

Yes, it's complicated, but love anyway

BY THE REV. DR.
KHARMA R. AMOS
Spirit of Life

To be alive today is to know that so much in our world is broken and in need of repair. Climate change, gun violence, a global pandemic, poverty, war and countless other realities are demanding our attention here at home and around the world. The latest news from the entire region of Israel and Gaza seems at once unreal and unsurprising.

There are no words to describe the horror, the loss of life, the dehumanizing realities of antisemitism and the fear of collateral damage by reprisals and counter-reprisals for years to come. Closer to home and among many critically challenging issues, we are experiencing an affordable housing crisis that is in no way aided by the growing polarization between people on various "sides" of every interconnected issue. Sadly, that's just the tip-py-tip-tip of the iceberg of malaise we seem to keenly feel and not know how to address together.

Many of us lament, "It's complicated!" We're right, of course — it is complicated. We say it all the time because it's true. For years, we've even been able to select this as a descriptor of our relationship status on social media. Acknowledging the complexity of the world and the myriad issues we're facing is fine, so long as this doesn't become an excuse for doing nothing to repair the brokenness and stop the harm. We cannot afford to allow the complexity of the issues we face to discourage us from facing them with intention, creativity and compassion. This is exactly what is called for just now, and we desperately need to be in this together.

In progressive circles, we are sometimes (unhelpfully) obsessed with wanting to do the right thing. In an increasingly com-

plicated world, it can be less and less clear what the "right thing" to do or say is. Unfortunately, this immobilizes too many of us. In our admirable attempt to avoid doing harm, we sometimes freeze up when there isn't one clear "right" answer. For example, we are appalled by the inexcusable actions of Hamas and can understand the outrage of Israel in response to this tragic loss of life.

We also recognize that the policies of Israel have exacerbated a situation of suffering and powerlessness for many Palestinians, including the dead and horrified in Gaza. What do we do with this ambiguity? For too many, the answer is nothing. We do and say nothing. We internalize the pain we witness because we are not confident that we know enough to say or do anything at all. There is a big element of truth to that. We don't know enough; and a response — a loving response — is still required of us.

In his commentary on Micah 6:8, Rabbi Tarfon said something like, "Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it." This seems like wisdom we would do well to take in daily these days. Don't be daunted by the complexity of the world's grief, either. Whatever next right (or most right) word or action your heart is leading you to, lean into it! Do not hold back any sincere expression of love. Now is the time to nurture and strengthen relationships with one another, especially across our differences. With our siblings of every faith and no expressed faith, let us join in the humble prayer, "May Peace Prevail on Earth."

*The Rev. Dr. Kharma R. Amos
is the minister of the Unitarian
Universalist Church of
Brunswick, uubrunswick.org.*

*Spirit
of Life*