

## **What Brings Us Together**

As I write this, the election has not yet taken place and yet as you read this, the results will be known. I am also aware of this: there are many people who are unhappy and possibly afraid. There are many people who are suffering.

One of the emphases in all religions is to take care of our neighbors, to welcome and treat the stranger kindly, and to love and appreciate our time on Earth. I worked in hospice care for eleven years and in that time I never saw any person who wished that they had done more harm or had hated more people. In fact, the themes that emerged were always love, gratitude and forgiveness (both seeking forgiveness and offering forgiveness). As a mediator, I have helped families when they are facing end-of-life situations where there is turmoil, conflict, and hurt in the family system. What these families are looking for is some healing and peace around accepting their relationships. Though they may not be the relationships they wished for, they are still the relationships they have.

I struggle, like everyone else, to recognize the difference between the beliefs that a person holds and the person in front of me. I have struggled myself with confusing the beliefs and views I hold with the identity of simply being a human navigating this life the best I can. And deeper than that, I often miss the identity of being a part of something much larger than myself, whether that something is God, nature, or the present moment.

When I was first married, I held very tightly to being “right,” and believing that the way I did things was the correct and only way to get things done. As you can imagine, this did not go over very well! Turning left on this particular street was not better or more correct than turning left on that street (much to my embarrassment, an actual example). Over time, and much loving patience and frustration from my spouse, I loosened my need to be correct and focused instead on the shared goal we had, like getting to the restaurant to go eat. My kids would say that I still have a long way to go in this loosening over the need to be right, but it is changing.

What I realized is how important it is to focus on what is shared. We all want enough to eat, to have shelter, to be healed when we are sick, to experience the freedom to be who we are, and to feel safe. We don’t all agree on how to get there, but finding our commonalities and shared purpose can allow us to realize our goals of creating a more harmonious world. When we are reflecting back on our lives, we all want to have left an imprint on the world. Let us hope that the imprint we leave is one of healing, love, and community.

Bio:

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