Letter from the Minister for November, 2026

Rev. Amy Kindred

“I'm gonna sit at the welcome table
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table - one of these days
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One of these days”

-Lyrics from *Welcome Table,* an African American spiritual written in 1874

Alex was invited to join others for a meal. “Come join us,” Roberta said. “It’s a gathering of friends who care about one another.”

On the following Thursday evening, with a bottle of wine in one hand and a pecan pie in the other, Alex knocked on the door. Roberta opened the door and greeted Alex with a huge grin and a sincere, “Welcome to our home.”

Roberta lead Alex to the dining room. Seated around the table, Alex saw about a dozen people, all happily talking with one another. The host guided Alex to a seat.

As the fixings of the meal were carried to the table, two people began clapping. One person said excitedly, “The food looks amazing!” The other person said, “Thank you, thank you.”

And then, another person pointed a finger at one of the items and said loudly, “Look. I see charred bits on the broccoli. I simply will not eat anything that is burnt. It causes cancer.” It was a hurtful comment, but no one said a word.

Roberta, who was also the cook, apologized and said, “OK, let’s see what else I can serve.” They went back to the kitchen and brought out another dish, still steaming. One of the guests said, “Marvelous! I can’t wait to try it.”

The person who commented about the charred bits of broccoli said loudly, “That dish of corn looks mushy. Roberta obviously does not know how to cook vegetables.” It was another hurtful comment, but no one said a word.

As the group began to eat the food, the room was filled with soft conversation sprinkled with occasional laughter. Thirty minutes into the meal, the host left the dining room, went to the kitchen and carried two different pies for dessert to the table. One person said, “Yay, it’s time for the sweets! It’s my favorite part of the meal.”

The individual who commented about the corn and the broccoli said loudly, “My word! Who in their right mind serves pecan pie filled with nuts and poisonous corn syrup?” Again, no one at the table said a word.

With a sigh, the cook slowly began to cut the pies. They said, “I did my best.” After a brief moment of silence, one guest held out a plate to receive a piece of pie. Others soon followed.

After dessert, the guests began to leave. One by one, each looked back at the table filled with dirty dishes, saying “thank you” as they turned to leave. The newcomer, Alex and one other person, Finley, stayed to help with clean up.

While Roberta was in the kitchen, Alex and Finley gathered dirty dishes from the table. Alex said to Finley, “Why didn’t someone say anything to the person who made hurtful comments about the food during the meal? Although I am new here, I am puzzled that a group of friends could just sit back quietly while someone could be so unkind?’

Finley said, “Oh you mean Sam, who commented on the broccoli, the corn and the pie? That is just how Sam is. We don’t want to hurt Sam’s feelings by saying anything.”

Later, as Alex was preparing to leave the apartment, Roberta said, “I am so glad you came today. I hope you will join us again.” Alex said, “You are a wonderful cook and a generous host. I am so grateful for you.”

On the way home, Alex considered Roberta’s kind offer to join the group again for a meal. “As much as I like Roberta, I want to be surrounded by friends who call one another out when hurtful comments occur over and over again. After all, that too is an act of love,” thought Alex.

Anne Lammott said, “No is a complete sentence.” Dear reader, I hope as the holidays round the corner, you will have the heart and the courage to kindly remind friends and family members to be kind to one another.