

**Weekly Meditation February 2, 2011
By Rev. Teri Lubbers**

Smile At Fear

But the first step along this path is looking at yourself with a feeling of gentleness and kindness, and it takes a lot of guts to do this. If you've tried it, you know how difficult it can be to stay present when you begin to fear what you see. ... When we wall ourselves off from uncertainty and fear, we develop an "iron heart." When someone develops a true friendship with themselves, the iron heart softens into something else. It becomes a vulnerable heart, a tender heart. It becomes a genuine heart of sadness, because it is a heart that is willing to be touched by pain and remain present. ~ Pema Chodron, "Smile at Fear"

Ever been afraid? That uncomfortable, queasy, yucky feeling of dread, of "I've gotta get out of here," that response to uncertainty that makes us react, put our armor on, and run for our lives? No wonder we turn into control freaks. We try so hard to eliminate anything that smacks of uncertainty so that we never have to feel afraid.

What if we didn't run away from what we are afraid of, or what makes us sad or angry or upset? What if we stuck around? We might find out that there is more to our story than we had imagined. That we reward ourselves with things outside us because it feels like there is no "enough" big enough to fill the emptiness inside. That we avoid crying and feeling sad because we don't want to feel vulnerable and raw. That we become workaholics hoping to appease some internalized parent. That we constantly seek entertainment to take the edge off feeling uncomfortable. We might discover all sorts of things about ourselves if we stood our ground when fear enters the room.

There is another path. We can have faith that the moments when we feel raw, naked and very tender are the real moments of our lives. Moments when the possibility of connection and gathering up all the scattered parts of ourselves becomes real, and we learn to tap in to something much deeper. We can learn to smile at our fear, stay present, and not allow what frightens us to make us shut down. Tenderness, openness, gentleness, kindness, for ourselves and those around us...these are fear's antidotes.

Prayer: God, teach me how to stay present to all of my life. Let me not turn away from any part of it, especially those parts that frighten me. In those moments when I am afraid please teach me something that matters. Help me stay put and listen. Amen.