

Wide Margins: Two-thirds through Karen Armstrong's book, "The History of God" is like reading Merke's Medical Manual. Every disease I looked up in Merke's, "I had" for at least a day, and every few pages of Armstrong's book I fill the margins with revisions of my credo!

Today was the last full day of the La Gonave Circuit Convention like United Methodists call Annual Conference. Held in Source of Philippe every year, more than 200 pastors, church officials and a large number of young candidates for membership gather for three days of meetings, interviews, preaching and retreat.

I remind you, all cooking is done outdoors, there are cots for about 30 of the two hundred plus, one latrine I share, and my shower for the "the big cahonas" only. Lighting is limited and there is no refrigeration .

The church seats over 200 on straight back benches (another reason for SaP) and for a week people cut back overgrowth and clean tons of Kabrit poop from every porch, pathway and flat spot. It is a dress up affair.

The eye of whatever today's cyclone was called, rearranged everything from planned leadership to where food could be cooked and served, and cooled things down a bit. Tonight I wandered to church to exercise my limited Kreyòl. Joe is still in Port a Prince with hearing aids that rebel at electric guitars, 8 ft speakers and microphones that encourage hogs to attend worship.

People packed in, "dressed up" with women's head coverings of baseball caps, cowboy hats and American flag bandanas. Spike heels, flip flops and red and black shower shoes started clean before the muddy uphill climb. Wedged in, all dance and clap and lift hands to God. They sing lustily, loud and long!

The sermon drew amen's from me and I only understood about every third word! I think he said the "the church was as sic as the paralyzed man", and could just kusè, (lay down) or get healed and live with, like, or because of, trusting in Jesi Krist . The power was in the way he said it.

I would wish you all the prayer experience. With heat rising from wedged in bodies, the prayer leader begins rapidly and immediately a sea of voices join, swelling and blending. Sound I sense as millions of colored spikes on an audio screen or waves of a pounding surf. I am too overwhelmed to pray as I am lifted and carried on the wave of prayer, wordless and thoughtless.

Thoughtless may be the key to prayer that is so unlike my intellectualized image of God. As I listen and realize the voice they raise "is" God within, and God, different from the one I have known and experienced. No less, God.

Thanks to Karen Armstrong for wide margins.

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Shirley, La Gonave, Aug 16, 2008