

Ordinary Faithfulness

Patricia Farris

Driving out to the Claremont School of Theology to teach a class in “The Practice of Ministry,” I meet a room full of amazing third-year MDiv students. Their passion, their questions, their impatience, their love of the church and its ministry give me hope for the future of the church.

The persistent “ordinary faithfulness” of God’s people gives me hope...a new Young Adult group bursting with energy and dreams for the congregation...parents bringing their infant children for baptism...couples choosing Christian marriage and another celebrating a 50th anniversary renewal of vows...people stepping up to the work of leadership in the congregation...an experience in Companions in Christ leading to a midwife’s decision to dedicate a year of her life as a volunteer in Liberia with Doctors Without Borders...a new covenant partner relationship with the Methodist Church in the Iware District of Nigeria...children eagerly coming forward each week for the Children’s Message, bringing their offering to put in the usher’s basket.

The students at the art college where my husband teaches give me hope—their energy, creativity, nonconformity, their tattoos and wildly-dyed hair, their passionate pursuit of their art and of their vocation...

The courageous witness and testimony of faithful brothers and sisters among us, insisting on opening God’s church to the fullness of human experience and love. Prophets among us as we journey forward in a season of repression and fear. Their incarnate dedication is for me a sign of hope.

The Advent scripture readings, full of warning, judgment and promise give me hope for our nation and this world. The promise of covenant maintained, God’s insistence on a new heaven and a new earth marked by justice and peace and the restoration of all creation. God’s Word in these times of war and suffering is the wellspring of our hope. Abiding in steadfast hope through the encouragement of scripture, as Paul says.

The beckoning promise of Easter. But first, unflinching honesty. Suffering and defeat and betrayal acknowledged and confronted. The capacity of humans to grievously wound one another and the creation. Death in the very nature of creation itself. Yet always, life. Always life. The stone rolled away again and again and again. The place of death emptied of its prize. Life restored in all its fullness and beauty and power. **The mystery and truth and power of our faith is the bedrock of our hope.**

Moonrise over a desert mountain, another generation of blue jays returning for another spring, the promise of poppy fields as far as the eyes can see in the California hills...these evidences of God’s creative will and power give me hope. □



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