

## Imagine the Possibilities!

**W**e love new beginnings. Our energy and expectations swell with another chance for peace at home or far away, the arrival of new pastors, the start of an invitational and outward reaching ministry, or when we observe generous response to human suffering. Recall the delightful sense of renewed possibilities that can flow when we are prayerfully attentive to God's leading. Take note of how folks are animated by events where acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and triumphs are celebrated.

Our aspirations are reawakened by encounters with the Holy and we're encouraged by small openings in what seemed like intractable walls of resistance. Sometimes we're nearly bursting with renewed fervor and vitality. Imagine the possibilities! What if? Maybe this time . . .

It's amazing really, given the ever-present hope-killers that abound! No need to recite that long list of culprits. We are too familiar with the disease, dysfunction, desperation, and deception that crop up and leave us dispirited.

Given the perverse and stubborn forces that often seem to prevail, what is the source of our partiality for hope? Is it instinctive self-protection that thankfully numbs us so that we'll have the fortitude to face another day? Perhaps what we're sensing is a giddy optimism that only masquerades as hope. Could our recurring hopefulness be a conditioned response that does us more harm than good?

If the hope we have in mind relies on our own intellect, imagination, and strength of will, we should rightfully be wary. Undoubtedly there are many opportunities for trivializing and domesticating hope. But moments and hints of clear vision, intense expectation, and warmed hearts are a foretaste of what it's like when we feel, see, and affirm the work of God in and around us. The assurance and exhilaration we call hope is pure gift. Not a product of determination and hard work, hope comes when we receive with profound joy the grace God provides.

We may recite the claim by habit with the words hardly tracking in our consciousness, but God's promises prevail even when we are inattentive. "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts..." (Rom. 5:5).

Our hope is in Jesus Christ. We love new beginnings.

What is  
the source  
of our  
partiality  
for hope?



*Neil M. Alexander*  
President and Publisher  
The United Methodist Publishing House