

**Hymn of Promise:** For nearly two years we have lived and worked in the fourth most corrupt nation in *the world* according to recent publicity. Since the storms of last year, only 24 million dollars of a promised 2.6 billion has been received by the government of Haiti. Promises and payments have stalled due to issues of corruption, accountability and mismanagement.

Haitian history is rife with murder, mayhem and corruption. Biblical interpretation and ethic is based on cultural standards, including voodoo and a survivalist mentality. Pockets of technology are developing in selected areas with commercial progress, yet, millions are hungry, undereducated, lack health care and safe water, and have no means of support for old, women and children. Do we continue to hope for justice, equity and financial integrity?

Yesterday, I celebrated Easter in a traditional way and experienced once again a "faith whammy" of both paradox and epiphany. The song "Hymn of Promise" closed worship and once again tripped my theological "switch"

Seven years ago, I was serving a two point charge in rural Kansas, and developing a personal "theological credo" in the two traditional faith communities. My understanding was often conflicted between my bent for early spirituality and contemporary interpretations of scriptures.

During a worship planning meeting on Sunday afternoon, April 28<sup>th</sup>, a phone call sent me and the parents of an eight year old to the emergency room at the County hospital. She had been injured in a horseback riding incident and I listened as they told the parents the child had died shortly after sustaining a significant head injury.

The personal impact guided my ministry to the family and community. I elected to "preside" at the funeral allowing other clergy to provide words of faith and wisdom. Personally, I was wrestling with many voices exclaiming and questioning "why God called, allowed, needed, this exceptional child" for God's Kingdom.

I listened to time honored words of comfort offered from scripture yet was discomforted by their emptiness in the face of such devastating loss. I could not worship any God who "willed" such pain. Compelled to speak to the school children listening for some words they could understand, I talked of the "practical laws of nature" and the "promise of God to always save the inherent 'goodness' of all created things and beings. Then we sang, "Hymn of Promise" which speaks of visible, practical things; the paradox of life and death; and, the mysterious endings that "only God can see."

Yesterday, "Hymn of Promise" reminded me of the "hope" in my theology. My faith is based on the visible and practical laws of nature and the biblical promise of a God that saves the goodness of all created things. This "truth" is revealed in the mystery of the cross and empty tomb, that only God understands. I will forever sing that hymn with a smile on my face and tears in my heart. I'll return to La Gonave, because of a promise to be fulfilled in God's time and understanding.

*Shirley, April 13, 2009, Kansas, packing for sud la gonave.*