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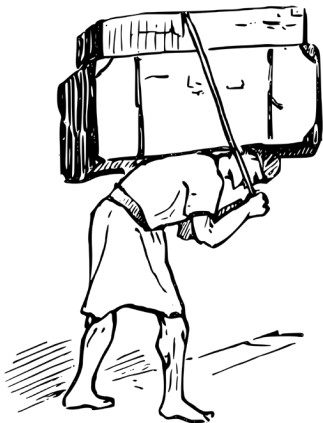
Impaired Hopefulness

Eileen Stanzione

Why is it so hard to write about something that gives me hope?

Let me count the ways...

Let's see, there is a pandemic, which is killing thousands of people a day; we have a President who is cruel and incompetent; we have Black people being disproportionately incarcerated and killed by police; we have an unemployment rate that is much higher than it has been for a very long time; we



have small businesses closing at a very rapid rate; we have crippling income inequality in our country; and sadly, our planet is being warmed and destroyed by us!!

I could go on but I won't. I think you get the idea. And, you got the idea long before you

read it here. We are all despairing to a certain extent. It is hard to imagine a future where things will be even somewhat positive.

In recent times, it felt disingenuous and/or mindless to be optimistic. Trying to be hopeful feels inauthentic.

The American Psychological Association (APA) says that hope is having an expectation that something good will happen or that something bad won't happen. The APA also says that an optimist is someone who "anticipates positive outcomes, whether serendipitously or through perseverance and effort, and who [is] confident of attaining desired goals." I have always been optimistic. I had a client once who said to me in a damning kind of way, "You always think things will be alright," as if it were a curse to be endured. Actually, for her it may have been....

Sadly, in recent weeks, I have been struggling. It feels as if someone put a cloak over my head and I have a heavy weight on my shoulders. I have had a blow to my psyche. An MRI revealed that I have moderate to serious back problems that force me to face my limitations and to do exercises on a daily basis and to go to physical therapy multiple times each week. I am forced to acknowledge I am

aging and have less time to live. And, I am upset that the coronavirus is robbing me of quality time during my remaining time with you and all those I respect and love. There are other issues as well, but my new limitations stunned and unsettled me.

So, perhaps what will be helpful and hopeful is to write about how I am coping with personal issues as well as the state of the country and world.

For one, I have you! My Quaker community and my friends in the broader community have brought me support, friendship, ideas, and endless resources to read and research, and most importantly, love. Secondly, I have my family. My family means the world to me and my grandchildren ease my



soul. How can I not feel hope when I look into the face of one of my grandkids and see the delight and wonder over a silly joke or an ugly bug? How

can I not feel hope when my children have chosen professions where their primary goals are to be helpful? How can I not feel hopeful when I have been part of hours-long conversations on the meaning of love?

In recent months, I have been enamored with the song, “All Will Be Well,” by Meg Barnhouse. In it a woman is talking to Julian of Norwich. In the verses, the woman is pleading with Julian to recognize the loneliness, sorrow, pain, hunger, disease and cruelty in life. Julian responds by saying, yes, these things are real and “have brought me to my knees.” She, also, says,

“Baby Girl, do you not know about tenderness? ... about friends? ...about Spirit?...Do you not know about love...that love never ends?”



That’s what I am left with today and always...that love never ends. We are all in this together. And, that Spirit is our constant companion—if we choose to know it, to feel it, to witness it. As God is *my* witness, we are never alone.

Hope is to Have Faith in Something

Dave Zeller

South Mountain Fellowship

The hope I’ve experienced after several years in prison came in the form of Quaker meeting and all the people from PFM who expressed their care and love for me, their continued support and interest in me. One person who’s showed more support and care as a true friend is Susannah and without her and the rest of you, well, my schizophrenia has not helped me much with my adjustment to prison. However, Susannah and the others from PFM have helped me to regain my hope. I try to read the Bible and every day I read “Our Daily Bread” verses. This helps keep my hope alive.



“In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, there’s something stronger, something better pushing right back.” Albert Camus, 1953 (my birth year).

Everyone clings to hope at some time or another. Keeps us moving forward. Hope is to have faith in something, anything one wants.

Sometimes the voices in my head can be self-destructive, but I have hope within myself, to tell myself not to act on the voices I hear. Wait until my thoughts become more sensible and less self-destructive. I wait until my real common sense has time to kick in and then hope takes hold of me.

I think the country is living in hope that we will all get through this COVID-19 pandemic and things will return to normal. So let’s keep the hope and faith.

Work, love, courage, and hope
Give me strength and help me cope.

From Ann Franke’s *Diary of a Young Girl*
Shared by Jean Pfefferkorn

Recycled Hope

Jim Rose

Recently Susannah purchased a new bottle of shampoo. Not an earthshaking event. But I considered the message on the bottle: “Bottle is made from 50% recycled hope.” A message like that gives one pause.

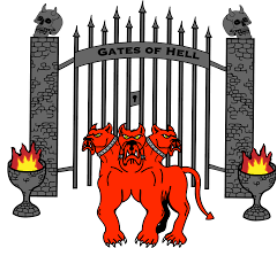


I begin to appreciate the notion of “recycled hope.” Indeed, at my age, there are a good many things that are (or should be) recycled. I’ve used many ideas before, and some seem to crop up, unbidden, at the strangest times. And it seems that hope is one of those.

I have hoped for world peace (or as the bumper sticker says “Whirled Peas.”) More recently I have hoped that a reasonable man might occupy the White House. I have hoped for good health, for good fortune, and for good friends. And except for the whirled peas, many of my hopes have come to pass.

There are those who argue that hope is a dangerous thing, that it is delusional, as in “who are you kidding?” Alternatively, with Emily Dickenson, there are those who claim that hope is a thing with feathers. This time I’m siding with the feathers. Apparently,

there is a sign mounted over the gates of hell with the message, “Abandon all hope ye who enter here.”



Beyond those gates there is no hope. But on this side, hope is the force that keeps us alive, that keeps us from despair, that

keeps us expecting something around the next corner.

It is hope that underlies our Quaker testimonies. We have a testimony of Equality, but we do not live in an age of equality. To me what that testimony implies is that I hope for such an age (and I hope that my actions will bring that about). We have a testimony of Peace, which for me is a compass that points in that direction, and that compass is clothed in hope.



Underlying each of our testimonies is the implied hope that they will become more than wishes, that they will become real. And paired with each of

those hopes are (hopefully) actions. We are given an inkling of the truth, a vision of a just society, an intuitive understanding of what is right. But we are given more. We are given the ability to do our part, to bring those hopes closer to reality. As the adage goes, our life is a gift of God; what we do with that life is our gift to God.

This kind of speculation naturally, for me, brings up the question: What other emotions, what other ideas in one's life can

be recycled? How about 50% recycled joy? Or, since we have been studying forgiveness, 50% recycled anger? Indeed, anger is something that feeds on itself, that recurs autonomously over-and-over, that is tough to lay down; we recycle the anger whether we want to or not. I would rather recycle the joy, to have that recur in my life autonomously and give as much pleasure as before. Or at least 50%.



Which brings up the fundamental existential question: what is the other 50%?

Professional Hope

Darren (Tony) McCoy
South Mountain Fellowship

After 92 incarcerations and almost three decades of my life serving time, I've come to the painful realization that I've become a professional prisoner. This means that for years within these walls of degradation and despair that have broken many men, I've learned to survive.

I let the scars and tattoos narrate the memoirs of a lost soul trying to find his way back into a world in which he'll never fit. I've crossed thousands of days off in calendars as if they were badges of honor. Like the great Houdini, years have escaped me, and in the wave of a hand children have grown to adults, having children of their own. Time flies by even when you're not having fun.

I know of no sane or rational individual that would have traded places with me, and yet I have no regrets. Where I could focus on what I've missed or don't have, it's never been an issue for me because where I am has always been the norm. What I didn't have God has always provided or blessed



me with the intellect and initiative to acquire.

I've grown from my first sentence at the age of

18, barely being able to read, to being able to file legal motions for my peers, having 4 semesters of college under my belt while also becoming very adept at detecting scams and games. Albeit slow to evolve, I can proudly look in the mirror and recognize what I used to be and who I am today. I've learned lessons in humility, humanity, and human behavior that college can't teach, and I owe it all to God.

I've always been aware of the presence of the Lord in my life so I had no reason to hope because I knew. I am a true graduate of the school of hard knocks, under the strict rule of Murphy's law; yet even in the worst conditions, in the darkest of dungeons, I will prevail.

Perhaps my mantra sounds a little vain but I serve a powerful God. I should've died more times than I can count. I own nothing of value and I've never even been on the internet. Every day that God allows me to wake up, though, makes everything simply a "not yet."

In closing I guess I am more of a faith-based person than a hope type of guy. I do hope, however, that this time around I can find another profession, because I'm tired of being a prisoner!



Our weapons were drawn only from the armory of Truth; they were those of faith and hope and love.

Lucretia Mott, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 3, 1860

Considering "Hope"

Ramona Buck

A lot has been written about hope. One of the best known – and one of my favorites – is the Emily Dickinson poem that starts,

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops - at all –*



I particularly like her concept that hope never stops, no matter what.

There are many times when I have felt somewhat hopeless. I remember when I was worried about our son, Andrew, a few years ago. He had injured his knees due to over-exercising and he had to stay mostly in bed for about 10 months. I interrupted my worry one day with a prayer to God and tried to hand over the situation to God, with trust that in some way it would be resolved. I remember feeling a certain relief and a feeling of hope when I did that.

It seems that if we are hopeful, we may be more open to seeing possibilities than if we are totally turned inward in despair. I know that sometimes the answers to problems emerge over time as we try to be creative even though in the past there may have seemed to be no answer.



I know that when some friends of mine separated/divorced, they wanted their child to continue to have both parents very much in her life. This seemed impossible at first but then they focused on it and had hope that they could find a solution. They decided that the father would live in an apartment in the basement and the mother would continue to live in the upper part of the house and that they would each have

time in the kitchen/dining room area with their daughter. This wouldn't necessarily work for every family but it worked for them, and I think it was developed partly through their positive intention for their daughter and their hope and expectation to find an answer that would fill all their needs.

I think that we usually hope for a specific outcome. "I want to pass this test. I want to be chosen for this job. I want to be cured of this disease." And it may be that we can influence the outcome by our hopes and prayers. People have often felt that their prayers were answered, which is wonderful. But if the outcome doesn't turn out as we wish, it may be that we should also hope for strength and wisdom and the ability to manage no matter what the outcome. I do believe that we can learn and grow from every situation.

Let us never give up on hope, no matter how bad the situation seems.

In addition to defining hope in terms of desire, expectation, and fulfillment, most dictionaries provide a secondary, archaic definition based on faith. This older and much less common meaning is about trusting life, without the expectation of attaining particular outcomes any time soon. This type of hope has a quiet but unshakeable faith in whatever happens and in the human capacity to respond to it constructively. It is a positive, but not necessarily optimistic, attitude to life that does not depend on external conditions or circumstances.

I call this “intrinsic hope” because it comes from deep inside us. Václav Havel, former president of Czechoslovakia, said in Disturbing the Peace that hope “is a dimension of the soul, and it’s not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. . . . It is an orientation of the spirit, and orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.” To me, intrinsic hope is also that of God in everyone; the inner light; the quiet, still voice; and the experience of the Great Mystery.

Kate Davies, A Quaker Perspective on Hope
Friends Journal, September 1, 2018

Rainbow on My Back

Kent Allen Brewer

South Mountain Fellowship

I’ll begin this essay with a secret personal truth – I’m no stranger to the emptiness of a life devoid of hope. During such times my very existence seemed pointless and was in fact extremely painful. Many were the nights when I’d close my eyes and pray fervently not to awake in the morning. My tomorrows were bleak and promised only dark foreboding clouds.



But those yesterdays are gone and taking their place are tomorrows full of dreams,

desires, and wishes enough to last a lifetime.

The country music songwriter and singer Johnny Cash wrote and recorded a song entitled “Man in Black.” A line from the song goes, “Ah, I’d love to wear a rainbow everyday – and wear bright colors on my back.” A rainbow on his back. Surely Mr. Cash was a man of hope for the rainbow is a symbol of hope. Following in Mr. Cash’s footsteps, I too am a man of hope. In my book hope is 99% of the game of life. Without hope there is no music – no rhythm to our lives. There is no expectation of ever experiencing the magic and awesome wonders that await you and me on the other side of our personal rainbows.

When I choose hope I’m choosing the high road of life which is after all the easiest road to travel when heading towards my tomorrows.



So, dear precious wonderful reader, wear your rainbow on your back as you dream your dreams of a lifetime full of hope. Let others delight in your...

H...ighroad
O...ptimism
P...erseverance, and
E...nthusiasm!

Three Paradoxes of Hope

Ken Stockbridge

Hope is about the future, but we experience hope in the present moment. (If God's "kingdom" is now, hope is here, and realizing it is in our hands.)



Hope is most often focused on outcomes outside of us, but we experience hope inside of us. Hope's transforming power works on us inwardly.

Hope focuses on things we can't control. (We have no need for hope for things we do control.) But we are still the instruments of hope's fulfillment, which depends on our openness to being transformed.

Reimagined

with apologies to Miss Dickinson

Andrea Miotto

Emily Dickinson the humble magnificent said,

"Hope is the thing with feathers -"
and a few lines later,
"And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird"
And last line,
"It never asked a crumb of me."
And though she is my master
I must disagree.

Today we've been through storms so sore
Steep and apocalyptic
Plague, floods and fires

The dismembering, bone by bone,
of any structures that might have bent
toward justice
in despite of chattel slavery at dawn, Jim
Crow at lunch, Breonna Taylor at twilight.

Today we need a brawnier hope,
One willing to shed its skin

Hope coils in my stomach a snake,
Chill, muscular along all its gorgeous length,
Scaled with tough diamond dreams
Able to coil in a thousand shapes.
Hibernating when neglected,
it asks much: the heat of my anger and the
drum of my heart,
the light of my prayers and the stamina of
my body for the long hunt.



This reptile, cold-blooded, vulnerable,
responds to outside conditions.
It needs tending and surrounding with love
A choice I need to fetch up out of my
despair –
Go down into the basement
Stoke the furnace
And come up fighting.

Far in the Back...

Susannah Rose

*But not quite black –
There is always a light for me,
No matter how dark*

*I want it to be;
Far in the back
There glows a spark.*

I wrote these lines in the 10th grade, when I was about 14, slogging my way through a pretty miserable adolescence. I wrote them in an optional writer's diary that was read faithfully by my best-ever English teacher, Jeannette Noble. Someone was listening, and it helped me listen too, and see the spark that really was there and really was going to help me pull through.

There were a few moments in my life when suicide seemed the best way out of an intolerable depression, but the spark



refused to be extinguished – with essential help from friends who encouraged it. I called my friend Ami in one

of the darkest times: Ami, who was the very soul of resilience and competence and loving creativity. “People like you and me don’t commit suicide, Susan,” she said. Wow. You and me? Could anything in me possibly be like Ami? But I bought it. I’m still here.

In Samuel Beckett’s novel, *Murphy*, there is a recurring line: “I can’t go on. I’ll go on.” I don’t remember anything else about the novel.

Recently, I heard this theme again in a powerful poem by a young African American man, born in a female body, who titled the poem, “Trans is Against Nostalgia.” Here are the lines from Taylor Johnson that went straight to my heart. The “boat” in the poem is the container for his

soul, the right body he is creating to match the person he knows he was born to be, his way of navigating and moving forward in the world – all of these:

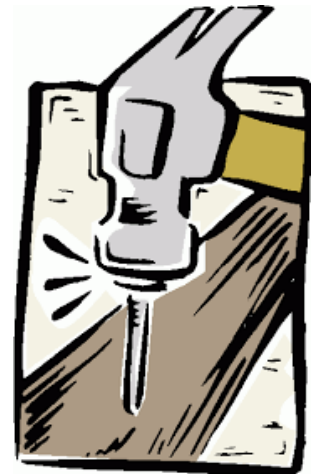
*...O New Day, I get to build the boat!
I tell myself to live again.
Somehow I made it out of being 15
and wanting to jump off the roof*

*of my attic room. Somehow I survived
my loneliness and throwing up in a jail cell.
O New Day, I’ve broken my own heart. The
boat
is still here, is fortified in my brokenness.*

*I’ve picked up the hammer every day
and forgiven myself. There is a new
language I’m learning by speaking it.
I’m a blind cartographer, I know the way*

*fearing the
distance....*

“I get to build the boat!” Even when we are afraid and can’t see the way, blind cartographers though we be, we *do* know the way because Spirit knows the way.



Our task is to pick up and use our hammers, to build the boats we need to carry us forward, and to honor the spark within us that keeps us going when our conscious minds feel most lost. “There is a new language I learn by speaking it” – or, as Roethke put it, “I learn by going where I have to go.”

I can’t go on. I’ll go on.

“May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.”

Nelson Mandela

The Lesson

Rob Schoeberlein

What gives me hope? Simply recognizing the humanity of others is a good start. Here's a story like I would like to share.

It was the summer of 1966. High passions aroused by the Civil Rights movement had made some people's temperaments match the hot weather outside. I did not understand much of it. As a five-year-old boy (soon to be six), I was still unaware of things like race segregation. However, I wasn't wholly ignorant that a feeling of animosity toward African Americans existed in many whites. The racial attitudes of neighbors and older playmates began to make an impression upon me and, like seeping water, this trickle of words directed against the entire black race sought to undermine my foundation of accepting innocence.



I recall that one particular summer day in 1966 as somehow seeming hotter. It's not uncommon for the mercury to touch one hundred degrees during a Baltimore summer. The city's location, at the top of that vast estuary known as the Chesapeake Bay, ensures that humidity levels on hot days will be especially uncomfortable.

I accompanied my mom that stifling day to visit “Buscha,” her elderly Polish immigrant mother. We traveled downtown in Mom's brand-new turquoise-colored 1964 Chevrolet Impala. She, in an effort to save what was probably \$75 or so, had declined the optional air-conditioning, believing the vents to be perfectly adequate. Mom later regretted her decision. The vents, however, did bring a great measure of relief, especially the large ones located under the dashboard at about the height of your lower leg. With the simple pull of a knob, a blast of air would stream up under and over your legs and circulate upward to provide some cooling relief from the still outside air. This vent, plus opening the triangular window, which you could direct at your face, made a car ride a distinct advantage over walking or taking one of the unair-conditioned city buses.

Our route of several miles to Buscha's house would take fifteen minutes at most. We drove from our tidy redbrick rowhouse neighborhood in the Belair-Edison section and turned down the divided four-lane boulevard of Sinclair Lane approaching Monument Street, the main artery that would eventually take us to our destination.

On our usual weekly journey Mom made a sudden, uncharacteristic stop on Sinclair Lane. She pulled her car parallel to the bench at the bus stop located in front of the Eastern District Police station. I had been oblivious to my outside surroundings, probably lost in play, when Mom asked me to roll down the passenger side window next to where I sat. Somewhat surprised, I did as she instructed. Upon the sun-bleached bench perched a sweltering solitary occupant—a slight, elderly woman with a large department store shopping bag

on either side of her, each one filled with recent purchases. Mom called out to her: "Would you like a ride home?" The woman



reacted with look of astonishment and then a pursed smile formed upon her dry lips. I remember a twinkle appearing in her eyes. She quickly accepted and began struggling to

dismount from the bench. Now, I don't rightly recall if Mom went over to help her get into the car. All I remember is that I climbed over the front seat to take my new position in back.

The whole incident puzzled me. Mom, seemingly on impulse, had invited an elderly African American lady into our car and was about to chauffeur her to her front door step.

I had rarely been in close proximity to a person of color at that point in my life. Like an anthropologist examining some new species, I studied the woman closely. No earth-shattering observations came as a result. Under her hat sat a head of salt and pepper hair, not unlike my own



grandmother's. And the woman's face had the similar wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. The dress, a summer weight floral print, was just like the ones I had seen the old Polish ladies wearing in Buscha's neighborhood. Our passenger's tightly laced black orthopedic shoes with their square, low chunky heels appeared identical to my own grandmother's.

Surely this woman was someone else's "Buscha." My observations indicated that, save for skin color—and perhaps a Polish accent and a few extra pounds (well, maybe more than a few)—the woman might have been my grandmother. While I don't remember her name or even any aspect of the conversation between my Mom and this woman, I recall her expression of delight when we started moving down the road once again, as the vents and opened windows produced a cooling breeze. We drove her to her house near the Johns Hopkins Hospital complex, slightly north and west of Buscha's neighborhood. Mom stopped at the sidewalk directly in front. The lady proffered many gracious "thank yous" and, I believe, even made motions to her purse for some money as payment, which my mother flatly refused. The woman carefully arose and departed from our car with her bags. We bade our good-byes and made our way to Buscha's house. Our detour, at best, made us ten minutes late.



Jane Schoeberlein and Robert Schoeberlein, about 1965

During the next few years my mother did similar deeds. Another time, from a different bus stop, she brought a young

African-American couple heavily laden with grocery bags to their apartment. Her generosity of spirit still amazes me. However, the first incident when I was impressionable five-year-old, unknowingly to my mother, marked a turning point in my life. She taught me an enduring lesson. My



Mom's simple gesture of kindness, no matter what the source of its inspiration, underscored that a person's humanity, and not their skin color, came first.

For stories about the early life of Jane Schoeberlein (born Jennie Sokolowska) check out these links:

<https://www.mdhistory.org/growing-up-in-fells-point-jennie-sokolowskas-stories/>

<https://www.mdhistory.org/growing-up-in-fells-point-more-jennie-sokolowska-stories/>

A Wellspring of Invitations...

John Buck



Modern complexity theory encourages ["reflecting about how you are thinking."](#) We can deal with complex situations best if we don't approach them with preconceived mental frameworks. Hope is complex. All sorts of surprises can emerge from hope, as is common with complexity.

Yet, hope is generally not portrayed as complex. The spirit of hope that lingered in Pandora's box was trapped in the framework of being a

[healing spirit.](#) Modern healthcare sees a similar value in hope.

Many religions dangle heaven as something to hope for. I like much better [Emily Dickinson's "feathered thing."](#) It's the same critter that Alexander Pope saw: ["Hope springs eternal in the human breast..."](#) Neither poet ties hope to a goal; rather, they praise hope as the well-spring of invitations to reflect.

Hope is Our Superpower



It's not a pie in the sky hope, it's not a preference for optimism over pessimism. It's just an

orientation of the spirit. I think we have to be willing to believe things we haven't seen...I think hopelessness is the enemy of justice. I think injustice prevails where hopelessness persists. And so, hope is our requirement, it's our superpower.

Bryan Stevenson, in *Just Mercy*
Shared by Jean Pfefferkorn

Sadako's Hope

Jean Pfefferkorn

On August 6, 1945 she was two years old and living in Hiroshima, Japan, in the Sasaki family. Her country had been at war for over four years, but the family didn't talk about it, afraid of losing hope for the future. Their lives were forever changed by "Little Boy," an atomic bomb dropped over the city.

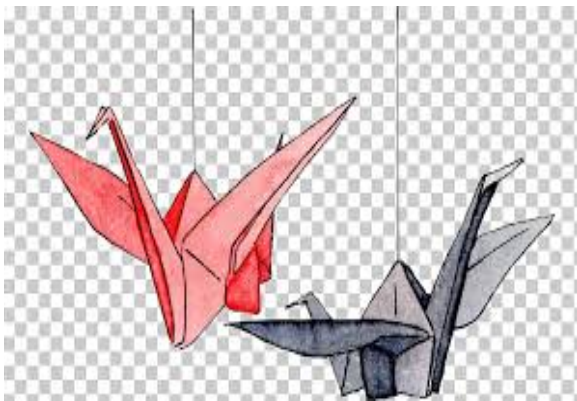
The bomb brought the war to an end. It also brought to an end the structures, comfort and community in her destroyed city. Neighbors became ill and died with a sickness that the

neighbors didn't understand. It was radiation sickness.

Sadako was playing in her house one mile from town the morning the bomb was dropped, and she was told that although the bomb left the home standing, radiation hit the family severely. But she was young and resilient. She continued a healthy childhood, becoming athletic, starting school, and making friends out of her kindness and joy.

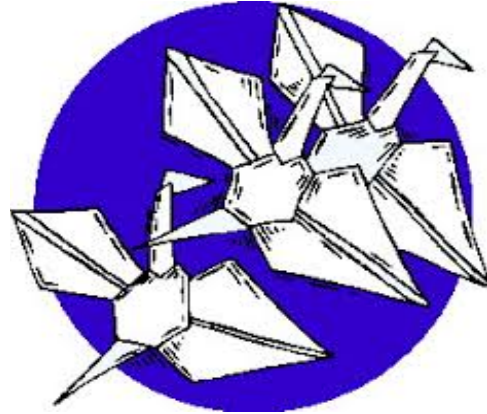
When she was twelve years old, she became ill and went to the hospital with leukemia, a disease that was fatal at that time. Because she stayed in the hospital for so long, she made friends and brought joy to the medical people who helped her.

A visitor brought her an origami crane and told her a Japanese folk belief: that a crane can live for a thousand years, and people who fold one origami crane for each year of a crane's life will have a wish—a hope—granted. She started looking for small pieces of paper, learned how to fold cranes, and taught others to join her in the art. Every day was a crane-folding day, a day of hope and spirit.



In time, the lethal disease caught up with her and she passed away in the hospital; 1,300 cranes, her symbols of hope, were at her bedside. Her Japanese family was heart-broken. Her story became famous in both Japan and the United States, the country that dropped the bomb.

Some might say that Sadako's hope was a false one, that her origami activity was the wasted effort of a sick child. But to look at it through another lens, the disease which killed her has, through the efforts of medical researchers, become a much less lethal disease. Now, 68% to 94% of children under 15 survive leukemia, perhaps in part due to the hope that Sadako channeled into those 1,300 origami cranes.



Reflections upon Viewing “Following the Ninth: In the Footsteps of Beethoven’s Final Symphony”

John Farrell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2pKvykQZCk&t=2529s>

As soon as this film began to play, I was immediately moved. I have long appreciated Beethoven's

9th Symphony and especially “Ode to Joy.” Over the years my appreciation of this work has deepened. Now as I watch this film depicting peoples and cultures from around the world and how they have responded to the 9th, I am reminded how we are all connected by the



spirit of love and joy and how we can be inspired by music and artistic creation. As we make music together, we are building a more peaceful world. I find this most encouraging and hopeful.

The portions of the film showing Japan and Chile and the effect of Beethoven's 9th on the people made perhaps the greatest impact on me. I am reminded of American history and the profoundly negative impact our foreign policy has often had on those countries. Yet, the spirit and hopes of the people prevailed over unimaginable hardship and brutality.

We are currently experiencing one of the most challenging periods in our history. Growing social, political and economic uncertainty are causing great distress for tens of millions of people, not just in the US, but worldwide. The comfort, strength, and hope one can find in great art such as the music of Ludwig van Beethoven provides beauty and encouragement that sustain us. Meeting the further challenge of organizing public performances of such music tests the very bonds of our culture and society. That we continue to create new ways to communicate and maintain our society and culture is truly hopeful.

What is Hope?

Karen McLain

Hope means something different to everyone. There are people who have hopes for a sunny day, hopes to win the lottery, hopes that the traffic will move on the beltway.



Hope to me never giving up. Always striving to be the best and give my best to others. My hope is good things come to those who believe. Better things come to those that are patient and the best things come to those

that don't give up. Have hope in your life and never stop believing.

What is Hope in 2020?

Katrina Balovlenkov

What is hope in 2020? To be honest, a lot of days, there doesn't seem to be much hope around. In a year marked by death, political division and turmoil, isolation, and the magnitude of what used to be the simple decisions—as a species, we are lost. Beyond us, minks, tigers, lions, pumas, snow leopards, house cats, and dogs have all be found to have COVID. We

are but 1 of the 26 orders (evolutionarily speaking) in the kingdom animalia. How eccentric. How comforting.



How do we not look up at the sky and wonder why?

In a world sorely lacking in hope, we must keep going. Churchill said, "When you're going through hell, keep going." How simple and



necessary. That is the epitome of hope—the tenacity to keep moving forward. The (literally) Disney version is "just keep swimming, just keep swimming." The opposite of hope isn't despair or loss—it's

stagnation. Inertia. Stuck. It's not figuring out, in the Venn diagram of overlapping stress and chaos, a way out.

Obama spoke of "The Audacity of Hope." Is hope audacious? Is it acting with impunity? Is it calling the universe to the carpet only to win?

I'm not sure. For the past 3 months, I have been spending at least one day a week in the woods. Why? Because nature doesn't care. She is impervious to COVID, she is the opposite of working hours under fluorescent lights that cause the sun to burn your eyes when you step outside, and above all she is resilient.



I am undeservingly proud of our forests. Other than taking my trash with me on the way out, I owe no claim or responsibility to their success. I can take no credit for the joy they bring, the stillness we need, the refreshing monotony of tree after tree, and the phytoncides they freely share with everyone who walks by. Nature is our most essential medicine. She is a constant cycle of rebirth. Trees and plants never stagnate; their cycles continue with complete disregard for the world buzzing around them. If given the option to be, be a tree.

In recognizing value in the intersection of hope and nature, I'd like to close with a Jesse Jackson quote that I've held close to my heart since first reading it in 1998.

Q: What you see, Jesse?

A: I see joy in the morning! I see victory. So, hold your head high. Let your hope expand so the children can feel it like the risin' sun. When the sun comes out in the springtime, flowers blossom, eggs crack open, chickens start talking that chicken talk—hope is alive! Everything in the universe starts to stir when there is hope in the air! We got too much experience, already seen too much, to ever be pessimistic. We

know that there is honey in the rock. We know the joy cometh in the morning.

Joy Comes with the Morning

Psalm 30

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

²O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me....

⁴Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.^[b]

⁵For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.^[c]

***Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning....***

¹¹You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;

you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,

¹²that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!



Optimism vs. Hope

Desmond Tutu, in The Book of Joy

"I say to people that I'm not an optimist, because that, in a sense, is something that depends on feelings more than the actual reality. We feel optimistic, or we feel pessimistic. Now, hope is different in that it is based not on the ephemerality of feelings but on the firm ground of conviction. I believe with a steadfast faith that there can never be a situation that is utterly, totally hopeless. Hope is deeper and very, very, close to unshakable. It's in the pit of your tummy. It's not in your head. It's all here," he said, pointing to his abdomen.

Finding Hope Where Hopelessness Abounds

Joseph Evans

South Mountain Fellowship

How do you find “Hope” in an often-negative environment where “hopelessness” abounds?

As someone who has been imprisoned for nearly 40 consecutive years in some of the harshest prison environments the state of Maryland provides, I readily admit that I have “hoped” for things in this life. Some significant life-changing events I have hoped for have come to be, while others may be on the horizon. I hope.

I believe Hope sustains the Spirit and that we all have the capacity to hope. Hope propels our internal belief that a goal or desired outcome is possible.

I can accept that hope will be different things to different people at different times in their lives. Perhaps hope can only spring forth from faith or a combination of faithful experiences.

Hopelessness, however, is a condition I cannot imagine as a permanent place. This is a condition that is difficult to accept.

I have to believe hope exists. I know when I have it. And I know when I do not. The Question is: Where does it come from?

Perhaps hope is simply generated by the power of prayer.



*May the blessing of hope be
alight within us, bringing
comfort and courage.*

*May the “testimony of
hope” be evident in our
lives.*