

What is your concept of God?

Kitsap Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Bremerton, WA, Rev. Liz Stevens 2006-2007

Opening Reading(s):

Since truth in religion is like truth in poetry, by its very nature the language of religion is poetic language: *God, soul, angels, spirit...salvation and sin*. Because such words are imprecise, many people shy away from them. Today, however, I need such words. Rather than abandon it, I do my best to rescue the old language from captivity by literalists, who strip it of all poetry, diminishing its symbolic nuance and vitality. Though easily reduced to an idol, God is still the biggest word I know. It points toward a power beyond our own yet mysteriously present within us. I am no longer ashamed to mine the poetry of my forebears in search of touchstones for my faith.

-Forrest Church, *Bringing God Home*, p. 23

Other UU's on God:

Rebecca Parker: God is not an all-determining creator. Each creature is self-creating in relationship with all other creatures, including God. So we are co-creators with the Divine. We make God, as much as God makes us.

John Haynes Holmes: When I am asked if I believe in God, I am either impatient or amused and frequently decline to reply. All I know, all I want to know is that I have found in my relations with others and in my glad beholding of the universe a reality of truth, goodness and beauty and that I am trying to make my life as best I can dedication to this reality.

Jane Mauldin: I would say that God is the creative force that has cast each of us into this world. God is the love in and between people. God does not willfully direct hurricanes onto the beaches of the unjust. God is the moral conscience that demands we walk these beaches hand-in-hand, building together where hurricanes have destroyed.

Ricky Hoyt: I believe in God, but I don't believe God cares about us...God doesn't watch or know us. God has no eyes to see, no mind to know, except in the sense that you and I have eyes and minds and we are a part of God. And since we are a very limited part, mostly God is blind and unthinking.

Jack Mendelsohn: God, to me, is the Spirit of a spiritual universe in which all life shares an associated and interdependent destiny. God is the glorious sum of the living process, in which I, as a person, live, strive, and die. God is the existence I share with all that is or is to be.

Discussion Questions:

When you were a child, how did you imagine God? How have your ideas grown and changed over the years? What is your concept of God now?

In finding words to use for God, you are acting as a theologian (the word comes from *theo* meaning God and *logos* meaning words...theology is simply words describing God). How do you feel about being a theologian? Is there anything that stands in your way of claiming the right and the responsibility to "do theology"?

In what ways do you find it helpful to use words to describe God? In what ways can be harmful? Is there a way to clearly delineate between the two, and in doing so, to avoid “toxic” theologies?

Closing Reading:

Preface: by the Rev. Elizabeth Tarbox

I thought I heard the voice of the spirit cry:

Come and find me. You won't have to look hard. Come to where the ocean touches the shore; find me in the bright-light promise of morning on the waves; look carefully at the bubbles breaking on the wet sand—there I am. Turn over the glistening rock, slippery with its cushion of seaweed—here I am. Hear the gulls crying news of the endless ocean—that is my news, my voice. Lie with me in the tall, green marsh grass; see my footprints in the sand you have walked upon. Do not say I am lost, for you have found me. I am here.