

## *The Pit and the Pendulum*

That 1842 tale by Edgar Allan Poe seems to me to be a fable for our times. The narrator is locked up in a dark room and discovers a large, deep pit in the middle. He loses consciousness only to awaken and find himself strapped down with a razor-sharp pendulum swinging slowly back and forth over him, slowly coming closer to him. With mere inches to spare, he manages to free himself. His relief is short-lived, however, as the walls of his cell begin to move in ... slowly ... steadily ... pushing him ... toward ... the pit.

So here we are, 167 years later, locked up in a dark economy. Maybe you haven't seen the pendulum yet and are just worried about staying out of the pit, worried about how deep it might be.

Or maybe the pendulum looms over you. The interest rates on your credit cards have gone up and now you're behind. To top it off, your company is laying people off. Could you be next?

Or maybe the walls are pushing you toward the pit and you see no way out. Your mortgage reset and your payments have jumped up. You're behind—how are you going to get caught up? You've lost your job and the search for a new one isn't going well. You have no idea where to turn as you teeter on the edge of the pit.

But wait a minute! I didn't tell you how Poe's story ended. And tell you I must, as it completes the analogy.

We left our narrator being pushed toward the pit, toward certain doom. He's within inches of the edge, terrified, scrabbling for a handhold on the smooth walls. His feet keep sliding, sliding, his toes now over the edge. He starts to fall but catches himself...balances on the edge...arms flailing...the walls push forward again. A hand...an arm...from nowhere! The walls have pulled back and the hand has grabbed him! He is saved!!

Our narrator was saved by...well, just read Poe's story if you really want to find out. Because what's important here is that there's a hand

reaching out for you and me today. A hand reaching out to help us get back on our feet. The hand of God working through Shepherd of the Hills Presbyterian Church.

Look—I know that there's not going to be a hand coming down out of the sky to hand you a mortgage payment or a great job offer. You and I both know that God does most of his work on earth through people and in ways we don't always expect.

That's exactly what's happening at SHPC. The church has attorneys, real estate agents, financial advisors and others who are coming together to provide whatever help they can to whomever they can. No promises of miracle fixes, but no matter what your circumstances—looking bankruptcy in the face, about to lose your home, trying to find a job, tightening up your finances to make sure you make it through—there's a hand reaching out to you.

Finding that hand is easy. You just need to say "Can we talk?" to Larry, Mike or Britta. Or to me or Tom O'Meara. Or Roger or Marilyn Wade. Or Sherry Smith. Or any current or past Elder or Deacon. Or the Stephen Ministry leader, Laurel Calhoun. Lots of hands for you to choose from. Pick the one you feel most comfortable with and that person will know how to tap into the resources you need.

How may we serve you?

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