

Bridging

October 2006

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church, Bridgewater, MA

Minister's Column

As I look ahead to the fall and my time with you as interim minister, I am reminded that the start of autumn coincides with the Jewish High Holy Days, beginning with Rosh Hashanah at sundown on Friday September 22 and lasting through October 2, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. These Holy Days---these ten Days of Turning---are devoted to setting right any relationships that have gone awry during the past year. This is a period of forgiveness and reconciliation.

I am grateful for this intentional period devoted to admitting wrongs, grudges, and hurts. In my experience as a minister, 'forgiveness' is a subject that could come up much more in Unitarian Universalist circles. I suspect that some of our reluctance to easily talk about forgiveness is its Calvinist associations, as in 'forgiveness of sins.' However, forgiveness involves so much more than forgiveness from inherent sinfulness. Forgiveness can be a profound spiritual and psychological practice. When we are willing to forgive others as well as ourselves, for hurts that have been done to us or that we have done to others, we stand a chance of letting go of those nasty resentments that eat away at us. Forgiveness is not copping out, it's not the easy way out. Getting to a place of forgiveness is often very hard to do. Forgiveness may mean that we have to admit our role in muddles or misunderstandings, even if we weren't the main cause. Forgiveness means taking ownership.

The benefits to forgiveness are well worth the challenges. When we are open to forgiveness, we open ourselves to righting relationships. We open ourselves to that loving covenant that has been the core of our free liberal faith tradition for nearly four hundred years. Acts of forgiveness can mean fresh starts with others with whom we've been over rocky roads. Forgiveness means a chance to move on, to move forward.

Perhaps you are thinking that we shouldn't need a special period set aside for forgiveness and reconciliation. I for one welcome this Jewish holiday, this annual reminder of how we ought to be living all the year through. These Holy Days help my turning. Yom Kippur really can be a Day of 'At-One-Ment.'

Are there unresolved resentments in your life? Is there any 'At-One-Ment' that you'd like to work on? Start with others, or start with yourself: it matters not which comes first. It does matter that we keep a covenant of right relationships, in our personal lives, in our church communities, in the world.

See you in church!

Barbara

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