

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Vice President, American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

Snippets of Hope

Hope. The Apostle Paul says in his famous treatise on Love, that *faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is Love.* (1 Corinthians 13:13) But it is love that gives us Hope and it seems to me that without Hope people wither away and die. Without Hope there is no reason to live another day. Without Hope for a better tomorrow what is the point of slogging through today?

Joan Chittister, in her book *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, sees that when Hope exists it is *only as some kind of green shoot in the midst of struggle.* She calls struggle the *seedbed of Hope*, and calls Hope *a gift of life.* (p. ix)

I see this is true in my own life. It is Hope what allows me to rejoice in the goodness of God even as I struggle with my own daily trials. It is Hope that allows me to believe in a God who is *in control* no matter what it looks like from my own front door, or on the front page of a national newspaper. It is Hope that causes me to see the one ray of sunshine in an otherwise gloomy day.

Hope is the green shoot that refuses to be hindered by the cement surrounding a crack in the pavement. Hope is that rose bush that has never bloomed - that I try to dig out and eradicate year after year - yet reappears each spring green and strong, hopeful that *this year she can produce a single fragrant red rose!* *We are afflicted in every way,*



Paul says, *but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal flesh.* (2 Corinthians 4:8-12)

Hope. Hal Borland says, *No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn.* Even in the darkest night, the light of the moon may eventually appear or a lone star

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Hope. Hal Borland says, *No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn.* Even in the darkest night, the light of the moon may eventually appear or a lone star

makes its way between the clouds. And even if the night stays dark and bitter, the sun eventually rises to greet a new day!

Hope. The Psalmist shares his Hope: *In you, O Lord I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel. For you, O Lord, are my Hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.*" (Psalm 71:1-5)

My Hope is in God. The God who sent John to prepare the way for Christ Jesus; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of Ishmael and Esau; the God of Moses and David. My hope is in God. God is my rock, my refuge, my fortress. It is in *God's* righteousness and sovereignty that I put my Hope and my trust. My hope is in God. My Hope is in God *in control*, because I know that I am not.

For in Hope we are saved. Now Hope that is seen is not Hope, for who Hopes for what is seen? But if we Hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness...that very Spirit intercedes with sighs to deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints, according to the will of God. (Romans 8:24-27)

Hope affirms and justifies. *We do not lose heart, for although our outer nature is being destroyed our inner nature is being renewed day by day.* (2 Cor. 4:16). *My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness...therefore I am content with my weaknesses...for whenever I am weak then I am strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Struggle...*the seedbed of Hope.* Hope...*a gift of life.* (Chittister, p. ix)

Praise the Lord, praise God, Hope in the Lord. May the God of all Hope and encouragement fill you with joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in Hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Amen.

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Reference: Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, paperback edition, 2005.

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