

Not Ordinary Church

Start with your socks

Allyson Sawtell, 2/10/21

I had a lovely pair of socks that I refused to wear for two years. They were part of a collection of socks I once bought from a group that used the proceeds to support various environmental nonprofits. There was one pair for ocean life, one for rescue dogs (a personal favorite!), one for trees, and so on. The pair I refused to wear was even in some of my favorite colors. It was for an organization combatting wildlife trafficking, represented on the socks by lovely green elephants.



I am a lifelong, die-hard Democrat with farther left leanings (although I did vote for a few Republicans a couple of times many years ago). My two-year elephant sock boycott occurred during the Trump administration, up to and through the 2020 election, and past the Insurrection on January 6, 2021. I was so angry (with good cause!) at the Republicans over the years for more things than I can go into right here, that I refused to wear red before the election, and refused to wear the aforementioned socks. (Let it be said, however, that I did more with my anger than simply make wardrobe decisions – I called my Senators and Representatives, wrote letters to the editor, helped organize get out the vote efforts, participated in pounding the pavement and phone banking, made donations all over the place, and voted – all that good stuff.)

Then, in early February of this year, I pulled the socks out and figured, oh what the heck, I'll wear them. I felt strong enough emotionally to take on this footwear challenge. So I put them on. I walked to a local community center that hosts a Labyrinth each month, and walked the Labyrinth. And I prayed (or whatever it is I do; I'm never sure): "Help me heal the divide in this nation." And the little voice in my head (that I hope we all have and it's not just me!), said, "Start with yourself. Start with your socks."

I had – and still have – such rage at the people who are such white supremacists, homophobic, misogynistic, climate-deniers and all that, that I can barely see straight some days. They are tearing our nation apart. The earth and the poor, the marginalized, people of color, LGBT and gender fluid – basically just about everyone but old, straight, white, able-bodied, well-off Christian men – are really getting screwed. This is what I would keep telling myself while pointing my finger at "them." Again, with good cause.

I had – and still have – such rage! Help me heal the divide, I prayed. And if I won't even wear a pair of socks because they have a critter on them that the Republicans use as their logo, then I, too, am sticking the crowbar into our splintering nation and shoving with all my might. What is this festering rage-fueled hate I carry? What is the pain it's built on? How can I use my rage, instead, to challenge unjust and violent systems and ideologies, to build up a vision and a possibility, and to begin to be an ally/accomplice to marginalized folks and to our beloved

planet? And do all that from a place of love – deep, prophetic-witness-type, transformative love. Not from a place of fear or of hate.

Those are the questions I commit myself to facing and living from, as I pull on my elephant socks. They really are quite lovely, soft, and warm.



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