

Touchstones Theme: Respect



The web of existence in which we breath, move, and have our being includes the often violent struggles for domination and survival, as well as breathtaking sunsets and the smile of a newborn baby. This web of existence is good and evil, comforting and terrible, a web of life, and a web of death. The seventh principle asks us to have a clear and affirming relationship with what is real. We must learn the spiritual discipline of living with respect; respectfully entering into relationship with the many conditions and challenges of this world. . . . We are not only a part of the grand design of natural selection and evolution; by the decisions we make, by the way we take care of, ignore, or increase the brokenness of our world, we ourselves are profoundly changed. *Rev. Barbara Merritt*

During my second month of college, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: “What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?” Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. “Absolutely,” said the professor. “In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say “hello.” I’ve never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy. *Joanne Jones*



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