

Mission Moment from Kate and David, ELCA Missionaries

Confident Hope

Last week I read this quote from ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson and it sparked a reflection on how hope is made manifest through the lives of others:

“we gather for this assembly in confident hope, for God has neither abandoned God's people nor forsaken God's creation.”

Bishop Hanson was speaking to Lutherans who had gathered from dozens of countries for the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany. He placed these words in the context of the glaring injustices around the world and the struggles our churches are facing. For me, these words also brought to mind the face of Eduardo, a young man I had visited the week before with a delegation from the Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. Eduardo is Church Council President of Magdalena de Cao Lutheran Church near Trujillo along the northern coast of Peru. When we visited him in his home, Eduardo spoke to us from his bed, flat on his back, mostly covered by a blanket. Eduardo was in a terrible bus accident in November 2008 that left 26 people dead and many others seriously injured. As a school teacher that was trained and taught in towns at some distance from his home, it was a trip he had made many times. He is now a paraplegic and is slowly regaining the use of his arms.

But this is not Eduardo's whole story, not by a long shot. During the visit we witnessed a conversation between the congregation's pastor and Eduardo that brought the words “confident hope” to life. Pastor Marcus was talking about the plans for a small preschool the congregation operates for local children and what Eduardo's role would be in directing this ministry. They would like to make the school's novel Montessori (www.montessori.edu) method available to more children at higher grade levels. Pastor Marcus wasn't talking about the future, rather about the here and now, something that seemed hard for me to believe given Eduardo's circumstances. As I translated this conversation into English, I would turn my eyes back and forth between Marcus's and Eduardo's faces and their expressions made it clear to me that both believed that Eduardo's life will not be confined to that bed. We were told before meeting Eduardo that progress has been slow to come and some days he doesn't get out of the bed. Depression lurks nearby, as might be expected. But the radiance of Eduardo's smile, the self-assured gaze that firmly held our own, and the energy of his presence transmitted a different story.

I am still not sure how Eduardo will some day soon direct that school, but in the faith we share I find confident hope. It is the hope that springs forth in the midst of paradox we encounter in Christ – our Savior – on the cross -- that symbol of pain, suffering and ultimately, death. Paul writes,

“...and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” Romans 5:5 (NRSV)

We live our lives hoping for and actively seeking something new, be it in our personal lives, our neighborhoods and faith communities, or our world. Christian hope asks us to believe in what we cannot necessarily see or even imagine. God does not disappoint because through people like Eduardo who are God's signs of hope, the flame of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is lit anew.



Our family with five Young Adult in Global Mission Volunteers atop the “window” mountain during the February 2010 retreat. (The wind made our hair stand up; we have not started our own punk rock band!)

Family Update

Here at the mid-point of 2010 we find ourselves in the middle of what has turned out to be a pretty cold Argentine winter. We almost hit 32 degrees F a few weeks ago! Kids are back to school today after two weeks off for their July Winter Break. Last Friday we left Kate's parents at the airport after a terrific visit. We are also saying sad good-byes to our group of 2009-2010 YAGM volunteers (pictured left). Please keep them in your prayers as they return to their families in the United States. They all are a blessing for our church. We will miss them here! Many of them have become like big brothers and sisters to our kids.

Please continue to write to us and thank you for thinking of ways to keep our ministry before your communities and congregations. Your faithful financial support is greatly appreciated, as well as the cards, t-shirts, stuffed animals, books and much more that you creatively get into our hands — one way or another. Blessings to all of you!

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