

**Charmaine McKissick-Melton**

**Remarks – July 1, 2010**

**St. Titus Episcopal Church – Service in honor of Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray**

**Opening:** I'd like to open by sharing our decision to include three presenters from the Pauli Murray Project this evening. This decision reflects our commitment to listen to diverse voices, to convene multiple perspectives and to find many meanings in Pauli Murray's work and legacy.

This reading is excerpts from a lecture given by Pauli Murray on March 28, 1979 at the Church of the Atonement in Washington, D.C. It is entitled: *Challenge of Nurturing the Christian Community in Its Diversity*

True community is based upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the common human ties that bind us together. The marks of a community of faith are communion, participation, mutual trust, sharing and fellowship.

Making the church a more inclusive community involves transforming our imagery as well as church structure to reflect the experience of women as well as men.

We enter into community with others based upon our new self-understanding and we struggle to transform ourselves, our church, and our society in order to actualize vision.

In the process, we glimpse only fragmentary moments of the community that we seek and fleeting images of our authentic selves. We are held in tension between the “now” and the “not yet.” We are buffeted between advancing and receding waves of fellowship and withdrawal, or reconciliation and alienation. The human lifespan is so short that we experience only tenuous segments of social change in a single lifetime. I think of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, whose entire lives were dedicated to women's suffrage but both of whom had been dead for nearly two decades or more before the Nineteenth Amendment became part of the Constitution. I think of President Kennedy, who initiated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 but did not live to see it enacted into law. I think of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who did not survive to see the partial transformation of the South and acceptance of desegregation by people today who shouted “Never!” when he was alive. And of former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meier, who I think passionately wanted peace but died a few months before the treaty between Israel and

Egypt was signed. I think of my own beloved aunt whose call to the ministry could not be fully consummated. The closest she came was as the wife of a priest, and she died twenty-one years before I was ordained in the same diocese where she and her husband last served.

No one knows how the oppressed people of the earth can move together and eliminate the barriers of race, sex and class that rob human beings of their freedom, says Letty Russell, yet we believe that we are not acting out of own power, but under the power and plan of God. And, as Dr. King once said, we can have deep faith in the future because we know that in our struggle for justice, we have “cosmic companionship.” Dr. Rosemary Ruether’s reflection on the tension between what “is” and what “will be” seems an appropriate conclusion to our discussion. She said, “To remain in this tension in fidelity is to live by faith; to keep our hope for the Kingdom in the midst of inconclusiveness and our love for the brothers and sisters in the midst of brokenness. In this faith we can also begin to celebrate now.”

Quotes from *Pauli Murray: Selected Sermons and Writings*, edited by Anthony B. Pinn, (Maryknoll, NY Orbis Books, 2006).