

Weekly Meditation November 10, 2010
By Rev. Teri Lubbers

TONGLLEN

*Tonglen is a practice of creating space, ventilating the atmosphere of our lives so that people can breathe freely and relax. Whenever we encounter suffering in any form, the tonglen instruction is to breathe it in with the wish that everyone could be free of pain. Whenever we encounter happiness in any form, the instruction is to breathe it out, send it out, with the wish that everyone could feel joy. It's a practice that allows people to feel less burdened and less cramped, a practice that shows us how to love without conditions...With the in-breath the armor begins to fall apart, and we find we can breathe deeply and relax. A kindness and a tenderness begin to emerge. We don't have to tense up as if our whole life were being spent in the dentist's chair...When we breathe out relief and spaciousness, we are also encouraging the armor to dissolve. The out-breath is a metaphor for opening our whole being. When something is precious, instead of holding it tightly, we can open our hands and share it. We can give it all away. We can share the wealth of this unfathomable human experience. ~Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times**

Long quote...but this is the best short description of why I meditate by focusing on my breath. Partly I do it to make my world spin not so fast, and partly I do it to help my own armor fall apart and dissolve, and partly I do it because I think it will help transform the world. Every event in life – whether sad or joyful, difficult or easy, full of pain or pleasure – presents us with a choice. We can either hold on tightly or we can let go, but we don't have to hoard pain and pleasure. We can let them come and go the way tides do on the beach. Nothing about our existence is permanent. But it doesn't have to be permanent to be precious.

Don't know about you but when I go to the dentist I have to consciously relax my body and my mind. I breathe deeply before they take my blood pressure, to consciously will myself to be calm and slow my heart rate. I love what Pema says, "We don't have to tense up as if our whole life were being spent in a dentist's chair." We don't have to live like that.

We can allow the painful things to loosen us up and teach us not to be so guarded and armored. We can allow the pleasurable things to free up our kindness and tenderness for ourselves and others. We can give it all away. We are unfathomable creatures.

Prayer: Creator, help me to take every moment of this day as from you. Help me to sit with it, breathe it in, breathe it out, and be okay with what comes and goes. Help me experience the deep current of your love that holds and carries me. Amen.