

## **Pulpit duty-bound to challenge us**

In recent news, some of the words of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright have discomfited me very much, especially in light of his 34 years of community-transforming ministry in Chicago. Yet I remain grateful for the freedom of the pulpit to speak words that challenge us.

I remember the aphorism that one task of faithful preaching (and may I say, truthful politics) is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Familiar with that quotation, a parishioner once said to me after a sermon, "I'm sorry, pastor, but today you only comforted the comfortable."

The Hebrew prophets and Jesus made some of their own people uncomfortable in their day as they confronted them with their failure to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (*Micah* 6:8). Jesus spoke of such people harshly as "whitewashed tombs ... full of the bones of the dead ... full of hypocrisy" (*Matthew* 23:27-28).

Discomforting words are in order until we effect the comfort of "liberty and justice for all" with preaching and politics that call us to that task.

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