

Hope in a world with so many ups and downs and turmoil and confrontation and upset and illness and loss, and ... the list goes on. It has been hard to keep it forefront in our mind. It is there: in the stillness of a star-filled sky, in the gentle breeze on our faces, the sweet song of the songbirds, as we sit quietly and listen.

The skeptic voice will say no way, there is too much confrontation and fighting, verbally and physically.

Several years ago, I remember the angst many were feeling as the possibility of war loomed, hope was gone of a peaceful settlement. But church gatherings started to grow, and it felt that hope became stronger for peace, or at least a willingness to get along with one another, started to become reality. When we turn to our Creator, life can become more meaningful, more hope filled for the future.

This past year has been filled with many meetings (by zoom of course). In three days, I joined four zoom meetings for the church, not to mention those at work. Although I enjoyed meeting many new people via zoom, it is not the same as that personal feeling of being in the same space face-to-face and having a conversation one-on one. I had "hoped" to be able to meet in their space/church to connect the Region with the communities of faith. Thanks to our friend COVID and the ups and downs of restrictions being on again, off again, that wasn't possible. People of all ages are tired of joining zoom for meetings and for worship. But we have been so blessed to be able to continue with the work of the church, with worship and seeing/joining our faith communities, with our careers, using zoom or Microsoft Teams. Some communities held coffee hour following services via zoom but that was also a blessing because it kept the feeling of belonging to the community alive. There are stories of younger people with used computers or iPads that gave them to their older relatives along with a lesson on how to join the on-line services. People checked on their neighbors regularly to see how they were doing and if they needed anything.

There is always hope! We can see it if we look around us in the stillness with an open mind and let it wash over us like a gentle breeze from angel wings. I love watching eagles soar overhead and when I am down, I think of the verse from Isaiah 40:31: *"but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."*

With hope and trust in the Lord, we will get through all that life throws at us. We will soar like eagles and carry on in faith, in community and in hope. Amen.

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