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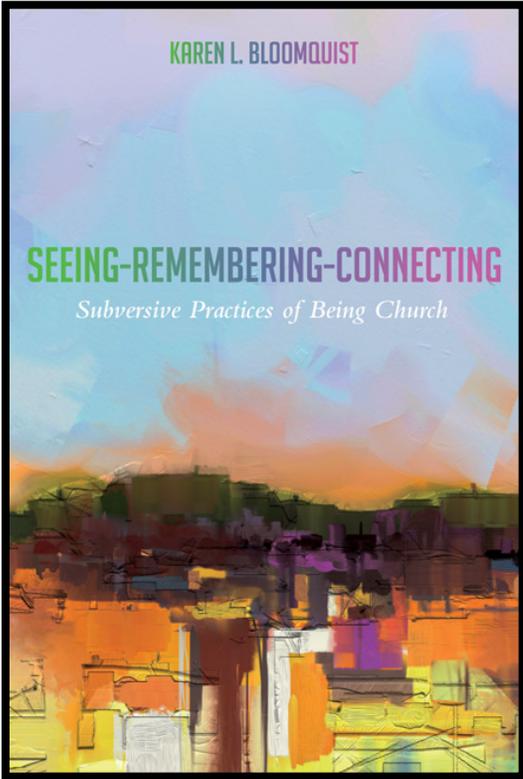
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New Title From Karen L. Bloomquist

*Seeing-Remembering-Connecting
Subversive Practices of Being Church*



This book draws from the author's many years and formative experiences as a pastor, theologian, activist, seminary professor, and speaker in a number of settings in the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), as well as ecumenically and globally. With insights from many sources, it proposes a new “church in society” framework for faith communities to engage and transform the urgent systemic injustices confronting us today.

“Seeing-remembering-connecting” evokes ordinary practices that can engage those from diverse or no faith traditions, as well as pointing to the heart of what churches have long been about. God is becoming manifest in and through what these verbs imply—as transcendentally immanent. “Seeing-remembering-connecting” is nurtured over the long-term in faith communities, as they put together what is fragmentary or forgotten, point to what is true, and empower communities to see, remember and act, in organized actions with

others--across boundaries of religion, geography and self-interest

Karen L. Bloomquist has served as a parish pastor in California, New York City, and Washington State, and as a seminary professor in Chicago, Dubuque, and Philadelphia. She has directed theological work of the ELCA (Chicago) and Lutheran World Federation (Geneva). Most recently, she served as Dean at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley. She has edited many books and written many articles. One of her books is *The Dream Betrayed* (1990).

*Seeing-Remembering-Connecting
Subversive Practices of Being Church*

by Karen L. Bloomquist

Cascade Books / Wipf and Stock Publishers

978-1-4982-8197-3/ paperback / \$15

www.wipfandstock.com

Interview with Karen L. Bloomquist

Why did you write this book?

Through the years, I often have noted shortfalls in the usual paradigms and approaches of how church relates to society. They tend to assume an institutional strength in society that churches no longer have, or a top down approach that is not empowering of communities or collaborative with others.

In this one volume, I draw upon, summarize and make more accessible a lot of current social and theological analyses in articles and books that are read mainly by academics or those focused on a particular issue. The aim is not theoretical debate but perspective for practical action that is theologically grounded.

What gap does this book fill?

Much has been written on the injustices and dominating powers (“empire”) pervasive today, which sharply contrasts with what the church has long professed. However, church leaders are often hesitant to make the public connections, and to pursue the long-term work of nurturing resistance and seeking social transformation. This book proposes a framework---of Seeing-Remembering-Connecting---that engages what people are experiencing pastorally and theologically, for the sake of furthering systemic changes in society.

Why is a theological approach necessary?

Distinctive theological perspectives are what ground the church and makes it subversive of the ideologies, assumptions and practices prevailing in society. Too many of the typical approaches for “fixing” the church are more reflective of rather than transformative of society.

Why a new framework and language?

In order to reach people today who do not know or are “turned off” by theological jargon, ordinary language is needed that they can relate to, such as “seeing-remembering-connecting.” As I write in the book, “Seeing-remembering-connecting” are practices basic to what it means to be human, and thus, become a means for opening up some deeply theological insights that are critical, historical and relational.” These verbs also can move into theological depth, opening up what the church has long been confessing.

An Excerpt from *Seeing-Remembering-Connecting*

Because of the inevitably subversive mission to which God most centrally is calling us today—as uncovered through seeing-remembering-connecting—the boundaries of the church need to be viewed in more flexible, less institutionalized, more expansive ways that they usually have been....It may become a less distinct institution, but at the same time, is both more worldly and more otherworldly. It becomes more transcendent of what is dominating or ruling in society today by becoming more engaged (more immanent) with what actually is occurring in society, world and creation.

...Through its common practices...the church... begins to counter the illusion, amnesia, and disconnectedness, in other words, the sin, bondage, blindness, a-historicity, and privatization that enable the powers of domination to prevail. ... This involves crossing some of the usual boundaries between sacred and secular, between “us” and “them,” between local and global realities, between Christians and those of other faiths, between racial/ethnic or other affinity groups, between humans and the rest of nature, in ways that are trans-contextual, “transfigurational” and thus transformative—for the sake of the world that God creates, loves, redeems and continually transforms....

...“Seeing” implies that formation *begins* by ... engaging the contexts.... and learning to see in deeper more critical ways what is going on there. This contrasts with the more superficial ways of seeing that typically prevail in society. “Remembering” is where traditional texts and insights are engaged deeply, intentionally opened up (and “transfigured”) in relation to what is being “seen” so that it really becomes engaging, rather remaining abstract and theoretical. If the collaborative nature of what it means to be the church for the sake of the world is to be embodied and lived out, then practices of connecting (with those in the church, with outsiders, with those of other faiths, other disciplines, other movements and organizations, etc.) become much more strategic....

...“Seers” are those who can see through the usual presumptions and illusions so as to name what is really going on. “Rememberers” are those who are able to make the past present, and remind us of those absent from “the table,” for the sake of an unfolding future.” Connectors” are those who continually seek out and develop new working relationships, making connections with other people, organizations and movements, so as to work together for the common good. Bringing together those with gifts such as these, focused for the sake of God's mission in the world, through the synergistic dynamic of God's Spirit, can enliven the church far more than some of the usual practices that seek to sustain it as an institution.

„If churches are to move from survival to engagement, some deeply embedded assumptions and practices need to change:

- instead of aspiring to be self-sufficient churches, our inter-relatedness;
- instead of being hostage to measures of “success,” attitudes of humility shaped by a theology of the cross;
- instead of *our* strength or know-how, our vulnerability, open to listen and learn from others;
- instead of speaking and showing others, open to being transformed by those different from ourselves;
- instead of an insular sense of who we are as a church, open to how the Spirit of God continually is renewing, transforming the church through new faces and realities.

When fear of the future dominates the church, creative imagination shrinks. Ecclesial imagination requires putting ourselves in uncomfortable places, liminal spaces, at the intersections of many worlds....

Praise for *Seeing-Remembering-Connecting*

“Karen Bloomquist helps churches listen and learn from each other for the sake of the world. A theologian, professor, national and global church leader, she has lived the text. This book is both brilliantly comprehensive and succinct. Seeing those kept invisible by dominating powers, she connects economic disparities, racism, greed, and climate change, all intensified by corporate and political policies. She sees justification and justice intimately connected, and community across boundaries as the heart of the Gospel.”

—**Norma Cook Everist, Professor of Church and Ministry, Wartburg Theological Seminary**

“A manifesto for a public church to be in and for the world! Combining political and liberation theologies with ecumenical insights and a Lutheran pugnacity, this book transcontextually subverts our seeing, elicits remembering to transfigure our memory, and inspires connecting to bring about transformation. Weaving her own experiences with a prophetic theological voice, Bloomquist issues a call for the church to be faithful to God’s great ‘occupy’ movement: the incarnation.”

—**Vítor Westhelle, Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago**

“Based on impressive experience worldwide Karen Bloomquist rereads the liberation theology triad ‘see-judge-act’ as ‘seeing-remembering-connecting,’ thus emphasizing the *communio* and alliance element of all three. Building on the anti-imperial subversive character of the prophets, Jesus, and Paul—and even on Luther’s critique of early capitalism and on today’s global ecumenical exposure of empire—she enters into conflict with the economic, political, and ideological powers dominating all aspects of life. Here you will find a vision of a church that joins the struggle for a new culture of life—ready to suffer the cross of empire.”

—**Ulrich Duchrow, Professor, University of Heidelberg**

