

Winter 2014

Wow! What a winter! That pretty white stuff can be absolutely gorgeous. I can never get enough of watching the birds at my feeder. They are amazing to watch and somehow give me a special peace. The snowflakes are amazing too as I reflect that each one has been created uniquely just as you and I.

Unfortunately not everything about winter is gorgeous. This winter has been particularly hard for many and I'm not fully sure why. Nearly every person I meet talks about the weather with a deep sense of burden and dread. It seems like it has snowed flakes of fear, pain and depression instead of glistening intriguing crystals of ice.

I too have found myself battling this winter funk. I was not happy when our hot water pipes froze and we had to boil water. Fortunately we at least we had safe cold water unlike our neighbors down state dealing with a devastation of a chemical spill. I did not appreciate the dangerous road conditions, but I've been blessed with four wheel drive. I didn't appreciate the chaos it caused at the office either, but I'm blessed to be employed. I find it amazing that adapting to the stress of winter takes so much thought and energy. I can't imagine what the homeless and other individuals with challenges go through.

Sometimes like you, I just have to practice looking at the bright side. It isn't easy, but we must be purposeful about this exercise if we are to avoid slipping into the depths of despair during the many other challenges in life. During this winter's extremely cold vortex temperatures it has seemed like spring would never come. Sometimes in life it can look as if everything is dormant and will never change and suddenly a tree bud bursts forth. Winter is a wonderful reminder of the gift of hope. There is a healing energy released when we embrace the future with hope. In the meantime we just have to get past the snowfall of today.

This winter I have had the honor of hanging out at the Winter Freeze Shelter a bit. This three month ministry of Youth Service Systems is amazing. An office floor is transformed into a shelter by night and an office by day for 90 days each year. The residents are so polite and thankful. They appreciate the opportunity to sleep, eat, and stay warm from 10:00 p.m. until 7:30 a.m. each day when it is time to seek refuge elsewhere. The Freeze Shelter team is a reminder to each of us that we must adapt to circumstances and think outside of the box. How many opportunities are missed simply because we have become frozen in our thinking and unwilling or fearful to make needed changes.

It is exciting to realize that dormancy of winter is followed by an exhilaration of new life and change. Those birds crowded about my feeder will soon be giving birth as spring arrives. Those little snowflakes will be trickling into streams and great changes will announced soon for this counseling ministry.