

Haydenville Congregational Church
The Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian
September 6, 2009
1 Kings 19:1-8

“I Will Try to Fix You”

*May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord Our Strength and Our Redeemer. Amen.*

When I was in my 20s and early 30s, I thought I knew a lot about love. I considered myself a caring and loving person, a good Armenian with a big heart. Maybe I would have said I was a love expert. But then, when I was in my mid-30s, I met Michael Klare and my big heart grew bigger. And then when I was in my late 30s, Sasha Klare-Ayvazian was born and suddenly I felt enormous love—huger and more intense than any feelings of love I had experienced before. It was like a trapdoor opened in my heart and my love capacity exploded to a whole new level.

This summer, when I underwent emergency surgery and then weeks of recovery, I felt my heart grow larger again...and that happened because of YOU. When you learned of my surgery and painfully slow recovery, you burst into action doing what you do well: you prayed for me. You prayed for me: consistently, faithfully, and lovingly. And I felt it—I felt surrounded and uplifted by your prayers.

There is a story in the Bible, in 1 Samuel 10:9, in which Samuel is anointing Saul ruler over the people of Israel. After the anointing, as Saul turns away to leave Samuel, the Bible says, “God gave Saul another heart and all the signs were fulfilled that day.”

Well this summer, God gave me another heart.

I don't know if it was another SECOND heart or another BIGGER heart, but this summer, like Saul, I got another heart. And it was God working through you—your love, your prayers, your caring, your generosity—that gave me another heart.

I know it took great discipline on your part to pray intently for me but not to call or visit me (which I had asked you not to do). But you did it, you refrained! You sent cards, and you left flowers, food, stuffed animals, books, CDs, gifts and countless surprises on my front porch.

And you did not ring the doorbell; you crept over quietly like angels and elves and left your offerings of love. YOU gave me another heart, just like Saul.

This morning, as we think about how you ministered to me during my medical crisis, let us reflect on today's reading from the Book of 1 Kings.

As we heard in the passage that Jim read, the prophet Elijah is weary—he is on the run from Jezebel. He has just had a hand in killing the prophets of the false God Baal. And now he fears for his life. He is tired, he's spent, he wants to give up and die. Listen again to part of the story,

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. Then Elijah was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba; he left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life....' Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep.

Elijah is afraid, depleted and desperate and he prays to God. And what does God do in response? God sends an angel with cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. Listen,

Suddenly an angel touched Elijah and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at this head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again.

God does not speak to Elijah; God does not send an angel with a big announcement, proclamation, lecture or pep talk. God does not speak at all. God sends cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. God sends food. AND God sends the angel with these gifts not once but twice. After his rest and the second feeding, Elijah is ready "for the journey" ahead, whatever that might be. After rising, eating and drinking twice, the Bible says,

"Elijah went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights...."

Well, I am not the prophet Elijah, Lord knows, but I too was weary and frightened and God sent angels to care for me. God sent you.

You did not speak. You did not appear at my front door with lectures about self-care, resilience, and faith. You did not even ring the doorbell. You came with the likes of cakes baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

God sent angels to care for me.

God sent you.

And when a person is visited by angels, that person is changed.

And I was changed by the experience. I got another heart, a bigger heart—like Saul did in the Bible.

You prayed and pampered me into health.

You ministered to me, just as the angels ministered to Elijah.

And I was strengthened, as Elijah was strengthened.

And I am able to continue on my journey, as Elijah was able to continue on his journey.

Now recall with me the words by Hafiz that we read together at the beginning of our worship service today....the closing lines of that poem...

Let me bring you trays of food

And something

That you like to

Drink

You can use my soft words

As a cushion

For your Head.

Your soft words made a cushion for my head and I let myself settle into that cushion of love and healing.

Your prayers made a cushion for my head and I was able to rest in peace on your words.

You did for me what you do well, what we have talked about in this sanctuary for four years since I became your pastor. You prayed deeply, consistently and faithfully. And I felt it.

You did for me what you have for each other so often and so well.

You did for me what we have done with and for each other when we have lifted in prayer Linda and Ann, Jennifer, Alice, Phyllis, Helen, Fred, Marcia, Deb and so many others.

You know that as Christians we are called to pray and to act....
To place our soft words as cushions under the heads of those who suffer,
and to bring cakes baked on hot stones and a jar of water....

OR as the case may be, baked lasagna and bags of black licorice, homemade bread
and sparkling cider, mashed potatoes and meatloaf, Cheetos and *People* magazines,
and beautiful, colorful, delicious vegetables from your gardens.

You were trying to fix me...in the ways you know how...
in the ways God directed the angels to fix Elijah.

**And that is what we do for each other....as a community of faith...we try to
fix each other with prayers and acts of generosity and kindness.**

And what good pray-ers you are!

So many of you have reported feeling the prayers of this congregation when you
were in need.

Gary Stone felt zaps and zingers from church members after his heart surgery;

Coni and Kayla felt a sense of peace settle in Coni's room at Bay State;

Lindsay felt surrounded by loving prayers after her surgery;

And Phyllis told me she regularly felt waves of our love washing over her.

And now we can add my name to that list.

I felt you trying to fix me.

I felt your soft words as a cushion under my head.

I found your cakes on my front porch.

I can attest to the healing nature of your prayers and acts of generosity and
kindness.

My beloved brothers and sisters...

Never wonder if your heartfelt prayers make a difference.

They make a difference.

Never wonder if God has chosen and sent YOU to minister to those who suffer.

God has chosen and sent you.

Never wonder why Jesus' healing ministry was done entirely in the context of
community.

Community sustains and heals.

Never wonder if a small gesture of love can have a big impact.

A small gesture of love can and does have a big impact.

And never wonder if a middle-aged heart already an expert on love can grow bigger and fuller of more love.

A big old heart can grow bigger and fuller of more love.

I learned so much this summer...so much about prayer and faith,
so much about patience and hope,
so much about humility and gratitude
so much about YOU.

I learned about angels and how they appear not with lectures and pronouncements but with cake, water and black licorice.

I learned about God and grace, friends and family, and lights that guide you home.

Thank you, my beloved brothers and sisters, for being my precious Church family, my angels and my teachers.

Amen.