

Who Are You, and Why?

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This double question is from a poem by W.H. Auden: 'Dog Days'. It's one I've been pondering a lot over the last week, since a dear friend asked me a pointed question that focused my mind. I was feeling rather low and confused – at an event that I'd committed to, but really didn't want to be at. No reason for the unwilling other than that I hadn't had a great time at the same event last year – not enough to explain the level of upset I was feeling. The friend pointed out that I was 'retiring'. Well, yes, but the work was very part-time, so I'm not sure it's going to make that much difference. Yes, she conceded, but you'd been working in that field for a long time: if your life's like a tent (she's very good at imagery, my friend), then one of your tent peg's just come out, so your tent's flapping in the wind. She also pointed out that something else that we've both been very involved with for a very long time is also ending – so that's two guy ropes floating free. Probably enough to explain my discombobulation. Probably enough to have the tent flapping the question 'who am I, and why?'

How do we know who we are? Often we define ourselves by what we do, by function, work – what we are to or for others, job titles. When those 'doings' fall away it can throw us into uncertainty, into that sense that nothing, or not enough, is holding us down, earthing us. I am hanging on to the knowledge that God knows, that the answer to both those questions is in the loving creativity of God. That is where 'being' comes from, resides. The 'being' that enables our 'doing'. I can trust that grounding - that guy rope is secure. Maybe some more fresh air in the tent is just what I need.