**GENEROSITY: SOUL MATTERS**

**December 2016**

**Opening Words:**

**“**As spiritual searchers we need to become freer and freer of the attachment to our own smallness in which we get occupied with me-me-me. Pondering on large ideas or standing in front of things which remind us of a vast scale can free us from acquisitiveness and competitiveness and from our likes and dislikes. If we sit with an increasing stillness of the body, and attune our mind to the sky or to the ocean or to the myriad stars at night, or any other indicators of vastness, the mind gradually stills and the heart is filled with quiet joy. Also recalling our own experiences in which we acted generously or with compassion for the simple delight of it without expectation of any gain can give us more confidence in the existence of a deeper goodness from which we may deviate*.” Ravi Ravindra*

**Quotes:**

“Generosity is the bread and butter of feeling connected in our lives—to ourselves, to others, and to life itself. And it’s a practice.” *The Dalai Lama*

 “Generosity is the most natural outward expression of an inner attitude of compassion and loving kindness” *Sharon Salzburg, “The Real Power of Generosity”*

“Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” *The Buddha*

“Antonio Luis Alves de Souza, a Brazilian drummer, was offered an expensive new car after his band recorded *The Rhythm of the Saints*. Paul Simon wanted to thank him for the excellence of his artistry, beyond what he had already been paid. Instead, Souza requested money enough to buy an old building where he could teach theater arts, singing, and dancing to poor children and women from the streets. Fifteen years later, when he died of a heart attack at the age of 54, his funeral process was followed by 4,000 people dancing and singing his songs.” *A story from Life Gets Better The Unexpected Pleasures of Growing Older, by Wendy Lustbader*

“For it is in giving that we receive.” *St. Francis Assisi*

“To cultivate generosity directly is another fundamental part of living a spiritual life. Like the training precepts and like our inner meditations, generosity can actually be practiced. With practice, its spirit forms our actions, and our hearts will grow stronger and lighter. It can lead to new levels of letting go and great happiness.” *Jack Kornfield*

**Questions to consider**:

What quotes resonated with you and why?

How does it feel to give? How does your giving affect you?

What are the connections for you among the intersections of happiness, holiness, and generosity?

What practices help you to express generosity?

What might happen if you extend to someone: the benefit of a doubt, your positive regard, your respect, your understanding, your trust, your love?

**Closing Words:**

A bell is no bell till you ring it.

A song is no song till you sing it.

And love in your heart wasn’t put there to stay,

Love isn’t love till you give it away.

*Oscar Hammerstein*