

# *November 2016*

## **From the Desk of Rev. Chuck**

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Dear Friends,

It has been said that our memories can become harbingers of peace and joy, or they can be bearers of fear and pain. The power to make it so is up to us.

I would like to share a true story by Betty Calre Moffatt that illustrates how we have the power to choose how our memories will effect us. She writes:

"There is an interesting and beautiful labyrinth of streets that go around and around in a curving maze of beauty. Along the streets are old-fashioned, imposing houses set back on a bluff overlooking the city proper, set above acres of parkland and zoo and wild woodland, set like a mysterious contrast between civilization and nature. And each time I walk, the past comes rushing up to meet me, they are my moments to remember in joy or fear. Moments to be remembered, resolved, and reconciled, like the time my marriage ended, my business fell apart, the untimely death of my beloved son, and the unrealized of specific dreams I had for myself.

I walked my path around the curving courts one weekend morning as usual. The dogs were out at one house, so I crossed to the middle of the street and started walking down the open, empty road. At seven in the morning, the day was already so hot that my clothes stuck to me and my glasses slipped down over my nose, so perhaps it was true that for a moment I couldn't see clearly. But then I did. I looked around and such a sense of joy seized me that it almost threw me to the ground. There was no one out but me. I was the only woman in the world, walking down an empty street, just after dawn, with wild-lands on one side and civilization on the other.

My vague distress, with which I had started the walk, dissipated. My orderly, reasoning mind, looking for clues as to what was to come, fell away. I ceased thinking about my past and fearing what the future held for me.

I took a deep breath and looked up at the almost cloudless sky. Blue and blue and more blue, a blue so vivid and clear it might have been painted. There was one huge white cloud that came purposefully toward me. I peered at it. And felt the force of something, a lurch of memory that threw me back in time to a day

when I was six years old--the day I climbed the windmill and lived to tell the tale.

We lived in a small town in New Mexico one summer and rented a place out in the country. It was the first time I had ever seen a windmill. I was an intrepid child. I wanted to get closer to the sky. So one day I climbed the windmill. I can still remember how it felt, the wind buffeting me, almost knocking me off each rung, and me steadily advancing. And when I got to the seat of the windmill, I remember that I could see valleys joined with hills and waters and skies into an entranced order I had never seen before. I was--literally--on top of the world.

My parents were frantic. They stood far below, yelling at me to get down, screaming at me at the same time to hold on. My father finally climbed the windmill and carried me down in his arms. But I was never scared. Why was it that back then, when I was a child, I was never frightened? How different it is today.

I don't know how long I stood there, rooted to the road, looking upward into the blue, tears rolling down my face as I recalled these moments in my childhood. Then something shifted. Something changed. The day rearranged itself into accustomed patterns. I was walking the labyrinth of streets, instead of perched on the windmill with a God's-eye view and a child's-eye faith. I pondered all this in my heart.

Maybe, I thought, when I could think again, it was a sign--to tell me that I can trust these days as well as any others. Maybe, I thought, it is time to accept memories as harbingers of peace and joy, rather than bearers of fear and pain. Maybe, I thought, it was a gift from the past, with no meaning attached other than to receive one of God's many blessings.

I walked back home. Nothing bad happened to me. No disaster awaited me. No heroic measures were required of me. My moments to remember no longer caused me to fear the future. I walked back home in wonder, safe and joyous under the endless sheltering blue, while I prayed this prayer:

'Dear God, Here is my pledge. I will look in wonder, as a child again. I will dismiss all thoughts of a fearful future and exist in the joy of the morning. Thank You, God, that this is now so. Amen.'

Friends, peace and joy or fear and pain, the choice is ours. So as we celebrate our memories and blessings this Thanksgiving let us remember that all our 'moments to remember' help us to feel God's presence in our lives.