

Letter from the Minister-October 2024

-Excerpt from "In This Place (An American Lyric)" by Amanda Gorman

"There's a poem in this place—
a poem in America
a poet in every American
who rewrites this nation, who tells
a story worthy of being told on this minnow of an earth
to breathe hope into a palimpsest* of time—
a poet in every American
who sees that our poem penned
doesn't mean our poem's end."

*definition: parchment or tablet

October has arrived. Soon, plastic ghosts and ghouls will dangle from trees and orange pumpkins will pop-up on porches. Every year, many of us use this season to poke fun at fear. Hence, the popularity of haunted houses where one meanders hallways knowing that, at any moment, a hand could reach out and grab an ankle. This kind of fear is fun.

However, authentic heart-wrenching fear is far from a party-worthy celebration. It is a stomach-punching, raw cortisone-raising reaction to unexpected chaos. Most of us are still reeling from the destruction left by Helene when she reached down and reminded us that life as we know it is impermanent. Frankly, I don't need that kind of reminder that "change is constant" but here we are, rebuilding. Some of us more so than others.

And, I have observed lately that people who are wrapped in a cloak of fear are spiraling with heightened concern about the upcoming election. This too is a reminder that you and I, who do as much good work as possible to create a culture of love and concern, are ultimately not in control of the future.

Thich Nhat Hanh wrote, "When you look at the nature of things with concentration, you discover that they are all impermanent. Everything is constantly changing. Nothing has a permanent identity..." (From *Your True Home*) How does it feel to *breathe in* this reality? To *breathe out* true understanding of this fact?

If you haven't developed a ritual already, I encourage you to nurture a spiritual practice that focuses on observance of the present moment. Meaning, begin a routine of pausing to simply breathe in and out slowly. Condition yourself to pull those rising terrifying thoughts of the future into this focused silent mantra, "All I really have any control over are my actions in this moment." Doing this 10 times often is not too much!

We all know there is much to fear about shifts in the climate. And possible changes at the US governmental level are daunting. Perhaps now is a good time to consider how to find a calming center when facing our fears.

Maybe this is also a good time to remind one another that no matter what happens in any realm, you and I are committed to helping each other *and* asking one another for help, come what may. That is not a scary proposition but a comforting promise.

With you on this journey, Rev. Amy