



Reflection for July 15, 2020
The Feast of William White (transferred)

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. [Jeremiah 3:15]

O Lord, in a time of turmoil and confusion you raised up your servant William White, and endowed him with wisdom, patience, and a reconciling temper. . . [Collect of the Day]

On Friday July 17th we will observe the feast of William White, who may have had more influence on the development of the Episcopal Church than any other figure. William White was born in Philadelphia in 1747, was ordained deacon (1770) and priest (1772) in England, and served as priest at Christ and St. Peter's Church from 1772 until his death in 1836. During those sixty-four years, he also served as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (1789; 1795-1836), chaplain to the Continental Congress (1777-1789), chaplain to the Senate (1789-1800), and the first Bishop of Pennsylvania (1787-1836). Not only was he a chief designer for the first Constitution of the American Episcopal Church, but he was also mentor to the missionary bishops who themselves influenced generations of congregations and their leaders, most prominently Henry Hobart, Jackson Kemper, and William Augustus Muhlenberg.

The description of William White in the Collect of the Day as a man with *wisdom, patience, and a reconciling temper* is an apt description of the church that we need be, or called to become, today.

A *wise* church is worldly in the best sense of the word:

it is practical, attending to the ordinary daily concerns of being an organization

it is mindful of the ordinary needs of its members and its neighbors

it frames every ministry in a vision of 'the big picture':

the promise of ever-renewing life in our Creator

the promise of mercy from our Crucified Lord

the promise of insight from the Holy Spirit

it is not ashamed to say "we cannot know"

and it is bold and humble enough to say "let's learn."

A *patient* church resists our culture's promise of short-term satisfaction.

It promises long-term plans for peace and sustainability.

It honors the worth and dignity of all human beings

no matter their current circumstances.

It does not evade or avoid the uncertainties and obstacles

that are inevitable in each human journey toward wholeness.
It sees rebellion as an opportunity to be more flexible
and complacency as an opportunity to awaken the imagination.

A church with a reconciling temper

Illuminates the common ground shared by all polarized groups.
It is unwavering in its engagement with every struggle for justice.
It is a beacon for the path to peace for individuals, communities, and nations

Today we stand at the cusp of a profoundly new way of “being church”:

The pandemic and the world-wide upsurge of demands for justice and freedom
have revealed needs never adequately addressed
and they have revealed to us our own complacency and willful self-sufficiency.

William White reminds us that

the church has the inventiveness and courage to explore new territories
and the stability and grace to guide our world into
the era of peace, justice, and shared abundance that God has promised.

Just Beyond Yourself, by David Whyte [*The Bell and the Blackbird*, pp. 21-22]

Just beyond / yourself.

It's where / you need to be.

Half a step / into/self-forgetting / and the rest / restored / by what / you'll meet.

There is a road /always beckoning.

*When you see / the two sides / of it / closing together / at that far horizon / and deep in/
the foundations / of your own heart / at exactly / the same / time,*

that's how / you / know / it's the road / you / have / to follow.

That's how / you know /it's where / you/have / to go.

That's how / you know / you have / to go.

That's / how you know.

Just beyond/yourself / it's/ where you / need to be.