

# Jean Brown tells a story and weaves a call



## The second Sunday after the Epiphany

**January 16, 2022**

This morning, Jean Brown, who is a community member of the Dayspring Church, told the story of Sky Woman as recounted in the book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. She reminded us that stories help us find our place in the world, and how the scriptures function in that way. Asking what seeds we might be carrying in this season, she spoke of her own story about discovering the Church of the Saviour, where small groups deeply listened to one another, in the spirit of remaining open and deeply present to the places where they found one another.

Jean continued with a story out of her own life, in which she came from southwest Virginia, where she was serving a small Presbyterian church, to attend a Come and See event. For many years after that, she tried to get that church to learn the CofS way of evoking one another's gifts. Eventually, she left that place and, taking a leap of faith, fell—or jumped—to DC. Surrendering herself to the Spirit, she hoped to become part of the love made visible in the world. It is up to us, she said, to say “yes, I am yours, show me the way.”

After many different cycles of call, including spending time in the Discipleship Year program, working at Joseph's House, Wellspring and Potter's House, she came to Dayspring where she became part of the Permaculture project.—Planting seeds in what she calls the Ceremony Circle at Dayspring, she noticed the plants that might be called weeds, learning the Native American way of calling all plants kin. She prayed for what the earth might need from her, from us, what gift she might be asked to give, what gift the earth and plants might be giving to her. Trying to listen, she heard, “You can remove me and plant something else, but at least know my name.”

This shift in the way we view our relationship to the plants, to the soil, to all of it reminded her of words shared by Drew Lanham, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Master Teacher at Clemson University: social justice is inseparable from environmental justice. Just as Martin Luther King dreamed that we would one day see all human beings as beloved community, Jean dreams that we will come to see even the plant world, all of creation, as part of that beloved community. She asks, “How do we lean into caring for creation? How do we make that shift?”

Jean said that she is now in the middle of birthing a new call which she names as Earthen Hands Ministry. She continued, “We

are of the earth and the earth is in our hands. How we manifest this is still taking shape, and I ask for your prayers. We have seeds and soil at Dayspring. I'm imagining a community of seekers at Dayspring committed to creating a culture that embodies ecology at the heart of faith with opportunities to attend to the natural world, explore connections rooted in faith, and respond with acts of reciprocity. There are many possible forms for this to take, including worshipping on the land, being present with the wider web of life." Jean said that in the near future she plans to offer a vine basket workshop, learning about plants, harvesting them, and weaving a basket from them, seeing what gifts they have to offer. This plan is still in the making, in the living, in the speaking, so details will be forthcoming. In the season to come, she hopes to find Seekers leaning more into the earth and its gifts, finding ways to live into the future so that when our children's children are born, that this wonderful creation and its manifestation of God's gifts will be present to them.