

**INAUDIBLE LANGUAGE OF HEART**  
**Jeff Liebmann, Ministerial Intern**  
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When preliminary discussions conclude, we arrive at the heart of the matter.

When someone you love with all of your heart grows ever more distant, we dread the eventuality of a broken heart.

When we yearn for something so deeply, our hearts ache.

When we feel like jumping for joy, our heart song springs forth.

The one constant defining our very lives, every moment through the years – our heart beat.

The heart represents the core of our very being. Whatever the viewpoint – physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual – our hearts reflect our deepest essence.

Access to our hearts opens the portal to the intimate inner self; to the “me” that few will ever know completely.

And yet, we can wear our hearts on our sleeves. In spite of its vulnerability, our hearts often rest like open books for all to read.

Many times, we pour our hearts out searching for closer connections and richer relationships.

At the heart of it all, persistent, our hearts force us to feel that which our minds might explain away, that which our memories might lock away, and from which our feet might run away.

Our hearts; our way to feel, to remember, and to engage with life.

*Upon meeting, they felt an immediate attachment, as if something reached out and locked onto something within. They shared common ideas and interests. Each desired the company of the other. Their time together increased, consuming an ever growing proportion of their waking lives.*

*They felt that invisible bond, that grounding tether; what some describe as our heartstrings. They knew that they wanted to build something together.*

*In time, they joined and began creating a partnership. That new life emerged as a new being. To some, they were almost inseparable, as if the new life replaced the individual parent lives. To others, the lives apart simply faded into the background of the “us.”*

*They assembled a home, extended families, and formed new relationships with others. Old interests adapted and new commitments grew. Sometimes, old friends could not maintain ties with the new being emerging from their union. Old stories, edited and rewritten, joined new co-authored tales.*

What happens to the heart in a loving relationship? The weight of the muscle tissue seems to lighten as our hearts beat from a higher point in our chests. Do hearts actually connect in some sense, imperceptible to monitors and analysis? When we are apart from those we love, our chests tighten, as if our hearts respond to our anxiety. Does some new heart emerge from the union of hearts? And, if so, how can we envision this new heart entity that lacks form and that thrives only in symbiosis?

Imagine a web – a web of life threads between us all, connecting us all. Now imagine that sometimes, special nodes emerge floating in this ethereal plane of existence. Built from the shared lives and loving purposes of people, the special nodes beat with a life of their own. These heart nodes depend on those feeding it for sustenance, but experience their own unique sensations and experiences.

Like our own organic hearts, these heart nodes built of human union possess health that can, in time, suffer damage and disease. The nature of this heart node disease derives not from bacteria or virus. No, the heart node given birth out of love dies from a single cause – starvation.

The heart node fed by the energy pulsing through our life webs requires a rich and constant diet of compassion and care.

*Time passed and life intervened on their love. Stress from work, family obligations, and the inevitable currents of time began to erode the carefully and lovingly constructed relationship. Age brought its own challenges, leaving consensus and compatibility harder to achieve. Mistaken actions, misspoken sentiments, misinterpreted words.*

*They built their own defenses in response to the pressures of life. Over time, layer after layer accumulated, and these shells thickened around their hearts. The memories of love and life remained, but the calcifying crusts interrupted the flow of force from each to their heart node. Each recognized that their ailing special heart needed attention, but neither could find the path of healing among the infinity of detours.*

*The thread connecting their lives paled and withered. The heart node they had planted and cultivated, that bore fruit and seed, now shriveled. Only weak reflexive energies remained and could no longer sustain the special node of their love.*

Most of us know the anguish of a broken heart. When the bond between us and another severs, the pain hurts as deeply and as sharply as a blade. We can survive the wound, but the treatment requires much time and rehabilitation.

One irony of our modern world lies in our amazing capacity to mend the physical heart, while skill with failing heart nodes eludes us. Imagine spiritual bypass surgery that would help us overcome the lengthy and painful recovery from a lost love. What if valve replacements existed as substitutes for those injured from the loss of a heart node connection?

Instead, we comfort ourselves with the notion that such wounds exist somehow "naturally." We accept the trauma of lost threads to our heart nodes as something we must endure and from which we can mature and develop.

Must we accept this logic? We learned the nature of the physical human heart through experimentation, through trial and error, through hands on examination. But the webs of life do not exist on the physical plane, at least not the physical plane familiar to us. The heart nodes created out of human relationship elude medical probes and surgical expertise. To deny the inevitability of pain from diseased heart nodes, we must envision a new paradigm of exploring the nature of the web of life.

*He entered the worship service alone; an unfamiliar space with unfamiliar people. She set aside memories of the week past and thoughts of coming days. He settled into the seat, finding a position of comfort without distraction, a meditative pose. She examined the spaces between herself and others, between herself and the pulpit. He read through the elements of the order of service and pondered their relationships. She scanned announcements of community dinners and discussions.*

*They heard the music and listened to the words as they passed over the ears of those present, knowing that everyone listened to the same vibrations, but perhaps heard different sounds. They stood with others and sang, gaining the confidence of melody, and lyrical linkages with the surrounding company.*

*They recited words of covenant, promises those assembled agreed to maintain. More words, more sounds, colors and shapes, movement, a hand of friendship. He felt part of something. She felt her heart pressing against the boundaries of her chest. His heart seemed to draw energy from his sensory organs as skin tingled, eyes watered, mouth dried. She felt the movement, subtle vibrations, as if the heartbeats around her somehow moved the air itself.*

We assemble in worship for many reasons: to rest and to recuperate; to reason and to learn; to forgive and to atone; to open ourselves to the mysteries of the world in dedication to our ultimate

purposes of life. Mostly, perhaps, we congregate in worship to experience a happening with others impossible to experience alone. We join in fellowship to "be" with others intentionally and honestly. In this place and time, we set about the work of breaking through and perhaps tearing down the defenses that life would entreaty us erect and perpetuate.

Sometimes, a worship taps at our shells like a bird, echoing gently through our hearts. Other times, worship runs over our shells like waters, murmuring the potential of change in our hearts. And, occasionally, worship shatters our shells like a sledge hammer, bursting our hearts in ecstatic epiphany.

Worship plugs us into the life threads between us. Engagement in committed relationship with another constructs a new heart node. When we engage in worship within a covenanted community, we erect a node of proportional size and strength. In the end, the heart node of a congregation separates a church from other human organizations. The energy gladly spent to nourish this heart node resembles no other and can, in turn, sustain us through the challenges and crises of life.

Depending on the source, the origins of the heart symbol go back several millennia. The heart as image and metaphor pervades our culture, representing everything from love and affection to the seat of thought, emotion, or soul. One might easily trivialize a discussion of heart, romanticizing the function of a collection of cells really no more special or deserving of our attention than one's pancreas. Doctors can undoubtedly explain that sinking feeling in our chest as some combination of muscular responses to glandular secretions.

When accepting the Nobel Prize in 1964, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart." The word "heart" is an inadequate symbol to describe that universal array of sensations we all experience. But, we should not shirk from endeavoring to explore the heart's role in all arenas of our lives. Here, in our congregations we blaze those trails in search of truth and meaning. In our worship together, we reach out along life's webs to each other. Together, we build that heart node that is this congregation; source of learning, of healing, of forgiving, of challenging, or striving.

Reach out and feel your heart strings. Sense your body and that within you that reaches out beyond your physical presence. Now, allow that energy to flow not only from you, but also toward you from others. Remember this sensation. Practice recalling this feeling in the days ahead. Draw upon the flow from the heart node of this congregation as you need. Together, may we find adequate ways to express our understanding of the inaudible language of the heart.