

Holding to Hope—A Pastoral Reflection for Unity Lutheran, Hickory  
Pastor Russell Makant  
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The preacher in the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews wrote: “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23). Likely the encouragement was written to early Christians in Jerusalem during a time of persecution. We at St. Luke’s Lutheran are not facing persecution. (Some Christians in the world do—pray for them.) Nevertheless, this admonition from Hebrews speaks in these wavy times.

I read this verse with the Congregational Council as we met, and told them that I felt like I was walking a tightrope—hold fast without wavering—yeah, right! It is human to ponder all that is going on, where it will lead, where it will leave us, others, the world. What is God up to? Where is God in all this? (WIGIAT? is a beloved seminary professor’s “famous” rendering.)

God is faithful. That is the second part of the Hebrews preacher’s sentence. “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope...for he [God]...is faithful.” In the midst of all this some will struggle, maybe waver, wonder, wander. There is a huge difference between any suggestion that God has sent this (like a contest with Pharaoh in Exodus) and the promise that God is with us in it, through it, and beyond. Joseph was **not** threatened with death at the hands of his brothers, thrown into the well, and then sold into slavery by the will of God. But God turns the horror to God’s good. (The Hebrew is *chashav* – more than the English “intend” – it includes reckon, think, even the idea of weave—see Joseph’s story in Genesis, especially chapter 50.)

“Let us holdfast to the confession of hope...” This is, in part, the work of the Holy Spirit, who as Martin Luther said, “keeps us in the faith” (Small Catechism). We certainly have agency, responsibility—so one way to “holdfast” is deliberately thinking about our faith, our confession of the hope in us—especially in trying and wavering times. Hope is an eschatological pointer. Eschatology is the area of theology that deals with final destiny, end time events. Hope points us like a sign-post along the highway toward the promises of God, toward the good end of God: salvation, new creation, grace, resurrection life, amazing-unending-agape-love. The hope toward which we are pointed, the hope to which we cling, is not based on our feelings, our buckling down on belief—but on the promise of the ONE who is faithful and present, now and always.

Perhaps one way to holdfast is to look for a bit of beauty every day. The smile of children, the stories of old friends and family. The daffodils blooming on a foggy morning...

God’s Grace, God’s Peace to you all.

