The New Year dawns. My heart, which often moves more slowly than the calendar, continues to ponder the people and stories that have filled the recent holidays. Years ago a college professor – on the verge of retirement – offered us students her home-spun recipe for success. “The human heart,” she explained, “must learn to be both tough and tender.” Her words come back to me now as they have so often over the years. I pray for those among my family and friends who seem this year particularly challenged. May they each be guided and supported as they make their way; may grace enfold them.

On a broader scale, the radio continues to announce incidences of wanton gun violence, human life wasted through moments of uncontrolled fear or fury. These too are someone’s sons and daughters. My heart cries for those I do not know personally, yet feel bonded to in human tragedy. My spirit sinks into deeper prayer: May God have mercy on us all.

Yet I must rise; a new year beckons. Emboldened by grace, I must find a way to plant my own feet towards growth and healing. In faith I lean back into the light of Christ and know that I can bring this vision forward. For solidarity I take the hands of those who also stand for justice, for the transformation of our world towards ways of lasting peace. Together this year we will learn to better live as an interconnected web of life, growing new wisdom from the small to the greater, even as the increasing light of each new dawn moves across our land. We will because we must. All life depends on it.

May toughness and tenderness dance within your heart; may compassion and mercy show its face through your face. May the fabric of all life grow stronger through our Great Turning towards ways of sustainable life for all. May 2016 usher in a thousand years of healing. With one heart we pray. Amen.

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