



View From The Corner: The President's Blog
April 2018

Happy Eastertide! My sincerest prayers are for your experience of the fullness of God's love and the richness of life during this season.

I write to you in my first monthly blog to share news of our life together and some ruminations about the struggle to reclaim our public square from the forces of exclusion and the purveyors of hate within our society. At least as I see the struggle. I have waited two months to write this first missive because I wanted to speak with each member of our staff and many members of our faculty and Board of Trustees. It is my hope that having listened closely, the words and ideas which animate this blog will be familiar and strike you as being authentic to our common life here at CTS.

Allow me to offer my sense of the moment and the vital role I see for us, here at CTS, in the work of God in our world. I frame these thoughts with a quote from Howard Thurman as he wrote to Mordecai Johnson.

"My people need me."¹

These simple words capture the call of the moment for me because they evoke a sense of calling that responds not to self-promotion or vainglory, but, rather to the needs of a hurting world. My paraphrase is to say of Chicago Theological Seminary that our people need us. They need us, more now, than at any time in recent memory. Our people need us because the words "We the People" ring hollow in a way that I cannot recall in my lifetime. Our people need us because fear and loathing have become the spiritual forces which pervade our common life as a nation, and deception and venality the coin of the realm. I place this as

¹ Howard Washington Thurman and Walter Earl Fluker. *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman: Volume I: My People Need Me, June 1918 - March 1936*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 2009, 3.

our central calling because to be a member of the community here at CTS is to understand that it is precisely in the spaces of our common life that we experience our personal humanity as either a joy or a regret. This is why we, as a community, fight so tenaciously to maintain our place as one in which *all* people can exist with dignity and pride in who God has made them. If this is work to which we must continually attend here at CTS, how much more so our nation?

Our people need us because forces within our society which would collapse our public square in ways which force people into the shadows of life and exclude many based on the melanin content of their skin, the particular shape of their family tree, or whom they love, are strong. Because of our intimate knowledge that the sacredness of our humanity is the specificity of each of us (Matthew 10:29 – 32), we understand that place in which we express it is of concern to God. Put plainly, we care about the public square because God cares about all who are in it. Today those of God's children under assault need our help as ally when solidarity is called for and as champion when the circumstances demand.

Throughout this blog, I have frequently referred to "our people." Let me be clear what I mean here. Our people are any who thirst for justice, seek to honor God by caring for our neighbors and welcoming the stranger, see the sacredness of all creation, and find joy in the flourishing of us all. In these times in which fear and loathing permeate our public life, such people, our people, need leadership who can see beyond the miasma of this moment. From what I have come to understand of CTS, raising up people for such times as these is our particular gift to the world.

I am thankful to God for allowing me to share this work with you and look forward with joy to #TheNext.