

## Hudson Church Epistle

### Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Greetings,

Today, I am sharing with you a reflection posted on the WI Annual Conference by Rev. Forrest Wells, Southeast District Superintendent. If you would like more information about the conference staff or to read future reflections go to [www.wisconsinumc.org](http://www.wisconsinumc.org). Kathy OBS.

## Hope

By Rev. Forrest Wells

*“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance: and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope: and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:1-5*

Yesterday while driving to a parking lot worship, I listened to the first of a three-part NPR series on “Hope.” The host described how her initial reaction was incredulous that such a topic could take three one-hour programs to unpack. After all, is not hope some wishful thinking reserved for Hallmark greeting cards? Is not hope just a frivolous word used during times of personal and societal trauma? However, she came to understand that hope was more than a superficial, Pollyanna feeling. At its depths, hope is what propels humanity through extraordinarily tough times to new heights.

Hope appears in the most desperate of times. Jesus was born into a world of crisis both external and internal. Corrupt officials from within the Judean community served as puppets for the Roman empire. Herod and sons were known for their brutality and corruption in addition to architectural genius. Jesus, the one who is also called “Immanuel, God With Us” had to flee such jealous hatred. There is a poem entitled, “Hope is a woman who has lost her fear.” In like manner hope blossomed in the life of Jesus when he enters public ministry exactly when John the Baptist is arrested and beheaded. Both Jesus and John the Baptizer exhibited a depth of hope that went far

beyond the outward circumstance of their lives. Crisis pushes us to “keep on hanging on” which in turn deepens our character and hope becomes the fruit.

I believe that the key to hope is relationship. It is when we become isolated and separated from community that despair can seep into the depths of our soul. When we are sad, the community can lift us up; when broken, our wounds internal and external are soothed, when grieving we are comforted. It is community that holds us up in times of trouble and helps us anticipate the unseen buds of new hope. This community of which I speak is the living Church of Jesus Christ who is the author and perfecter of our faith and hope.

Amid the turmoil of the day, “Jesus came proclaiming the Good News of God, saying, the Kingdom of God has come near; turn around and believe the Good News” (Mark 1:14-15). We are called not to be people of hope and confidence because we participate in the life and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to live boldly for and with God. We are called to live together as a community of Hope and to offer the Good News of God’s presence to the world. Let us look out for one another, that we may lift each other up and not give way to despair.

**Ever Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus into the world at just the right time to demonstrate for all of time your love for the world. Enable us to follow you with hope and in turn, make a positive difference in this world because of our love for you. Amen**