

Meditation at a Sunday Service
The Rev. Ellen Rowse Spero
First Parish in Lexington, MA
Sept. 16, 2001

(Based on a text from 1 Kings 19:11-13)

There is a story about Elijah, the biblical prophet who demanded justice of both his kings and his God. Standing outside a cave in the mountains, he watches for the presence of the Holy One. And so the story goes: There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks ... but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind - an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake - fire; but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire - a voice of small stillness.

Spirit of Life, of Love, of all that is Holy:

This week, our nation saw and felt the splitting and shattering of a great and mighty wind, and its ensuing earthquakes and terrible, terrible fires. A collective cry of disbelief and horror went up from all of us as the news reached us. In the aftermath, there have been cries of pain from those injured, cries of anguish from those who have lost loved ones, cries of relief from those who have learned that their loved ones are safe, cries of victory from those who believe this to be a righteous act. There have been cries of rage, cries for restraint, cries for revenge, cries for peace.

The wind and the earthquake and fire were terrible and powerful in their destruction, in the human act that created them. But as powerful as they were, our prayer, our cry, our hope this morning is they not be the most powerful nor have the last word. Wherever we turn for comfort and strength, wherever we seek meaning and truth, whether in the spirit of human community and love, or in conversation and communion with the Divine or in both together, may we listen. And may we find, even amidst the cries, amidst all the noise and all the talk and all the analysis, a quiet murmuring, a still small voice speaking to our hearts, reminding us that love--connecting us to one another in joy and sorrow, imbuing us with our humanity, seeking justice, affirming life where it finds a home--is stronger than any wind, or earthquake, or fire. Small and still, persistent and eternal, it is a voice we can hear when we too take a moment to be still.