

For Meredith News "Speaking of Faith" for October 8, 2020
Rev. Betsy Tabor - UU Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes

"A Felt Oneness"

The call of the outdoors won out last week, louder than the call to sit at the desk or do chores or think about dinner. Louder even than the Internet's call with the latest news shocker. With a Zoom meeting in an hour, I gathered up clippers, gloves, and a lawn bag and set out to weed the edge of the creeping juniper along the driveway. A quick satisfying task.

Or so I thought. How long had it been? Years, it turns out. Untamed, the juniper had run wild. What looked like prickly new weeds in the lawn were tips of long underground branches! I gently pulled at them at first, then yanked out yards of thick gnarly branches which had stealthily crept outward for a good decade while my attention had turned to going back to school and entering the ministry. What once was an annual hour of happy weeding had turned into a battle.

At first, this project left me with a deep sense of humility. While many New Englanders are models of "getting it done," I trust that some folks out there know what it's like when something growing in the yard gets away from us. No matter the human endeavors that claim our attention, we can count on Mother Nature to power on.

"Meanwhile the world goes on," wrote Mary Oliver in "The Wild Geese," one of her best loved poems. "Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain/are moving across the landscapes.... Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,/ are heading home again." Meanwhile, the juniper's life force flourishes. Humbling. And inspiring, too.

We might be tempted to see the world out our window as separate from our own. We occupy indoor spaces made from manufactured building materials. We fill our homes with highly-processed belongings. Our fridges bulge with agribusiness food. Though we've always used its bounty for own needs, our way of life can feel quite apart from the natural world. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

We are of Nature, juniper and human. One with the interdependent web of all existence. We know this in our bones when we crouch or sit or lie on the ground, when we dig into soil and discover life in myriad forms. We feel a oneness when soil works its way into our skin and under our fingernails.

The people of the world struggle today with many problems of our own making, among them deep divisions, a continued epidemic, racial injustice, and a longing for fair elections and truth-telling. Meanwhile, thankfully, Nature inspires.

As the long weekend approaches – which more and more people call Indigenous People's weekend – let us remember the spiritual connection our Native ancestors had to the land. May all people walk alongside one another, aligned with Earth's rhythms and grounded in the stability and strength that is our oneness. Rather than step aside and bow to Nature in all her glory, may we instead delight in taking her hand and joining the dance.

Rev. Betsy Tabor serves the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes (UUFES) in Tamworth, a congregation known for embracing diverse beliefs. Curious about Unitarians? All are welcome, all Sundays, at 10 a.m. Zoom details at www.uufes.com.