

Reflections 9/8/17

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“Bent and Whole”

The United Church of Christ commissions a communion set to be used for each General Synod and beyond. This past summer’s General Synod worshiped with a chalice that had a bent stem looking as though it was a kiln mistake. The bent chalice stem, though, was quite intentional. While many communion sets tend to be highly decorative and even artistic, there is an underlying reality of brokenness, of body and blood poured out.

We are called to minister in the midst of broken and bentness. We are called to be agents of hope and of wholeness. We are part of movements for wholeness in a fragmented world.

Yes, brokenness is all around:

- Hurricanes and earthquakes, landslides and floods threaten loss and devastation around the globe.
- This is the 50th anniversary of the occupation of Palestinian Territories, a time for remembering
- Climate change wreaks havoc. Leaders of the new Global Ministries partner church in the Pacific Island of Tuvalu point out to all of us that this may well be the first nation wholly displaced by climate change as waters steadily cover the land.
- Millions have died in the Congo in conflicts over minerals and human rights
- The Rohingya people in southern Asia continue as stateless, shuttled between Myanmar and Bangladesh, with violence ensuing
- The nation of Colombia in South America is in the midst of the longest running conflict in the world. A fragile peace agreement could go well or easily be sidetracked.

And there is brokenness at home in the United States:

- Our attention is riveted to Hurricane Harvey pummeling people in Texas and Louisiana, Hurricane Irma threatening Florida and the eastern U.S., wildfires raging in the northwestern states.

- White nationalists march through the streets and our U.S. president has declared that a lot of them are “really good people.”
- Health care for millions is hanging in the balance.
- The rollback of LGBT rights has accelerated through declarations against the service of trans-people in the military and the September “Nashville Statement” mis-using theology to discriminate.
- There is brokenness in our individual lives and families.

Maybe even a bent chalice is too good.

But in faith, brokenness is not the final word. We are called to receive and share good news. We can affirm solidarity with God’s children everywhere.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed: Perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4)

Joy and thanks be to God as we come to the communion table. In the brokenness of Christ may we find grace and hope and wholeness. Let us extend that grace and hope and healing across creation.