



...musings in this time ...

The Rev. Diana Akiyama, Ph.D.

"It is in the darkness of chaos that our self-organizing processes, our creativity, comes forth."

Margaret Wheatley

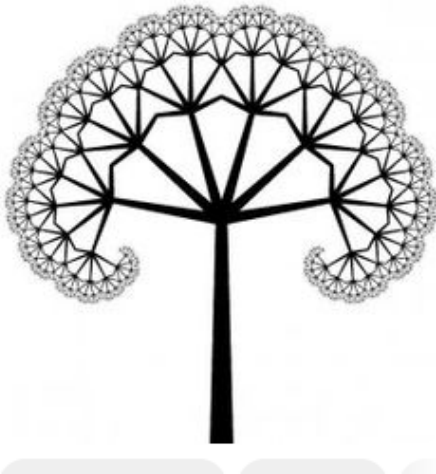
I enjoy design and beauty — creating, making, viewing, sharing beautiful design. When I need to step away from work to re-focus, re-group or find my center I will invariably find something to do with design — the colors, patterns and harmonies of beautiful design feed my spirit. When I was 7 years old, I fell in love with sewing. The imagination required to create a finished garment from a piece of cloth was magnetic. I remember sitting in church as a young girl listening to the rector's sermons and feeling a clear sense of holy love in his words ... and then I would begin to see designs and patterns and colors in my mind's eye. For me, the power of the Holy Spirit is often visual: I see its beauty unfolding when I soften my gaze and awaken to a stirring within.

Finding beauty in this pandemic has been a unique challenge. I do not doubt that beauty surrounds me in the same way I know the Holy Spirit is ever present. But the chaos visited upon the world by Covid-19 has scrambled my tried-and-true practice of finding peace through beauty. Every little thing, it seems, has changed. The pattern of my daily life has been

thrown into a tumbler — I recognize the pieces of my old daily pattern but they are not arranged the same any more. The virus imposes its logic on the patterns I have designed. Its hand has reached into my world and, like a toddler with a crayon, scribbled all over my beautiful design.

It has taken me time to accept the fact that I cannot erase those scribbles ... that they are indelible ... that no eraser exists that will remove the uninvited marks. It will take even more time to adjust my vision — inner and outer — to find the beauty that has always been the through-line in my life.

Recently, I was looking through digital images to find patterns and designs that were beautiful. I found a photo of the design I pasted at the beginning of this reflection. After I copied it I was disappointed in the quality of the image because it was blurry. Right before deleting it the thought occurred to me, “But isn’t this the way you are seeing right now, in these days?” And I remembered the verse from Mark’s gospel in which the first attempt to heal the blind man was only partial. He could see again but only blurred images. Only after Jesus laid hands on him a second time could he see completely.



“ I see people. They look like trees, only they are walking around. ” *Mark 8:23-24*

Even in the chaos created by Covid-19, beauty continues to surround us. But its patterns and designs are not entirely clear right now. We see the pattern as lines and shapes, as light and dark. But the design appears as a blurred chaotic mass. From within this blurry chaos, beauty will come into focus. Margaret Wheatley, a thought leader in Chaos Science, writes, “You cannot see order in chaos moment to moment.... If you look moment to moment, you will not see a pattern.... But, if you stand back far enough, if you wait over time, scale or distance, you will observe the order that's in chaos.... then [you] can see the pattern.”

When Jesus healed the sick, lame, blind and possessed he had to enter the chaos that illness represents. Perhaps his miraculous healings were the result of having a different perspective ... one that allowed him to see the pattern within



in order that he could heal by revealing an inherent beauty and power.

We are still in the early days of finding our way in a world changing, minute-by-minute, as it engages the chaos of Covid-19. The science of chaos theorists gives us a way to re-imagine what it means to lose the patterns and designs we've lovingly created to order our days. "There is inherent order in chaos" they tell us.

Jesus knew this too, it seems. The stormy seas, the contagious leper, the unclean woman — all signs of chaos that instilled fear in the people — seemed to create an opening for him to walk through chaos and reveal the beauty of order experienced in healing and wholeness. Even more miraculous was his message, again and again, that this beauty is available to all who seek it.

Perhaps it won't take as long as I feared to find the patterns and designs of beauty again. Perhaps its not about waiting for the chaos to pass, and more about progressing through it and looking for the way that order is revealed in this deep and disorienting chaos.

I'm going to go now. I want to find some digital images of beauty that will speak to me of wholeness, healing, and new life.

And I'm okay if they are still a little blurry. 🐾

