

## Notes from Presentation by Betty Pries During the MCA Vision 2020 Process

### Image of Selfhood:

We have a container we've given. This is the first skin or the descriptive self.

- Strength
- Limitations
- Fundamental human needs
- Context of how we were raised

We feel shame for some of our limitations or characteristics, so we grow a 2<sup>nd</sup> skin to hid the 1<sup>st</sup> skin. This is the defended self (false self)/second skin of ego and shame.

Sometimes we even have a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> skin—covering our pain.

BUT, there is a house of God that lives in each of us. This is where God lives and breathes: our deeper selves.

<God is formless—house of God; Jesus is form—like our container; Holy Spirit—transformation>

We mostly live on the edges of our container and 2<sup>nd</sup> skin. And often our identity is misplaced on those edges. It is hard to be “God”ly if our identity is not centred in God.

When discerning where our identity lies, it is hard to do the work if our identity is in the same location of pain. We need to create distance between our true self in order to self-reflect without pain.

Our life in God is never at risk. Life breath is true for all of us. As humans we are all created in the Image of God in the life we have been given. However, we do not always outwardly reflect God's Image. That image is obscured by the skins we layer upon ourselves. The more skins we layer, the more God's Image is obscured. We need remind ourselves to return to (and plant our feet in) the breath of God in us.

Spiritual disciplines cut through the skins to get us back to our true selves.

- Feeling worthy, beautiful and beloved only comes from the house of God in our true selves.
- We need to work on letting go of our “attachments” (holding too tightly) to our characteristics and live into our container with more grace.

Recognizing that the God-breath is the same in all of us leads us to a fundamental oneness with others.

Our “authentic self” is the dance between the described self and the true self/God-breath. THE HOUSE OF GOD IS NOT A SMALL CONTAINED SPOT, BUT FILLS US!

When we practice fidelity to the house of God through spiritual disciplines, we reconnect with the light of God within us and embody the body of Christ (incarnate). Then we can pour ourselves out into the world with an endless God supply, which we cannot do if we are pouring from our false self.

When we live out of the true self, acting out of faith, out of the breath of God, we can act and see others in the light of that. God's face can shine through us—not just being able to see it in others.

The concept of the image of self is also applicable to collective selves, such as congregations, MCA, etc.

**Acceptance Prayer:**

1. I allow myself to feel what I am feeling (because we entrench that which we resist).
2. I accept my feeling as real, I do not deny these feelings (because we can't let go what we haven't accepted as real).
3. I release my feelings into God's care.
4. I rest in God's love for me (because God love us unconditionally).

Notes by Laura Wiebe