

Facing the wind a year after Sandy

Donna Schaper | Oct. 29, 2013 Eco Catholic

The wind picked up in early October, late in the afternoon, seven days before the full moon, which arrived on Oct. 19.

It took all my energy to convince myself that we weren't being blown away again. I kept saying the storm can't be that bad, the moon is not full, the moon won't pull the tides so far if it is not full. I was right -- and also experiencing post-Sandy traumatic stress syndrome.

The wind picked up the afternoon Sandy came ashore -- a year ago Tuesday -- and then put one foot in front of the other, first walking, then running, then racing to a full force gale by midnight. The wind didn't die down.

There were moments during the gale that we thought it might never die down. You could hear the big trees crashing in the park. You could see the water rising on Second Avenue. I had a group of nurses staying in my apartment because they could be close to the hospital for the well-forecasted emergency shifts. When they came home that night, with Sandy's winds howling and their hospital closed (not to open for two months), we made a decision to have a genuine panic.

On the one-year anniversary, I try to find perspective. It will keep me from freaking out when the wind picks up. It will also focus me on how I intend to live after Sandy, and after Colorado and Katrina and multiple and multiplying climate changes.

I am looking for an alternative kind of climate change. One that brings about a change in my soul and a change in the societal climate -- politically, economically and environmentally. I want a renewable energy inside me and in my world. I want to imagine that we could reverse some of the damage.

I want to believe those ads that say if you quit smoking now, you might be all right in a year, and that 10 years out you could begin to have pink lungs again. The planet has been smoking a long time. What would reversal mean? Would reversal of our energy use keep another Sandy from coming along? Would we lose that sense of living in a rented world on borrowed time?

And if we had my kind of climate change by another kind of renewable energy, would we reverse the damage? Would we become unafraid of the wind?

Let me start small. Renewable energy reverses the pattern. We now use energies that deplete us and hurt us. The science [shows us](#) [1] that the use of oil and gas likely gave added strength to Sandy's powerful gales. And yes, I drive a car.

I'll never forget filling my tank one day and having the gas spurt all over me out of some inability of the pump to turn itself off once my tank topped off. I was a mess, and the mess got worse when I used a dirty rag to try to get the gasoline off my legs. I was in the self-depleting mode.

Gas pumps are hearing their orders not to turn off from the pro-fracking people and the oil industry and the government. They have limitless tanks. They are all in malfunction and I pay them to fill my tank. No wonder I lost it that day at that gas station. It was worse than my mini-fear a few weeks ago when the wind picked up. I saw my complicity and, worse, I smelled of it.

Renewing our energy has a liturgical pattern.

It begins with confession. Yes, I am part of the howling wind.

It moves to a hearing of the word. Yes, I hear the call to stop smoking.

It turns toward offertory. Yes, I will give myself the gift of a reversal of field. I will walk another way, even if my steps are small and slightly absurd. And I will take Communion and experience a renewable energy.

Prayer and liturgy are renewable forms of energy. I will use them to fill my tank.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/earth/hurricanes-climate.html>