

The Space Between Us

Physicists are discovering that the universe is less "solid" than it appears to us. What seems to be more significant is the space between "objects". So, I've been thinking a lot about the space between us. Local churches were created by individuals to help each other with faith journeys. In the UCC, Associations were created by local churches for support and accountability. Conferences and denominations were created as groups of local churches and Associations discovered that they could do more together than any of them could do apart.

What happens when the space between individual members of a congregation becomes unhealthy or noxious or somehow tainted? When people stop trusting each other and think that others are acting from suspect motives? When anger and hurt and betrayal and control are dominant in the spaces between people?

I believe that the space itself becomes corrupted. Like dirty water running through pipes, anyone who drinks in this space will feel its effects, even if they are unaware of the contamination. Left unchecked, lives will be damaged. The same is true when the space between congregations and the wider church is infected. Or the space between rural and city folks. Or the space between political parties. Or the space between races, genders, classes ... the list goes on.

What can we do with this space?

For me, this has become the great question. It's not about the other person or group. It's not about fixing them ... or even fixing me. My focus can be on the space between us.

I ask myself, "What does the space feel like?" Is there a block to the free flow of energy? Is there distrust? Is there love? Is there vulnerability? Is there fear? Is there hurt?

Then, I wonder about how I might create more openness in the space. What happens if I trust in the space between us? What happens if I am brave in the space? What happens if I introduce forgiveness into the space?

What I am learning is that it seems to make loving the unlovable possible; forgiving the unforgivable possible; being brave in the face of fear possible.

I wonder if this is a place of healing: focusing on the relationship between people or things or situations. Clearing the space between us may make it more possible to replicate Jesus' life and teachings.

Blessings,

Rev. Cheryl Burke