey, I really want to hear what you have to say... I got distracted for a second. Do you mind repeating the last thing you said?” By telling the truth and letting them know you care, you almost always regain rapport.

About Rapport Building Techniques

If you are ready to go a little deeper, here is a more advanced tip for building rapport and acting compassionately.

Matching¹ is a technique used to build rapport. It means using the same or similar body language and micro-behaviors of the other person.

Remember, conformity is the definition of rapport. By matching the other person's body language and other behaviors—not in a mocking way but in a conscious, loving way—they will feel more heard and you will both feel more connected.

Here are some of the behaviors you can practice matching:

- Posture
- Hand gestures
- Head tilt
- Facial expression
- Energy level
- Vocal qualities (tone, rhythm, volume)
- Breathing rate
- Key language phrases

Again, you are matching, not mimicking.

To match someone:

- Observe them.
- Slowly move into similar positions.
- Adjust your tone of voice.
- Be similar.

Once you become skilled at matching, the person will likely not notice, but they will feel the rapport. Again, this is done with love and the intention of building connection, not to be offensive.

This may sound strange to you, but you already build rapport regularly. As humans, we match the behavior of babies and animals to connect with them—when we hear them make certain noises or gestures, we do the same to help them feel safe. We actually do it without thinking; in fact, you are probably already unconsciously doing this with other adults. Once you master the art of matching, it will become second nature.

The next step is pacing and leading, which are techniques used to positively influence someone else's behaviors. Pacing means matching their movements, breath, and other micro-behaviors. Once you are pacing with them and matching their behaviors, you can try leading. The above story of my friend breathing with me is an example of pacing and leading.

A few examples of ways this can be helpful are:

- When someone is physically upset, you can meet them where they are with faster breath, similar facial expression, and high energy. Once you are in sync, then you can slow your breath, soften your facial expressions, and lower your energy.
- When someone is yelling or talking loudly, you can match their vocal quality and then slowly lead them to lower their voice and change their tone.

While these tools may seem a bit more advanced for some, try them with a stranger, friend, or loved one (babies and kids love it). Practice makes perfect.

You are on your way to acting compassionately, which brings you one step closer to being compassionate.

Oh No! They're Crying, What Do I Do?

When my mom died in 2008, I somehow got the idea that I had to be strong for everyone else. At the funeral, my brother and I delivered the eulogy to more than a thousand people (which said a lot about how beloved my mom was on our community) and I didn't allow myself to cry. Not one single tear slipped out. I was so worried that if I wasn't this example of "strength," everyone else would fall apart. And since I didn't want that to happen, I assumed the role of the "strong" one.

Throughout life we are given tools for dealing with loss and change that don't particularly serve us. "Be strong" is a biggie, one that's ingrained in all of us. What happens if we aren't strong? What if we "fall apart"? What if we cry? What if we show real human emotion?

One lesson I have learned since then is that my "being strong" got in the way of my truth. When I pretended to be fine, I cut myself off from the very thing I needed the most at that time: other people's love and support during the hardest experience of my life. My inability to share how I was truly feeling was my source of disconnection. Hence, my "strength"—and I put strength in quotes because it is actually stronger to be vulnerable than it is to pretend to be fine—made me feel terribly alone.

Isn't it interesting how uncomfortable people seem to become when someone is crying? What is it about tears that evokes such discomfort? And what do most people say once someone starts crying? "Don't cry," "It's okay," or "I'm so sorry."

I want to tell you that you don't have to be sorry. In reality, crying is natural and provides quite a bit of healing. Think back to a time when you were upset and allowed yourself to cry. If you were in a safe place and gave in to the tears without being hushed or handed a tissue, how did you feel afterward?

In my experience, tears can act as a release, and being accepted and acknowledged during these moments has also been a powerful healing tool. I always tell my clients, "Tears are better out than in."

Next time someone begins to cry in your presence:

- Resist the urge to fix them.
- Stand or sit with them.
- Be present so they know crying is safe in your presence.
- Say, "It's okay to cry." (You can even say, "Tears are better out than in.")
- Try not to immediately run away to find a tissue or shush them (even if it is loving).
- After you have given them some time to be with their tears, you can ask if a hug would be helpful. If they accept, hug them but don't pat them²; simply breathe with them. If they say no to a hug, let that be okay.

*“ When I pretended to be fine,
I cut myself off from the
very thing I needed the most
at that time: other people’s
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hardest experience of my life.
My inability to share how
I was truly feeling was my
source of disconnection. ”*

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You are not required to say anything, and sometimes it is more powerful if you don't. Silence and a hug can do wonders. If you feel comfortable saying something, acknowledge how they may be feeling by saying something like, "I can't imagine what you're going through, but thank you for sharing it with me."

If you think about it, it means a lot that someone is willing to cry in front of you. So be that safe space for them, and I promise you will be okay too. Crying is normal, healthy, and can be a powerful healing tool.

In an article by Judith Orloff, MD, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself from Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life*, she explains that:

Emotional tears have special health benefits. Biochemist and "tear expert" Dr. William Frey at the Ramsey Medical Center in

Minneapolis discovered that reflex tears are 98% water, whereas emotional tears also contain stress hormones which are excreted from the body through crying. After studying the composition of tears, Dr. Frey found that emotional tears shed these hormones and other toxins which accumulate during stress. Additional studies also suggest that crying stimulates the production of endorphins, our body's natural painkiller and "feel-good" hormones.

So go ahead, let the tears out, and allow the healing to begin!

One thing I am working on is my own vulnerability and comfort with crying or tearing up with people who care about me.

What about you? Can you allow yourself to feel? To cry?

“ If you think about it, it means a lot that someone is willing to cry in front of you. So be that safe space for them, and I promise you will be okay too. Crying is normal, healthy, and can be a powerful healing tool. ”

¹ Transformational Coaching Method

² Grief Recovery Method Certification

Laura Jack teaches about compassionate communication and how we can relate to one another more effectively during the challenging moments in life. Using practices of self-care and self-love, she helps people rediscover their light after loss. Laura's mission is to cultivate a culture of compassion, starting with self, and to create a better understanding of loss and its accompanying grief. To learn more, visit www.laurajack.com.

Want to learn more about "how to say the right thing when the wrong thing happens"?

Go to www.lumunos.org/upcoming to sign up for our new series, facilitated by Erma Cooke, Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, on compassionate communication.

I look at the world

By Langston Hughes

I look at the world

From awakening eyes in a black face—

And this is what I see:

This fenced-off narrow space

Assigned to me.

I look then at the silly walls

Through dark eyes in a dark face—

And this is what I know:

That all these walls oppression builds

Will have to go!

I look at my own body

With eyes no longer blind—

And I see that my own hands can make

The world that's in my mind.

Then let us hurry, comrades,

The road to find.

Langston Hughes, "I look at the world" from (New Haven: Beinecke Library, Yale University,)

Source: Poetry (January 2009)



Waking Up

Loving our neighbor can mean many things—feeding the hungry, donating money, volunteering, treating all people we encounter with respect, being an activist or voting with our conscience, taking care of the earth, etc. A big motivation for all these things—and loving our neighbor in general—is empathy, which involves taking on a deeper understanding of other people’s lived experiences. When we have learned to fear, hate, disparage, or “other” another person or group of people, finding empathy can be challenging.

Thankfully, we all go through times in our lives when we “wake up” to other people’s pain and suffering, strength and resilience, or to injustice in the world despite our fear, ignorance, or learned hate. These are stories about “waking up” from a couple of the Lumunos staff (Alice Barbera and Becca Perry-Hill). At the end, we’ll ask you to share your stories of “waking up” and we just might include them in our next newsletter.

Alice’s Story:

A middle-aged man sits alone on a street corner. I pass him every day on my way to work. His coat is ripped, and the bottom of his worn jeans are rolled down over his feet. Others like him gather on the same spot, but today he’s by himself.

He’s the lost part of our society some of us choose not to see. Many are harshly judged for their circumstances though we know nothing about them.

For a moment I switch roles. I peer through a tiny sliver of his world where I’m the one sitting on the street corner. People drive past me in their cars and pedestrians cross over to the other side avoiding my ragged appearance. The cement presses hard against my legs and the razor cut of the wind stings my face. I can no longer feel my hands.

It’s only through dumb luck that I’m the one driving the car, the one whose family dedicated their lives to my well-being, the one who grew up in a comfortable home. Problems I never had to face alone. He wasn’t so lucky.

But who’s the true hero in this story? Not me. Five minutes in and I’d break. But this man I pass every day has grit. He’s endured hardship I could never imagine and made me aware of my privilege. He arouses a deep sense of humility and forces me to care. I don’t know his name but his face stays with me.

Becca’s Story:

A couple of years after my dad was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, I was visiting him at his home in Michigan. He was physically frail at this point and plagued by unexplained ailments like nausea, weakness, numbness in his foot, and more. During the day, he mostly sat in his rocking chair, looking out through the glass sliding door at the birds and squirrels fighting for a place at the feeders on the deck. His world was small and getting smaller. But he remained upbeat.

So, I asked him, “How do you stay so positive despite the physical pain and Alzheimer’s? What’s the secret?”

And in a moment of total clarity, he said, “Bec, I’m so grateful for the life I’ve lived, the people I love and who love me, and for what I have. It’s very different from where I started. I never could have imagined when I was a boy, this life I have now.”

It was what you would call an “aha moment.” Suddenly, I understood not only my dad’s story more deeply, but also what it means for anyone to climb out of a childhood characterized by trauma, poverty, and abuse. Though he complained of his aches and pains and confusion, his attention was focused on the love of his wife and children, the creature comforts of his condo, and the interesting twists and turns of his career (even if the details had drifted away).

He gave me perspective. He reminded me to be grateful. It was a rare moment of “waking up” to the goodness at the core of an individual (my father) and to the resiliency of humankind in general.

What’s Your Story of Waking Up?

Tell us a story of a time when you woke up to another person’s (or people’s) pain and suffering, strength and resilience, or to injustice in the world. Was it a gradual process or more of an epiphany? Who or what helped you to wake up? Was there a spiritual dimension to your waking up? How did the experience change you or the way you live your life?

Email your stories to becca@lumunos.org or scan the QR code to go to our website submission page. You can also call our office at (802) 860-1936 and leave your story as a voicemail (we’ll do the transcribing). You may just find your story featured in our next newsletter (let us know if you’d prefer it to be anonymous).



SCAN ME



The Space to Open Up

Matt Spohn grew up in suburban Cleveland, went to college in Minnesota (where he met his wife), and then moved to Denver in 2008 to be closer to his wife's family. Now his permanent home, Denver has become the locus of family—both his wife's and his own. Matt and his wife work as lawyers—"as horrifying as that may sound" (according to Matt)—but don't talk law around the house. She works in-house with a hospital chain, and Matt is in-house with a software company. Matt and his wife have two daughters, ages 11 and 13. They all love to read, but also to tromp around the mountains. Matt lives for music, which he says is probably the thing he missed most during Covid. He jokes that he'd like his ashes scattered at the Red Rocks Amphitheater (famous outdoor music venue in the Rockies), though no one seems too eager to sign up for that presumably illegal task!

Becca: Tell us a little about your story of call/purpose.

Matt: I came to religion later in life after some searching. My wife and I then worked together to find the right church, first in Minneapolis, and then in Denver, where we found Montview Presbyterian. We've loved Montview from the start, and over the years as our kids have grown up in the church, we've become more involved. It has been a wonderful outlet for addressing that creeping feeling that I have been so very fortunate throughout my life, but I haven't been doing enough to give to others. The church has given us a wonderful community and a sense of shared purpose, as well as clear opportunities to help out and feel useful to others. This is my first year as a deacon, which is a great honor; I feel like I'm in a good place in my journey.

Becca: How did you become involved with the Lumunos TRIBES (Trusting in Brothers Evolving Spiritually) group at Montview Church? What has your experience been like?

Matt: TRIBES has been a great catalyst to get me involved, at Montview and in general. It was advertised in our church a couple years ago as a group where men could share experiences, talk about things that really mattered, and connect on a deeper level (and have fun too). In a way it came about at the perfect time—it was months into the Covid lockdown, and I thought "I might as well join. What the heck else am I doing?" Except for a couple of outdoor get-togethers in warm weather, it has happened entirely on Zoom, expertly led by Doug Wysocky-Johnson of Lumunos.

I seriously don't know how Doug does it. Working almost entirely remotely (which was never the idea), he has brought two successive sessions of TRIBES together in a series of meetings where there is an overriding theme. We explore the theme through a combination of readings, group discussion, and small-group breakouts. But it's loose enough that everyone has room to open up, be vulnerable, and support one another. We all marvel that we have become so close without being in the same room.

Becca: Has Lumunos influenced your sense of purpose, the way you relate to others, or your spiritual or religious life? How so?

Matt: TRIBES has been a real springboard for my journey. At a time when I was wondering how I could bring spiritual thought and practice into my everyday life, Doug quietly gave us tools for doing just that. He encouraged us to take up a spiritual practice such as journaling or meditation that we could report on, but even more importantly, his meetings encouraged us to slow down and really evaluate the most basic elements of our lives—our family, our friends, the narratives we impose on our experience. As a group, we practice how to make a habit of living a more spiritual and thoughtful life.

Also, TRIBES came along at just the right time to channel my inchoate urge to "help more." Our small-group breakout sessions—

usually groups of 3 or 4—can be quite intense, as we open up and share experiences (past and present) that can be difficult, painful, or simply heart-wrenching. Before putting us into those groups, Doug always cautioned that we should resist the urge to try to “fix” the situation; we are there to listen and maybe ask questions. It seems so simple but was just the guidance I needed to hear and then immediately put into practice. It was a great lesson in being quiet, listening, giving others the space to open up, asking some gentle follow-ups, and not trying to solve anything. I learned that is an important way of helping.

Becca: Would you like to share any memorable “Lumunos Moments”? Though a bit hard to describe, a “Lumunos Moment” might be a time when the conversation went deep, or when you had a meaningful encounter with another.

Matt: It’s hard to pin down any one moment, but there was something so special in those times when one of us would share

something difficult or heartfelt in a small group, knowing we were somewhere safe, were being heard, and that the others really, truly empathized. It can be so hard to find those spaces (especially during a pandemic!). You could feel something so powerful in those moments.

Becca: What continues to draw you to Lumunos? What inspires you to give to Lumunos?

Matt: I am so appreciative of what Lumunos does. In the case of TRIBES, it takes incredible energy, creativity, and thought to bring together a bunch of guys who might be generations apart and find ways to open them up and engage them. And then, when I see all that Lumunos does for other groups across the country, I realize how very rare and special it is. This is an organization so deserving of our support; in supporting Lumunos we’re really just supporting ourselves in the end.

Love Your Neighbor: Continued from page 3

thief on the cross. All these are met with a message of love and redemption. And the follow-up message: “Go and Do Likewise.”

We need to learn to love ourselves, to be compassionate and empathetic with ourselves. We will have more love to give when we have more love for ourselves—even despite all we know of ourselves.

Many years ago, my sister went through aggressive breast cancer treatment. And it left her body with scars that she didn’t have in the years previous. I was so proud of her strength and resolve. And I got the sense that she could look in the mirror and say, “I am a warrior, and the world should look out, because all this is only going to make me braver and more ready to live. These scars? I’ve learned that I’m even tougher than I thought I was, and I can handle way more than life can give me. In fact, they make me even more beautiful.”

When thinking about forgiveness, it dawned on me that we all have our scars. Some are obvious and visible. Others are hidden to the rest of the world. Yet in order to have a life that is fully engaged, we need to find a way to let the scars heal—then own them and let them be part of who we are.

I by no means want to diminish the power of our hurts and scars. When I say “heal,” I don’t mean, “Make go away.” By definition, a scar will be with us forever—much like the scars from my surgeries, which have faded over the years, but are still very much there. By “heal” I mean “To work toward making peace with; owning; letting empower...”

Think about this: Each of us has a wealth of talents, gifts, and abilities. We have the light of the Divine deep within us and all around us. Yet what happens over time is that we listen to the voices that cause us to question these gifts. We may have things happen to us that end up hiding that flame. We may do things that cause us to wonder if that flame went out long ago. We may have established patterns that keep us from ever looking toward the light. Or we may get ourselves so busy, we never take time to

give life to the gifts that are in us.

But what we need to do is get rid of all the stuff that covers the light. This may take a long time, yet every time we move one more hindrance, we have the ability to live a little more fully and experience the light a little more brightly.

How do we do this? We realize that we are human, that despite ourselves and our best intentions, we will make mistakes. But we are gentle with ourselves, and we offer ourselves some grace. We try to live in the here and now, loving ourselves and loving others. As Robert Hastings suggests in *The Station*, “regret over yesterday and fear of tomorrow are twin thieves that rob us of today.”

My family loves the movie *Moulin Rouge!* Baz Luhrman’s film blends music, chaos, and color while focusing on a cast of misfits in 1890s Paris. The main group of characters (artists, courtesans, writers, dreamers) feel like outcasts—and in finding each other, develop a deeper understanding of community and intimacy. No spoiler alerts here, other than the tune for *Nature Boy* by Eden Ahbez (first made popular by Nat King Cole) flows through the movie. In the end, the David Bowie version reminds us that “The greatest thing you’ll ever learn, Is just to love, And be loved in return.”

May we seek to love ourselves, so we may love and be loved with abundance.

Jim Brommers Bergquist has spent his entire career creating and caring. He facilitated retreats and events for students at Seattle University, co-directed the Capitol Hill Homeless Youth Center (Seattle), is a certified Love and Logic teacher, was a full-time ICU Chaplain Resident at Evanston (IL) Hospital, and is committed to making the world a bit better and easier for adolescents. Jim is quick to admit that he also has many flaws, has made many mistakes, and needs to work harder at keeping good mental health. He lives in Santa Barbara with his wife Ingrid and their two daughters (well, one is actually away at college).



LOAVES & FISHES

Remember or honor those you love with a special gift to Lumunos in their name.

2021

- In Memory of Ted and Tilda Baldwin** – Betsy & John Brink
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Upcoming Events

You can find an up-to-date list of events and register at our website: www.lumunos.org
Email your questions or comments to: becca@lumunos.org



WOMEN BECOMING

First Wednesday each month at 12 PM EDT

Online Zoom Book Club
Stories of Women Becoming Their Authentic Selves
Led by Becca Perry-Hill

▶ **May 4th:**
This Time Together by
Carol Burnett



PATHWAYS TO CONNECTION

Tuesday, May 10th, 7:30-9 PM ET

Listening and Expressing from and to the Heart
Led by Paula Willoquet, expert in NVC (Nonviolent Communication)



SPRING RETREAT WITH MARJORY BANKSON

Save the Date!

Saturday, May 21st, 12-3 PM ET



AN EVENING WITH BRIAN MCLAREN

Save the Date!

Monday, October 10th, 7-9 PM ET

Join us for an interactive online event with renowned author, speaker, activist, and theologian Brian McLaren.



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*"Celebrating what we hope for
together is better than fighting over
what we believe separately."*

— Steven Charleston, *Ladder to the Light*

