

*Many and great, O God, are thy works, maker of earth and sky;  
thy hands have set the heavens with stars; thy fingers spread the mountains and plains.  
Lo, at thy word the waters were formed; deep seas obey thy voice.  
Grant unto us communion with thee, thou star-abiding one;  
come unto us and dwell with us; with thee are found the gifts of life.  
Bless us with life that has no end, eternal life with thee.<sup>1</sup>*

Sisters and brothers in Christ:

We gather in Salt Lake City for General Convention soon and very soon. You will find it a place of immense physical beauty – mountains, sky, sunset and sunrise, birds, flowers and trees, salt and rock. I pray that this 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention may be a work of beauty, for as the Diné or Navajo people say, we are created to “walk in beauty” or *hózhó*. The Hebrew vision is called *shalom*, and it is the work we will come together to do – to be God’s creative partner in shaping a world of greater justice, peace, and indeed, beauty – the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Those who know themselves beloved of God are fit and ready for this work. As the voice from heaven said to Jesus at his baptism, “you are my beloved, and in you I am well pleased.” God has said the same to each of his children. In the coming days and weeks I encourage you to meditate on that image of belovedness, and keep it before your eyes, on your lips, and in your heart. You will meet what you already know in those who will share this work with you.

We will come together for a season to shape the work of this Church for the coming years, not knowing exactly what those years and decades will bring. If we trust the underlying work of the God who loves what he has created, we will come prepared to heal what is broken, guide what has gone astray, share what we have been given, and seek God’s wisdom everywhere we turn.

*Holy Lord, giver of all wisdom: Set for us this day the banquet of your word; invite us to feast on the genius and beauty all around us. Then, turn us in humility toward the poor, the oppressed and the weak; we ask this in the name of Jesus, who is Wisdom for ever and ever.<sup>2</sup>*

God’s creative work often uses what the world sees as broken or least or rejected – the youngest son, the forgotten woman, the suffering servant, the chaos at the beginning of all things. The displacement we will all experience in the work before us is part of that creative possibility. Our task is to steward the beauty within us so that we can meet what may seem chaotic or *other* and receive it as creative gift and possibility rather than overwhelming.

We have a great invitation – to stay grounded in the love we know in Jesus and his body, and to be radically open to its other parts and to creative “disorder.” This is a time to practice what we know – to pray without ceasing; to care for our bodies and spirits by feeding them appropriately, with good things; to exercise our souls and bodies in ways we know and trust; to grow our

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<sup>1</sup> Many and Great “Dakota Hymn” / Lacquiparle by Joseph r. Renville (1942), paraphrased by R. Phillip Frazier (1929). *Hymnal* 1982, Hymn 385

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Prayer for All Seasons*, Church Publishing, 2014. p 124. Adapted from J. Frank Henderson, *A Prayer Book for Remembering the Women* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), p.119.

capacity to meet surprises with gratitude; and finally, to rest at the end of the day in confidence that what has been done has been done, what has not been done has not been done, and to let it be.

*Source of life and blessing, of garden, orchard, field: Root us in obedience to you and nourish us by your ever-flowing Spirit that, perceiving only the good we might do, our lives may be fruitful, our labor productive, and our service useful, in communion with Jesus, our brother. Amen.*<sup>3</sup>

May God fill you with hope and vision for the beautiful work ahead of us all.

Shalom, beloved ones,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katharine Siffert Schori". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Katharine" being the most prominent.

Katharine

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 128. *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, p. 85.