

Small Groups Ministry , October 24, 2012

Covenant Circle: There is spirit here; I will kindle & sustain it

Dalai Lama: More fundamental than religion is our basic human spirituality. We have a basic human disposition towards love, kindness and affection, irrespective of whether we have a religious framework or not. When we nurture this most basic human resource – when we set about cultivating those basic inner values which we all appreciate in others, then we start to live spiritually.

Rev. Dave's sermon this week (October 21): The Spirit is both essence and wholeness.

Doug Muder, *The UU World*, Summer 2011 5.15.11, *Before words: Spirituality is an awareness of the gap between what you can experience and what you can describe.*

... it's not hard to see how a careless or premature definition might wreck a spiritual discussion. When people are trying to raise their awareness of the things they don't know how to put words around, then demanding that they use words very precisely and stop using words they haven't defined pulls them in exactly the wrong direction. Spiritual seekers don't want to talk about words and definitions; they want to talk about the experience of having no words. And they want even more to stop talking and invoke a situation that they will have no words to describe.

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, from her essay in *Noetic Sciences Review*, "On Defining Spirituality"

... the spiritual does not vary from time to time because it is not within time. Spirit is unchanging... The spiritual... is not separative. A deep sense of the spiritual leads one to trust not one's own lonely power but the great flow or pattern manifested in all life, including our own. We become not manipulator but witness... the spiritual is the one dimension of human experience which does not require proof—which lies beyond (and includes) the very mind which demands proof... Yet the spiritual is inclusive. It is the deepest sense of belonging and participation. We all participate in the spiritual at all times, whether we know it or not.

There's no place to go and be separated from the spiritual, so perhaps one might say that the spiritual is that realm of human experience which religion attempts to connect us to through dogma and practice. Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it fails. Religion is a bridge to the spiritual—but the spiritual lies beyond religion... The most important thing in defining spirit is the recognition that the spirit is an essential need of human nature....

Mary Oliver's "POEM" from *Dream Work* (Atlantic Monthly Press)

The spirit
likes to dress up like this:

ten fingers,
ten toes,

shoulders, and all the rest
....

Airy and shapeless thing,
it needs
the metaphor of the body,

.... it needs the body's world,
instinct

.... and tangibility,

to be understood,
to be more than pure light
that burns
where no one is --

so it enters us --
in the morning
shines from brute comfort
like a stitch of lightning;

and at night
lights up the deep and wondrous
drownings of the body
like a star.