



Words that soothe, books that heal

By **SALLY D. KETCHUM**

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"But, of course, we cannot choose. We can only try to cope. That is what one does with sorrow, with tragedy, with any misfortune. We do not try to explain it. We do not try to justify it by telling ourselves that somehow we deserve it. We do not even accept it. We survive it."

—Harold S. Kushner, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"

Birth and death is the lot of man — with "a heap o' livin'" in between — as Michigan poet, Edgar L. Guest, put it. What Guest means, of course, is that daily life includes personal triumphs, small pleasures and most certainly, disappointment, pain, illness and facing the fact of death — perhaps the loss of loved

ones or perhaps a person enduring terminal illness himself.

Since Sept. 11, Americans have found solace in community, patriotism and searched for personal peace. People of faith turn to reading, not only Bible study, but also other inspirational books. There many are valuable, healing books in print now, some classic, some new, written by America's best minds, whether philosophic, scientific or religious.

Written 20 years ago, Rabbi Harold Kushner's classic "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" is more relevant than ever. (Kushner helped counsel survivors and grief-stricken friends and family members after the bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building.) His book is now out in a handsome anniversary edition (Schocken Books). As a theology student, The Book of Job

Perennial favorites and plenty of new titles give readers food for thought in spiritual reading, as shown here at Traverse City's Horizon Books.

perplexed him; as a young father, coping with the death of his 3-year-old son led him to healing and wisdom, through his suffering.

Some predict that a current best-selling book, "As I Lay Dying: Meditations Upon Returning" by Richard John Neuhaus is destined to also become a classic. Highly recommended by the country's most elite critics, theologians and therapists, the book (Basic Books) presents Neuhaus's reflections on his near-death experience,

according to Charles Colson, of Prison Fellowship Ministries, "without flinching, without bravado, without sentimentality." A Traverse area retired principal said the book has been immensely helpful while her husband fights prostate cancer.

Authors of books for the troubled or grieving range from

celebrities, such as "The Right Words at the Right Time" by Marlo Thomas (Atria Books) to writers close to home, like "Hannah's Gift: Lessons from a Life Fully Lived" by Maria Housen, a Traverse City native (Bantam). Signed copies of "Hannah's Gift" are available at local bookstores.

David L. Miller, senior editor of "The Lutheran," has recommended several books to troubled but faithful people who seek both intellectual and spiritual inspiration. His recommendations include the work of William A. Barry, especially "With an Everlasting Love: Developing an Intimate Relationship with God," (Paulist Press) and "Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius" (Ave Maria Press). "Psalms for Sojourners" by James Limburg (Fortress Press) also a Miller recommendation, was such a help to a Traverse City area cancer patient that she has purchased it as a gift for others "for almost every suitable occasion that arises," she said. "It is a small, modest, pick up and put down book," she says. "It goes with me in my purse."

The popularity of books of faith and inspiration to local readers, according to Michelle Kelley, events coordinator at Horizon Books of Traverse City, comes because "any reader can identify with some aspect of the book."

Other popular sellers are:

"Hope Through Heartsongs" by Mattie J. T. Stepanek, (Hyperion).

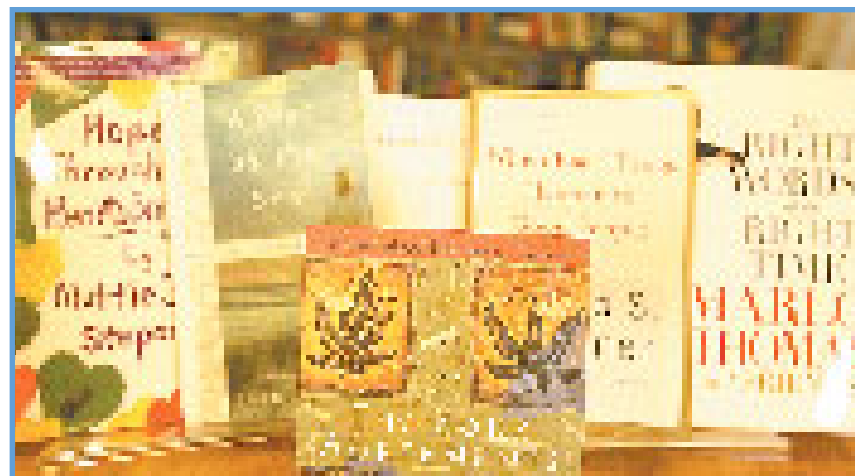
"A Year by the Sea: Thoughts of an Unfinished Woman" by Joan Anderson, (Broadway Books).

"The Soul's Religion: Cultivating a Profound Spiritual Way of Life by Thomas Moore," (HarperCollins).

"The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz, (Amber-Allen).

Recommendations of helpful books, whether for small, easy-to-read paperbacks of inspiration or the materials of intellectual contemplation of one's own spirituality, are everywhere. Good sources of recommendations are pastors, priests, rabbis and other religious mentors; physicians and counselors; bookstore staffers; and often friends or colleagues who have found solace of their own in books. Church magazines are also an excellent source; some even publish regular review columns.

Sally D. Ketchum is a local freelance writer.



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Grace Church is a Christian community with a bold plan for the future. Anchored in Christ and in our Anglican tradition, we are moving forward to inspire and welcome new generations. We are building new worship space and creating new spaces to enrich our congregational life and community ministries.

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Sunday, 8 & 10 a.m.: Holy Eucharist

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