One of my colleagues at our Minister’s meeting this week asked the question, “Whose are we?” This is an interesting question which has been going around the ministry since at least the fall’s convocation and I think even longer. To whom do we as ministers belong? To whom do we as Unitarian Universalists belong?

It’s a theological question as well as a sociological one. One of my colleagues said, “Clearly it’s God.” Another said, “I prefer we say who I belong to, not speak for us all.” Several said, “We belong to each other.”

Unitarian Universalism has been criticized in past decades as being too much about “I,” too individual-oriented. This manifested itself when I was growing up in the answer many of us gave to the question, “What do you believe as UUs?” We replied, “Anything you want.”

That’s true to some extent, in that we don’t have dogma to deal with, but the contemplation of what we really do believe has matured into our Purposes and Principles, a set of values, not beliefs, and yet, those values are founded on beliefs, which, when we sit down together, might be surprising. One of the tasks of religious community is to find out what binds us together, as in “religare,” to bind.

We are not bound by dogma, but we are bound. To whom do we belong? A very good theological question. And in the sense of belonging to a religious community, to whom are we responsible and accountable? To some it is clearly God, or god. To some there is a need to define that. To some it manifests in relationship. We belong to higher values, and we belong to each other.

What do you think? How do you think about this? To whom do you belong? To whom do we belong?

People are very passionate about faith. Love is involved. Salvation and forgiveness, in whatever meanings you attribute to those. People need to be seen, loved, supported, challenged and forgiven, to feel like they can find breath again - as in “spirit,” es-spiritu, the holy inspiration of worship (worth-ship), of meditation, of a smile. The eyes that see and the ears that hear. We all have eyes and ears. Are we seeing and listening? To what is deeper and more profound? To each other?

This question of “whose are we” brings up considerations of boundary and culture. Do we think only in terms of our neighborhood care circle or finding heart group? Do we think only in terms of our congregation, or do we include the other UU church and groups that meet? Do we think in terms of our district, and all the congregations therein? Do we think of the UUA, based so far away in Boston, but which is really our country? Do we consider the larger UU movement in the world?

But as we ponder, the question broadens. What about the person next door, the faith down the street, the people struggling on the borders? What about nation in relation to nation? Some of us are dedicated to thinking globally, meaning we belong to the earth, to all of humanity and to all of life. How does that shape us as religious people? To whom are we bound, then, religiously-speaking? What about the cosmos?

Thank you for your pledges, for binding yourselves financially in support of the congregation. May you find what you yearn for in binding yourselves in service and in love to Unitarian Universalism. Come, let us worship together, eyes and ears open.
--Rev. Susan Manker-Seale
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of NW Tucson, Arizona
PSWDUUMA