

Excerpt from Laughing Pilgrims

By Howard R. Macy

From Chapter 8, "When It's Hard to Laugh"

Sometimes it's flat-out hard to laugh, even when we want to. Though laughing might make more sense than anything else, though it might be good for us, though we might even know it's the best thing we could do, still somehow it's hard, even impossible.

We struggle to laugh for lots of reasons. Sometimes we're simply embarrassed, even over silly things. Sometimes pride will choke down laughter. After all, being the Center of the Universe is serious business. Sometimes stress, pain, or loss may get in the way. As one woman recalled, "I couldn't even laugh, I was in such a bad place." Another told me with sadness how humor had left her home for over a year while a family member endured treatments for cancer. We may need to be respectful and patient at times when humor seems to be no laughing matter. Still, we don't need to give in easily to the forces that would rob us of the lifting power of humor. Even when it's hard, we can learn when and how to laugh.