

Sermon AED Assembly 2013
Genesis 1:24,25
Psalm 147:11-15
Mark:10:14
Matthew 25:34-36

When the Design Team began its work about two years ago the first thing we needed to do was to choose a theme. There was much discussion about this. There were emails and phone conversation for several weeks. It was a time when our churches were worried about declining budgets and attendance. The economy was worsening and we saw the way in which more and more people were seeing life out of a place of fear, misinformation, anxiety, and timidity. We began to talk about helping people develop a new outlook, *weaving a new worldview*.

Then we needed to create a logo. Again, lots of conversation and email. We went through two artists! But eventually we got to a logo we liked. We wanted something that represented wholeness, hence the circle. We wanted something that reflected the diversity in our Church and in our communities, hence the colors. We wanted to show the weaving, hence the lines. And we wanted to show the deacon on the midst of it all, hence the figure.

The liturgical team got to work developing liturgies that would connect to our theme, and they have done a wonderful job. They have led us through a journey to **Reflect, Restore, Renew**, and tomorrow they will take us into **Return**. We started on Thursday, (and you remember how the storm broke during our service) reflecting on how the encounters between the European explorers and the native people went. We were invited to "paint our pain" on the canvas, a place where we could place the hurts, the disappointments and the brokenness in our world. Then in the liturgy yesterday we learned about the Japanese practice of using gold paint to restore art. We were invited to add some gold to the canvas, so that we could express healing and restoration artistically. Then this morning we saw how the canvas had been cut into strips and we were invited to weave those into the frame we see here. Physically acting out renewal and creating something beautiful. And just now we had this juxtaposition of the reading of a news article and then a passage from Scripture. We were invited to think again about how we treat the environment, God's creation, how we treat children, how we care for each other. Psalm 147 told us of a God who does not care about the size of a horse, but desires to give us the blessings of family, security, peace and food.

So then we set out to invite leaders who would help us in this weaving of a new world view. And in doing so we learned that they said "yes" partly because of their understanding of the role of deacons in the Church.

Katrina Browne brought her film, "Repairing the Breach" and spoke of how she saw deacons as people in a unique position to show leadership in these resolutions addressing racism. In fact I've since learned that Deacon Grinnell, whom we saw in "Traces of the Trade" and who is present with us here, has been re-energized in this work and wants to take on this issue. So Katrina's hopes are already being fulfilled.

Sarah Eagle Heart came here and noted how deacons seem to "get it" and how we share a passion on the same issues as she. She is even setting up a special online course for deacons so they can become facilitators and raise awareness about the Doctrine of Discovery.

And we have Eric Law with his work on "Currencies", helping us see how deacons can help build the environment where God's blessings can stay in circulation...urging us to "lead like water".

And so we have begun the weaving--drawing from our presenters, our liturgies, the narratives of the recipients in the Stephen's Recognition service last night, and of course drawing from our shared experience here.

I'd like to share a couple of "Weaving a New Worldview" places for me.

One comes out of Eric's work on the currency of Truth and his "10 eyes on the table" reference. In his book, Holy Currencies, Eric has written, "The Spirit of Truth calls us to attempt to understand the multiple points of view....The truth discerning process is always complex and messy." So here is how this has worked for me.

Much of the material we have sent out in preparation for this Assembly has been material that I have written. In fact, I heard myself introduced here as, "This is Tina. She's the one that has been sending you lots of stuff." Well, here is something I composed for you in my last letter:

Our location in historic Jamestown and Williamsburg offers us an opportunity to consider the time in history when the Colonial, Indigenous, and African world views came together in painful ways that continue to impact our common life in these United States. Our hope is that our time together will help us to consider these events in our history, and to continue to work towards a new world view that is more inclusive, more just, and more generous.

Now, as I usually did, I circulated it among the members of the Design Team so they could look it over. I asked them to notice errors or omissions and one of the members sent it back to me with an edit.

They inserted a sentence. After the words "*came together in painful ways that continue to impact our common life in these United States*" they inserted "*It was also a time of adventure, anticipation, and creativity.*" Well, I sat there and stared at those words on

my computer screen. "**Adventure, anticipation, creativity.**" Really? You know that's not the way I'd seen this time in our nation's history. I know my father, born in Mexico, didn't describe the arrival of the Europeans as a time of "adventure and anticipation". And my mother, Navaho, born in Arizona, certainly never described the arrival of the Europeans as a time of "anticipation and creativity"! But, you know, I left those words in the letter because I realized that the Team member was inviting me to reconsider my view of this period in our history, to factor in this different perspective, to change my worldview.

So that's me. There was also a news article that came out about the same time I was reading Holy Currencies.

Here's what Eric wrote:

In order for a community to discern the truth it needs to take into account the different perspectives even when they seem to be opposite or contrary to each other.

The article involved Sen. Portman from Ohio. He made the news by changing his stance and deciding to support gay marriage.

I read a description of his interview with CNN. They noted that the senator's change of stance has to do with another revelation, one deeply personal. His 21-year-old son, Will, is gay. Sen. Portman said, "I've come to the conclusion that for me, personally, I think this is something that we should allow people to do, to get married, and to have the joy and stability of marriage that I've had for over 26 years. That I want all of my children to have, including our son, who is gay".

As I thought this through it seemed to me that there were three elements here leading to the Senator's **radically new worldview**.

First, I think he finally really heard his son's story, heard his son's truth. (Another eye on the table)

Second, he wanted for his son that which he himself has enjoyed--the stability and joy of a 26 year marriage.

And third, he is going to work for this even in the face of opposition and real personal cost.

It seems to me that these three elements can describe the work that we have to do, both personally and in ministry.

There is the need to listen and really hear the stories of other perspectives. Then there is the wanting for others what we ourselves enjoy. Isn't that just a rewording of the Golden Rule? To treat others as we want to be treated? And finally, we need to be willing to work for it, even when the work is difficult and frightening, or as Eric Law put it, "complex and messy".

I think this is what deacons are called to. We make a space for the stories.
We help people appreciate the blessings in their lives, and then we help them make the leap to wanting for others the blessings they themselves enjoy.
And we invite the Baptized, our parishioners into the work.

That is how we "**weave a new worldview**".

And at the end of the day we get to the end of this passage from Matthew's gospel.
Jesus speaking to his disciples, speaking to us.

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it for me."

Amen.

The Rev. Canon Tina Campbell, President
Association for Episcopal Deacons

