

# HEALING WATERS

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ATKINSON MEMORIAL CHURCH  
9 SEPTEMBER 2007

## STORY - THE STAR FISH AND THE MOLE CRAB

Story by Annie J. Scott, Director of Religious Education

One day a man was walking on the beach.

Way down the beach he could see another man walking back and forth to and from the waters edge.

The man continued walking along the beach getting closer and closer to the other man. As he walked he noticed there were hundreds of starfish all over the beach. Stranded and probably dying.

He looked up again and realized the man was picking up starfish and throwing them out into the ocean.

He thought to himself how pointless the man's efforts were.

He couldn't possibly save them all.

Many would die, so why bother?

He reached the second man and said to him,

"Why are you doing this?"

There are so many starfish,

you can't possibly make any difference."

The man looked up, then bent over and picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean and said,

"It sure made a difference to that one."

Each year in early August Rev. Dana and I go to the beach together to talk about the upcoming year. We spend a couple days there together. This year Rev. Dana went down a couple days early. When I arrived we went down to the beach for a walk. We hadn't walked very far before she bent down and picked up something. She said, "It's this thing I've been doing."

She was holding a mole crab. I realized there were maybe hundreds all over the beach.

I watched as Rev. Dana walked closer to the water's edge and gently placed the small mole crab down on the sand and we watched it burrow its way down into the soft, wet sand.

For the next two days whenever we walked on the beach we picked up mole crabs and set them down again at the water's edge and watched them dig down into the sand.

May we look for starfish and mole crabs in our lives.

And make a difference when we can.

## HOMILY — HEALING WATERS

By Rev. Dana Worsnop

Have any of you had trouble answering the question, how was your summer?

People ask it with such kind intention, hoping to hear of times at the beach or gatherings with family. The question has been especially hard for me this year. For you see, I spent most of my study leave and vacation really quite depressed.

It started in June when I heard news of three Supreme Court decisions – the very ones I had long feared would come from a newly conservative court. The news seemed hopeless from every quarter. I found myself slipping deeper. Usually such despair lifts after a few hours or a couple of days or even a week, but this summer it didn't.

One day, I went to the movies to distract myself. I found some comedy that had gotten good reviews. But when I got to the theater, I was just in time for a screening of Michael Moore's documentary *Sicko*, about the health care crisis. And a kind of amnesia came over me. Oh, I really wanted to see that, I thought. So I bought a ticket. It wasn't till the lights dimmed and the film started that I realized my mistake. *What Am I Doing Here?* I thought. *I am such an idiot.* Moore's story telling is so full of the ironic and the absurd that I did laugh frequently. But it did nothing to lift my despair. After the movie, I got in my car and wept.

My depression turned, from the state of the larger world to the state of my inner world. I revisited old wounds. There were times I felt utterly inadequate to the task of being your minister.

Now I tell you this, not so that you might take care of me or reassure me. Even as I haven't felt so depressed for many years, I discovered that I am now strong enough to revisit those old and painful places. The gifts of this time of darkness are many, although it was sometimes a bit harrowing.

I tell you this not that you might reassure me. I tell you so that if you share my despair, you might know you are not alone. And there is strength and purpose to be found in your despair.

I tell you this not as a tale of the healing wonders of community. For as powerful and healing as community can be, community is not the final destination.

I tell you this so that you might hear of the renewed passion and yes, impatience I feel. I will be satisfied with nothing less than transforming lives that transform the world. I know ours is a saving faith, for it saved my life. Our purpose here is nothing short of saving the world. A harder task, perhaps, than saving mole crabs, but surely just as possible.

Our Water Communion represents our coming together as one body. Yet the waters here gathered are not just a symbol of community. They are also a symbol of power and renewal in the face of despair. It is because we have been wounded, because we are wounded, that we can heal the world

The waters we merge today – whether they are from an outward journey you took this summer or an inner one, whether they represent tears of sorrow, or waters of spiritual renewal – the waters we merge are a concrete representation of our spiritual strength as a religious community.

I tell you all this as we face a fall of excitement. My despair has lifted, and I feel a buoyancy among you all. Not because we're going to build a building, although it sure looks like we are. Not because this is such a grand community, although it certainly is.

But because the waters flowing through this community – merged together – can heal the world. Paradoxically, my despair this summer has given me renewed hope that we can indeed save ourselves, save each other and save the world.

We should ask of ourselves nothing less.

Blessed be.

May it be so!