

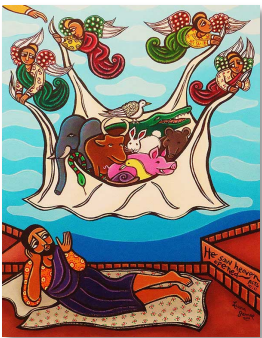
Visioning Our Future

Rev. Carol Saysette

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There was a period of time back in the 80's and 90's when I was on the backup staff at the Seminary for an annual conference that featured The Rev. Morton Kelsey. He was a very well known author, and wrote the best existing book on the history of dreams from the Hebrews, the Greeks and the New Testament. Every year during the conference he found a time when he held up a Bible that looked like Swiss cheese. He had carefully gone through the whole Old and New Testaments and using a razor blade, had cut out all the passages containing dreams and visions. This "holey" Bible got the point across very clearly: how many dreams and visions there are in the Bible, and how important they were and are in our Scriptures. It is hard to know from many of the biblical accounts whether the characters are describing a dream, a vision, or what we would call a day dream. They all seem to have equal value in the Bible.

I am amazed daily that we are all so unique. I think I am a visual thinker. My sister and I have had some talks about that; it seems to run in the family. Maybe that's why I love dream work. I was led to seminary by some dreams, and have found them to be of great importance in my life. I wrote my D.Min dissertation on "Dream Work In Ministry" (some of you participated in it and were part of the weekly dream group we had here at CCC for five years).



This morning, I want to focus on the potential for dreams to inform and inspire a person or a whole community. That's why I chose Peter's famous dream of the blanket with animals on it for our scripture today. People in Africa would have called his dream a *Big Dream*. Big dreams are what Jung calls "numinous;" they are often in Technicolor and intensely lit. It is my experience that big dreams are often accompanied by synchronicity.

In the case of Peter's dream, which impacted the whole early Christian community, we really have two story lines coming together. The other part was the story of Cornelius. Luke, or whoever wrote the book of Acts, says that Peter put the two stories together – the experience and the vision, along with the words of God. [See Acts 10 for the whole narrative.]

I want to pause here to emphasize how important that dream was. If Peter hadn't had that dream, he wouldn't have been open to welcoming Cornelius and his friends. By Peter's act, Christianity was opened to the gentiles. If this hadn't happened, Christianity might have remained a sect of Judaism, which of course it was in the beginning.

Dreams and visions can guide whole communities. So this morning I have an invitation to you all: start opening to visions that might be leading this community into the future. CCC has been through this cycle before. There's the end of an era, a pastor leaves, an interim comes, and the community discerns where it is and where it is being led to go.



Priestess at Delphi
John Collier

In 1992 I had a lovely dream on behalf of this community. As you all know, in 1990 this church went through a huge change. Some of us have very clear and painful memories of that time. I call it the *volcanic eruption*. At first I was the only pastor left for six months. Don Felt had graduated from seminary, and he helped, and then Dan Hatch, to whom I will always be thankful, came and was our interim. In 1992 I finally was able to get away and have a vacation. I went to Greece with my sister and some of her friends on a small private tour. It was *fabulous*! In Delphi, I was deeply inspired. As many of you know, at Delphi there was an “oracle,” a woman – actually many women over the centuries – who would answer questions about the past and future, sitting on a special seat in the sanctuary. People came from miles around to ask the Oracle questions. We had a complete tour of the site and the museum.

That night I went to bed and decided to do some “dream seeding.” I prayed that I would receive a dream about CCC, and where we were and what we should be doing. This is the dream I received:

First, I saw an enormous head of Apollo. It was the head on the statue we had seen the day before in Olympia. It is very beautiful.

The next scene was a view of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi when it was at its peak, with gold trim and completely intact. Around the temple was a rainbow of mother of pearl, with gold trim at the edges, twisted out of very fine gold thread.

The following scene was of the members of the church and myself plowing in a field, clearing it of weeds, raking and digging and preparing the ground for the planting of new seeds. The message was that a purification was needed.

The closing scene was a view of the church, and there was a rainbow of mother of pearl arched around it, trimmed with fine gold thread.

I came home and shared the dream in a sermon. It seemed very appropriate, and timely.

So my invitation to you, along with all the other work and challenges we will be led through by Alan Claassen and the folks from the Conference Staff of the NCNC/UCC, is to do some visioning and some dream seeding. Who knows? Maybe some of you are visual thinkers too.

So here’s a little dream seeding lesson for dream incubation. I learned this particular method when I did the Ph.D in Depth Psychology (with a Jungian focus) at the Pacifica Institute near Santa Barbara. (By the way, \$10,000 of the costs of that program was money donated to me at the dinner given by the church when I left – so it is only fitting that I pass this along.)

1. First, you ponder the whole situation you want to dream about. You do a mental survey of what is going on, the history of the situation, some of the dilemmas involved, etc.
2. As you are preparing for bed, make the environment as sacred as possible. Use a candle if you like candles and can do that safely, and you might read a spiritually inspiring piece.
3. Pray to God, your Higher Power, Jesus, the divine within, whatever is your theology.

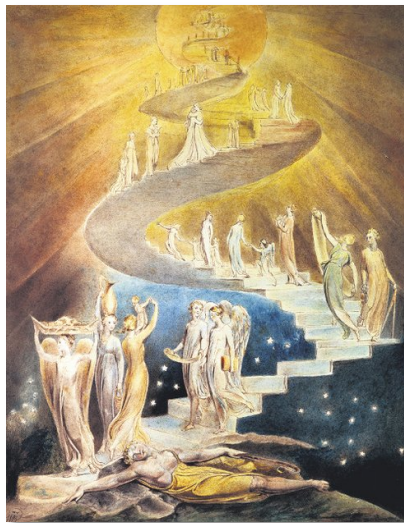
4. Be sure you have a way to record the dream close by: a notebook and pen, a tape recorder.
5. If you get a dream, don't move for a while after you wake up. Remember as much as you can. Often, we remember our dreams backward, and can trace the parts from the ending to the earlier parts.
6. Write the dream down, as accurately as possible.
7. Sometimes the meaning of the dream isn't as clear as one might wish. (In Peter's dream, it was quite a leap from the images on the blanket to his conclusion.)

Many of the great people in the Bible had very important guidance dreams, including Abraham, Jacob and his ladder, Esther, Joseph, maybe Mary and her encounter with Gabriel, the Wise Men.

If night-time dreaming is new to you, give it a try anyway. Also, do not ignore the images and inspirations that come to you as you simply think of this wonderful community, where it is in its history, and what you can imagine might be ways that we are being called. In the Bible, the line between dreams, visions, and daydreams seems very fuzzy. Jung says they all come from the "same place."

Blessings and prayers to you as we all open to guidance in this important period of CCC's history.

Amen.



Jacob's Dream
William Blake