

While the Wind Blows: Andrea Bocelli sings Christmas songs, the moon is full and a cold wind blows. Our home is "restored" following a week and a half of toddlers, teens and folks. I feel the mending of my soul, like the mariners mend sails on la gonave. Sitting on the sail, they chant quietly and put pieces in place; new material stitched into old and worn; restored.

The first week of Advent focuses on hope; hope of peace and restoration in a dark time. Reading Jeremiah is a journey from God's retribution, to words of consolation, then more threats of violence. Is this an analogy of the world we know? We suffer consequences of choices; hear words of consolation and promise, then discover the nature of God to redirect violence.

Two years ago we thought it simply a mechanical issue to fix a well at Dent Grien, and a negotiation issue, to drill a well where there had never been ground water on west la gonave. There are still no wells either place as challenges are complicated and not negotiated away. Hopeless? I hope not.

Two years ago most residents of Southwest la gonave were foraging for meager daily bread as they had for years. Saturday, Louis reported the fishing group is buying over 400 lbs of fish a week and now need a 15 horse motor to take the bigger boat to Petit Guave. That is hopeful.

The goat park is secured with fence, and ready for goats. Water will be hauled until a well (oh my) can be drilled. While fencing in Haiti, Olathe Grace UMC was selling goats and Haitian Prayer Angel's to finance the new Association of Peasants (zone 6) la gonave. Small groups are forming in anticipation of receiving small, strong goats and garden supplies. Anticipation is good.

Anxious phone calls seek reassurance that money is or will be in the account to purchase livestock and equipment. Hearing words of promise, plans are developing and rules written while the wind blows. It is hard to console those who have never enjoyed peace of mind, or success by their own efforts. They want so hard to believe in a better tomorrow, but need proof "the enemy" of poverty is on God's hit list.

The prophet offered words of consolation but hope was linked to proof. Peace was linked to the consequences of willing compromise and conciliatory acts. Hope is explained in a metaphor of a hungry child walking into the house and knowing he will eat because of the aroma of cooking cinnamon apples.

What hope do we have for southwest la gonave, and the rest of the hungry world? What hope do we have for our own broken bodies, relationships and declarations of more war? What proof can we offer, seek or see?

I hope this year for a "rung up" on the ladder toward alleviation of hunger and poverty on south la gonave. I hope for restoration of relationships in family, nation and world, and the kind of peace that begins in chaos. Hope is linked to proof. What can we offer as consolation while the wind blows?

Pastor Shirley, 1st Advent 2009. www.centralumclawrence.org