

November Letter from the Minister

November 1, 2024

Time is Like a Tortilla

On the morning after an election a few years ago, I called my mom. The name of the newly elected president had been announced and I was shaken.

When she picked up the phone, I said, “Hey mom! Tell me this isn’t the most frightening time in history that you have ever experienced, right? I mean you grew up in the time of World War II. You moved to California where my grandpa, your dad, worked in a shipyard. That was a scary time, right? But you got through it, right? This is what I really want to know—are we going to be ok?”

There was a pause at the other end of the line. I could tell my mother was choosing her words carefully. She said, “Well, I haven’t seen anything like this, Amy. There is so much unknown. These are indeed unsettling times.” At that moment, I could not foresee the future but one thing I knew with absolute certainty - my mom was honest to the core! She always has been.

And here we are *again*, facing another election cycle. Many of us are, figuratively speaking, teetering tubs of inner turmoil. I keep telling myself, “Stay calm, careful and kind. This is the best way to move through worrisome days.” I had decided long ago that fortitude is all about *learning* to be an adult, right? My son used to say with a weary tone of voice, “Adulthood is really hard.” Like my mom, he too speaks the truth. It runs in my family.

I am keenly aware that time marches on but frankly, it appears to go in a circle rather than a linear line. Leslie Marmon Silko wrote about what she learned from her elders regarding the circular nature of time:

“My interest in time comes from my childhood with the old-time people, who had radically different views of the universe and reality. For the old-time people, time was not a series of ticks of a clock, one following the other. For the old-time people, time was round—like a tortilla; time had specific moments and specific locations, so that the beloved ancestors who had passed on were not annihilated by death, but only relocated to the place called Clif House. At Cliff House, people continued as they had always been, although only spirits and not living humans can travel freely over this tortilla of time. All times go on existing side by side for all eternity. No moment is lost or destroyed. There are no future times or past times; there are *always all* times, which differ slightly, as the locations on the tortilla differ slightly.”*

Imagine, time is a tortilla! I have been pondering this idea all week. If time moves in a circle, with no ending and beginning and change, for better or worse, is constant, then where

might we, you and I, find some comfort? Where will we find a source of strength, an anchor, so to say, when we round the curves of yet another event, and it is just too much?

I have three suggestions:

A) Take the time to find your spiritual center. Pray, meditate, pace back and forth, or take a walk in nature. Listen to music, a podcast that is delightful, make something with your hands, and always pause to notice your breath. Locate a source of beauty in your surroundings and be grateful. Toni Morrison said, “At some point in life, the world’s beauty is enough.”

B) Reflect on how you have, up to this point, survived your toughest days and then, think about better days ahead. Imagine yourself healthy and happy.

C) Soon we will have a better idea about what the future holds. In the meantime, “Look for the helpers” as Mr. Rogers used to say. Better yet, vow *to be a helper* to a friend or stranger in the days ahead. Finally, take a look around. Notice all the loved ones in this, our Unitarian Universalist community. We have so many individuals who care. This is a treasure, a source of inspiration too often overlooked.

With you on this journey,

Rev. Amy Kindred

*(Excerpt from Leslie Marmon Silko’s book titled, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, page 136 – 137)