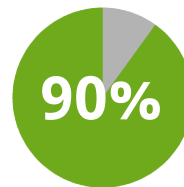


JOURNALS POSTED ON MARCH 16, 2018

Holding Onto Hope



MYLINDA BAITS



SUPPORT PLEDGED



“How do we get back to the struggle over the future? I think we have to hope, and hope in this sense is not a prize or a gift, but something you earn through study, through resisting the ease of despair, and through digging tunnels, cutting windows, opening doors, or finding the people who do these things. They exist.” -Rebecca Solnit in Hope in the Dark, Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities

***“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings,
because we know that suffering produces perseverance;***

perseverance, character; and character, hope.

And hope does not put us to shame,

because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit,

who has been given to us.”

Romans 5:3-5

I am now three months into my new role as Global Consultant for Training Through Restorative Arts. Since January, I have had the privilege of preaching at FBC McMinnville, OR and have led or co-facilitated arts-based, trauma informed, and hope infused trainings in Texas, Thailand, and Pennsylvania. I have said good-bye to my father in law, Dwight Baits, gathering with family in San Diego to honor his life. I both celebrated and stood in silent solidarity with my friend Joan Friesen and her sisters as they learned of their mother’s death during Joan’s birthday dinner in New York City. Through these occasions, I have seen, heard and felt God’s Spirit of hope and healing poured into my heart. The stories told, the struggles shared, and the time spent with God’s beloved, have inspired and restored my spirit even in the midst of difficulty.

One particular story I treasure is from Boaz, a peacemaking pastor from Kenya. I had heard about Boaz’s ministry from my colleague Dan Buttry, but was thrilled to meet him face to face in March at our International Ministries Colloquium for Conflict Transformation in Bangkok. As the quote above from Rebecca Solnit describes, Boaz is one who has dug through tunnels, cut windows and opened doors to find hope. As we walked through a beautiful park in downtown Bangkok, Boaz recalled his childhood. As he did, I was in awe of his resilience and capacity to see God’s hand on his life. Forced to live on the street because of a dispute over his legitimacy after his father’s death when he was 10, Boaz survived through sacrifice, street savvy and significant spiritual and social support. You can read more about his amazing story at <http://www.danbuttry.com/christianity/boaz-keibarak/>. What touched me most was when I asked him to translate and then lead our colloquium group in singing When I breathe in, I breathe in peace, When I breathe out, I breathe out love in Swahili. His song of hope still sings in my soul.

Not everyone exposed to trauma becomes traumatized. Some, like Boaz, have an inner firewall of resilience. Resiliency can be defined as the ability to navigate stress and adversity in a healthy way or as one of my wise friends, Neshia, says, “Even when things are hard and

our world seems to be falling apart, resiliency is when we can acknowledge and choose how to practice joy and community in the midst of the pain.”

When I was teaching a group of MDiv students in a small Karen village on the Thai-Myanmar border, I met Eti MaTu, a brilliant, energetic and aspiring community leader. During class, he often quoted philosophers, used complex metaphors to illustrate his point of view, and lead the class both with humor and creativity. As a child, he suffered advanced kidney disease and lives with just one kidney now. On the day before he was baptized, he lost everything he owned, except for the pants he was wearing, in a fire at the Bible School at Mae La refugee camp, where his Buddhist parents sent him when he was 11. He doesn't blame anyone, doesn't see himself as a victim, and accepts that the horrific experiences shaped him — as if the pain gave him a greater purpose. To summarize he said, “If I didn't go through what I went through, I wouldn't be the person I am today.”

He attributes his ability to communicate flawlessly in English to YouTube videos and the time he spent giving tours of the Mae La camp to the many visitors from NGOs and foreign aid groups working there. The camp has housed over 40,000 displaced tribal members fleeing violence in Burma, now Myanmar. He describes himself as extremely curious and capable. He knows in his bones that he is called to lead in some way to make a difference for his Karen community. He is also struggling with a decision to continue with his studies or to give them up and work on the farm to raise money so that his younger brother who is healthier can go to school. He is torn, because he feels like he hasn't contributed enough to the family budget, but if he gives up his studies he may never be able to finish them. He is willing to sacrifice his education for the well-being of his brother. I honored his commitment and his concern while also offering an encouragement to see his complete education as a way to help his family even more in the long run. Whatever he decides, I trust God will use it for good as I cling to the following promise for him:

*“Know also that wisdom is like honey for you:
If you find it, there is a future hope for you,
and your hope will not be cut off.” Proverbs 24:14*

Yael Danieli, who researches how trauma is passed down through generations, defines resilience as the capacity to believe that some better future might exist, even when no other possibilities are apparent. “I might be helpless, but I don't have to be hopeless because there might be someone else who can help me.” We are blessed to be part of the resilient community that helps each other to have hope!

As I look towards the next few months in ministry, please pray for:

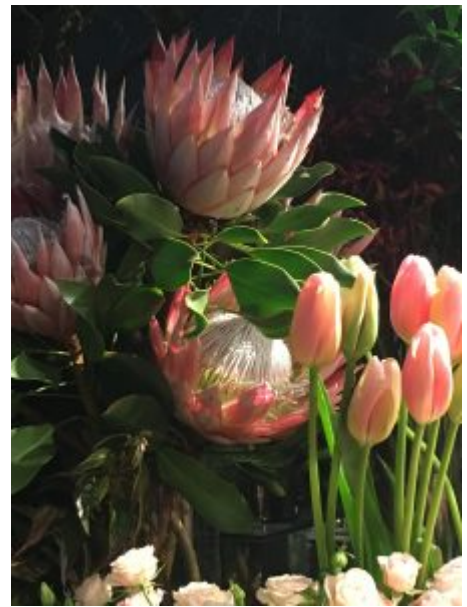
*Abundant generosity and cultural appreciation through our Chinese Feast and Festival Fundraiser on March 24, 2018

*Wisdom and creativity as I co-facilitate in Cuba with IM colleagues and Cuban partners from April 10-19, 2018

*First Aid Arts Training plans and participants in Nairobi, Kenya and preaching in Boaz's community May 4-15, 2018

Holding onto HOPE,

My linda



Beauty Heals