

September 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

As I am writing today, it's quite dark outside even though it is morning. The remnants of Hurricane Laura are whisking by, with not much wind or rain right now, just lots of darkness. It's hard to believe that just two days ago this was a category 4 tempest bearing down on the southern USA, and now it's just some dark clouds heading out to the Atlantic. I am reminded of the grieving process, remembering days when my own grief, and that of so many of you, raged like a cat 5 hurricane, and how in time, and with the hard work of mourning, it devolved, albeit slowly, into a 4, 3, 2, 1 and then passing storms and dark lingering clouds. The rawness of grief tends to diminish like these storms when it starts to allow the sun to filter through those heavy ominous clouds, delivering much needed light into our darkness and new life into the place where there was only seemingly death.

We all need light infused into the darkness of our grief. "It can be hard to be optimistic in grief. Through no fault of our own, loss has torn us apart. Life is painful and terrible. Why go on living when there's surly just more pain to come? Yet we hold onto hope, which is the expectation of a good that is yet to be." (Allen Wolfelt, Grief One Day at a Time). Over and over again, almost daily, I try to remind people of 'the good that is yet to be.' We all know, however, how incredibly difficult it is to believe and hold onto that hope whilst the storm is raging. In a raging storm all we can do is batten down the hatches, hunker down and stay safe. There is no way one can even conceive of 'the good that is yet to be' while being battered by the winds, waves, and pure pain of it all. And like all storms that pass, we are left with the remnants and damage, as we slowly, but surely, begin to rebuild.

I used to live in Sea Bright, and I saw first-hand what Hurricane Sandy did to decimate that adorable little town. It seemed irreparable at the time. But as people came together and got the help they needed and the renewed strength, they rebuilt better than ever. I don't even recognize the town anymore! It's been an amazing privilege to have seen this happen with countless grieving people with whom I have walked over the past 30 years. What had seemed like a barren wasteland of catastrophe quite often turned into someone with more strength,

compassion, empathy, and wisdom then ever before. In time of course; in each and every person's own time. During that time, let me offer some excellent encouragement from Dr. Alen Wolfelt's conclusion in today's reflection: "We are responsible for ourselves in this journey called grief. We are responsible for taking good care of ourselves, for mourning actively and openly, for being gentle and self-compassionate. First we foster hope, then we nurture optimism, then we step up and take responsibility for doing what needs to be done, one day at a time. This is our strategy." He is right of course, this must be our strategy on our way toward 'the good that is yet to be.'

Peace and Serenity,

Kevin