Half and Half

It is hard to believe we are still in pandemic isolation, that we have to fight for a new president, question a vaccine against COVID19, or that much chaos has changed. Even though our best efforts to connect through digital and social distancing means we feel alone and afraid. Most of all, we are wondering if we are even halfway through this upheaval and change. And what does "halfway" feel or even look like in these times? Would we even recognize it when we were "halfway" through this experience?

The word "half" has its origins in the meaning of being on an equal position or side. "Half" also means "a part of two equal objects." But when we use the word "half," the sense of inequity for which we use this word is often at the heart of how we feel.

Is your glass' half empty' (a sensation of loss or less), or is your glass' half full' (the sense of finding abundance or seeing possibility)? Sometimes we use this word to define our current emotional status. For example: "They only gave me half of what they had." Or "We have to cut your funding by half." Or "Halfway House" or the racial slurs "halfwit," "half-baked," and "halfsie" (half white, but doesn't 'look' it).

The word 'half' is defined as the equal side of a whole. 1 of 2 halves equal a total, but the half still has the same content as that of the whole. It is here that we must reside. Half or whole, the content is the same, and it is the content that we want, not the amount of the content. Here is where the idea or concept of a glass half full, or optimism, also resides. We have water. Half a cupful or not, we have water.

Many of us grew up with the story of Solomon, the wise king. Soloman threatened to cut a living baby in half to settle the dispute between the baby's mothers. He used the threat itself as a ruse to uncover the baby's actual parent. This action became a scaffold for the concept of "It's all or nothing." Those who play the part of the child want to go to the "winning" half to preserve their lives. In this idea, "half" is not an equal side of the whole, shifting language to introduce inequity. The word's usage implies dangerous, uncomfortable topics and removes the original meaning.

As we struggle today with emotional upheavals and systemic breakdowns of ideas, concepts, actions, and laws, we must remember to keep the language's facts and clarity. As ministers, we try to use non-judgmental/non-aggressive/non-emotive language in everyday communications. When it comes to sermons or op-eds, like this one here, how we use language to hone our view and change opinions or influence thinking can rest in a single word. For Western culture, a culture of word worship, this has an even more significant impact.

We are not half of what we were, or that half of us believe something different. What we were was not something that began inequality. What we are is something striving towards equality, which means that we are creating a new whole.

As we know, life is not flat. It's spherical. We live in one! And if you are a quantum physicist, multi-dimensional, boundaryless…Mycelium has 36,000 genders that we can identify. The world is our home. It is diverse and mysterious, and it is our responsibility to view and care for it in the best whole manner we can, and if half the world embraces climate change, then the world as a whole is affected regardless and visa versa. It is vital to understand the importance of being 'half.'

As I mark the 'halfway' point of my internship with this congregation (using calendrical measurement), I am beginning to view this new year as a new "whole." An internship is a place of learning in the ministerial formation world, a place to fill in the gaps of one's learning about parish ministry and about serving a religious community, bringing our whole selves to this service. It is natural for interns to take on various tasks outside the leading worship service's visibility, helping provide support to their supervisor's less seen but no less critical function to a congregation. Traditional credentialing internships are only ten months, making this particular credentialling internship extra special by providing an additional two months of experience. In no way do I feel as if this internship is "half" over. I also do not think I am "half" done. My seminary work is complete, but my lifelong learning as a minister has just begun, and you, this congregation, have kept me company on this incredible life-changing journey. As congregants, you get to see the "whole" result of the church's presence as you bring your whole selves to its offerings and to help me learn.

And so, as I finish the "last half" of this internship, I bring my whole self to the learning process. This Fellowship is more than just Sunday Worship. It has, what I like to call Family RE [Adult and children's Religious Education], Financial Wellness, Spiritual Wholeness, and stands on the side of Love. You represent the best of Unitarian Universalism, and even in these dark times of anger, violence, and controversy, this ark of hope will hold its doors open to shelter every being, not one left behind.