Soul and Role

*Introductions:*
- Name, role, and favorite seasonal memory

*Touchstones:*
- Reminder of our norms

*Today’s Theme:*
- Current condition of your work world; soul and role
- Poetry as the truth told at a slant, storytelling of one’s selfhood
- “The Seven of Pentacles” ; what counts as growth? How do you measure success?

*Reflective Dialogue:*
- What word image or phrase captured your attention around the theme of soul and role in your work world?
- Journal prompts that grabbed the attention of your heart?
- Other noticings

*General offerings for the group:*

*Closing:*
- What would you like to carry from this gathering back to your work world at DU?

*Soul and Role Touchstones*
- Bring 100% of self
- There is always invitation, always opportunity; never invasion
- No fixing, no saving, and no advising
- Openness to learning from others
- Speak for yourself; tell your story
- Listen to the silence
- Confidentiality
The Seven of Pentacles

Under a sky the color of pea soup
she is looking at her work growing away there
actively, thickly like grapevines or pole beans
as things grow in the real world, slowly enough.
If you tend them properly, if you mulch, if you water,
if you provide birds that eat insects a home and winter food,
if the sun shines and you pick off caterpillars,
if the praying mantis comes and the ladybugs and the bees,
then the plants flourish, but at their own internal clock.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.
More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.
Live a life you can endure: Make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.

Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen:
reach out, keep reaching out, keep bringing in.
This is how we are going to live for a long time: not always,
for every gardener knows that after the digging, after
the planting, after the long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.

Marge Piercy
Questions for reflection:

1. The elements of true vocation, like the garden described by Marge Piercy, will flourish but only according to their own internal clock. Is this description consistent with your experience as a leader, teacher, or staff person? Why? Why not?

2. What percentage of your strength and style comes from your roots that are hidden and spread out underground? What percentage comes from your branches and leaves which are visible and exposed to the elements?

3. How do you know, when faced with a soul/role challenge, whether the best course of action is to penetrate, fight, spread, or gnaw your way toward a workable solution?

4. After the long season of your work what are you hoping to harvest? How will you react if the harvest is lost or stunted by an early frost or insects? How do you measure success?