

MARCH

"A Fair Balance "

by Deaconess Student Karen Davidson

Hymn suggestion

"For the Fruit of All Creation" (ELW #679, LSB #894)

Scripture

"I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, 'The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.'" 2 Corinthians 8:13-15

Devotion

Often, the jobs they perform are dead end, keeping them working well into advanced age. They are men and women I worked alongside for six months as I completed my diaconal fieldwork assignment. Together we accepted, sorted and priced donations that were set out for sale in the thrift store. After a few weeks, I realized that my work friends are what society classifies as the "working poor."

Laboring with these people whose income falls below the poverty level, I learned how low wages and the high cost-of-living makes it difficult to rise above the poverty line. I listened to their lament about common business practices that involve fees and deposits that make accomplishing things such as cashing a paycheck, paying rent and utilities, or owning a car difficult -- all things I take for granted. I learned about shady business practices that rob them of employee benefits such as social security. Pension/retirement plans meant to support us in our retirement years instead keep them working well into advanced age. They have little to no opportunity of increasing their income in order to help overcome these obstacles.



In the midst of their laments, however, I perceived their resilience and their strong desire to earn a living. I listened as they raised awareness to management about the needs of people who cannot afford even thrift store prices. I observed how they cared for each other by cooking meals, sharing rides, and a "got your back" attitude that helps them prevail.

Their sense of community reminds me of Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church in which he instructs them about the benefits of sharing. He says that out of our plenty we should give -- so that if we are found lacking, we will receive what is needed. This exchange of resources creates a supply balanced on compassion, generosity and kindness -- the things I observed in my work friends. As Paul says that "a fair balance" is the goal, I ponder on the beauty of a society where no one -- in a land of plenty -- goes without.

Question for Reflection & Discussion

- In what ways do we selfishly hold on to resources that might create a deficit for others?
- How can we practice releasing them for the benefit of my neighbor?

Prayer

*"Father, providing food for your children,
by your wise guiding teach us to share
one with another, so that, rejoicing
with us, all others may know your care. "*

Praise and Thanksgiving (LSB #789)

About the Author

Karen Davidson is a deaconess student who is learning the deep humility of the call to diakonia. She lives in Huntsville, AL and is a grateful member of Grace Lutheran Church.