



# The Age of the Spirit

One of our well read council members, Don Imsland, lent me his copy of Harvey Cox's recent book, *The Future of Faith*. Cox, a former Harvard theologian, has been an invaluable interpretive voice on the American religious scene for decades.

In this new book he astutely divides the history of Christianity into three periods: The Age of Faith, the Age of Belief and the Age of the Spirit.

The Age of Faith (1st-3rd century) was that of the early church that sought to follow Jesus—The Way.

In the Age of Belief (4th-20th century) the focus was on *doctrine*, the teachings of the church *about* Jesus. Throughout that period there were caustic disagreements, arguments, and even wars over the issue of who Jesus was. The church developed into countless formal groupings (Catholic, Protestant, various denominations and sects),

each with its own *belief system*, and each claiming to hold the truth about Jesus.

The Age of the Spirit, now 50 years in progress, according to Cox, is replacing formal religion, belief systems, the institutional church, theology and dogma with *spirituality*. This is a return to recognizing and experiencing the presence of God in one's life and in the world. Rather than pursuing a particular belief system that has laid claim to the exclusive truth *about* Jesus, people are now more open to a much larger picture of God's activity, and a more inclusive first hand experience with God.

This has been one of the gems in the life of Our Saviour's for the last 15 years with its ever changing groups gathering to engage and celebrate God's Spirit among us and within us—Spiritual Growth and Development.

Many people outside today's institutional church, some formerly active church members, readily identify with this trend, as do many inside the present church. A cultivated spiritual life satisfies a deep longing in every human being while traditional church life seems to have failed to inspire and energize these alienated people of God.

Spirituality opens us up to a God who has revealed himself to us in many ways, most clearly in Jesus, and strives to keep us in a direct and dynamic relationship with this mysterious God who more than anything longs for closeness with us.

