



From the Wellness Committee: Finding Comfort in Uncertain Times

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In the spirit of the upcoming holiday season, here is the latest installment from our Community Wellness Committee.

How do we find balance in our world today? Even lives blessed with abundant goodness, kindness, faithfulness, love and joy may be confounded by what can feel like more reports than ever of hate crimes, natural disasters, warfare and persecution. How and where do we find the comfort, security, peace and courage to move forward? How can we best “keep the faith,” whatever that faith may be?

Health, religious and social services practitioners today stress the importance of *talking about* mental health because it is now well-recognized that taking care of one’s mind and body are equally important.¹ If some of us didn’t realize that before the pandemic, more do now.

Those familiar with New Testament writings may recognize Paul’s description of “the fruit of the Spirit” as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (moderation, self-control). This fruit I understand to mean qualities that I cannot will into existence. When faced with trouble, challenge, disappointment or temptation to withdraw into myself, I have drawn on such fruit by looking for some way or someone I could help.

Taking a cue from the “Be Kind” signs posted by the Falmouth Lions Club or in the spirit of Thanksgiving, we can care for our mental health by practicing kindness and showing gratitude. In times of disagreement, we can strive to settle matters peacefully through self-control instead of surrendering to anxiety, fear of the unknown or negative emotions.

A few of the many ways that our community offers love, joy and relief to those long-suffering or just in need of healthy activity or fellowship include: suppers, seasonal events, holiday services and food deliveries. Last month, 200 people enjoyed our first Community Cookout hosted by all Falmouth faith communities, 40 volunteers and substantial help from the Boy Scouts. This grand opportunity to reconnect came after two long years of pandemic restrictions. The event’s free-will offering went to the Falmouth Food Pantry.

This year our Wellness Committee co-sponsored a garden event at Tidewater Farm and autumn hikes on Falmouth trails with the UMaine Co-operative Extension and Land Trust respectively. Together with the Yellow Tulip Project and residents who planted 600 tulip bulbs, we shone a light on mental illness awareness. Six high school students contributed to two wellness articles this year that focused on teen mental health. The committee's human services team continued to grant monies to an increasing number of social service organizations.

Operation PHOENIX – Providing Hope and Opportunity through Education, Networking, and Information Exchange -- is our police department's new program that partners an officer/recovery coach with those in our community grappling with substance abuse disorder or addiction.

I was blessed as a cane/walker-dependent that a friend took me to join roughly 75 others standing for love and enduring peace at last week's Veteran's Day ceremony in front of our War Memorial. Afterwards the Lions Club hosted a delicious luncheon at Post 164 (of which my father was a charter member and past commander.)

Just as our veterans endured, did their duty steadfastly and were not easily swayed by the pressures of war, so we too can lean on the fruits of our spirit (and theirs) to face the many challenges of today's world, and take a moment to give thanks for all the ways that our community members support each other.

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>