

# Ponderings from a Presbyterian Pilgrim



*"...I have hope because of Jesus. We are stuck with Jesus, and he won't go away. Yes, we can try to tie him up or cage him in with any number of absolute Greek lines. Yes, we can crucify him with Roman power and bury him in a rich man's tomb. Yes, we can seal that tomb with the heavy marble stones of institutions, traditions, legalisms, and systems of thought. Yes, we can post armed guards in the form of theological thought police who try to keep Jesus in and us out, or we can practice identity theft and use Jesus' name to our own bidding in a thousand ways. Yes, we can do all these things, but Jesus cannot be contained. He rises again. He keeps coming back."*

*(A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith, Brian McClaren; HarperOne, New York, 2010; page 240)*

As we enter November, I find myself reflecting quite a bit on what has happened over the course of the year. In my family's life I find myself celebrating that my wife, Judy, has finally found a job that has allowed her to move to Indianapolis and that my youngest daughter, Sarah, graduated from Indiana/Purdue University, Indianapolis in May. But I also am aware that both my parents and Judy's find themselves struggling with a variety of health concerns, and that the tight job market has made it particularly difficult for my daughters, as well as my nieces and nephews, to find work that pays enough for them to support themselves and to pay off those student loans. In the midst of all those things, though, I am able to say, "I have hope because of Jesus."

As a Presbyterian, I also find myself reflecting on this past year as well. Over the past several months, I witnessed the passage of Amendment 10-A (now G-2.0104b in the Book of Order), the passage of the new Form of Government and the emergence of the Fellowship of Presbyterians and the Next Church. And in the mist of all those things, I am able to say, "I have hope because of Jesus."

There are so many ways that our thoughts and words and actions can seem to thwart the reality of hope. We can always dwell on the seeming hopelessness of the economy and society and government and institutional religion. But we can have hope because of Jesus. We can have hope because Jesus has already entered the hopelessness of an economy that pitted the haves against the have-nots. We can have hope because Jesus has already entered the hopelessness of a society that established a system where some were desirable and some were undesirable; where some were clean and some were unclean. We can have hope because Jesus has already entered the hopelessness of a government that accepted the premise that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. We can have hope because Jesus has already entered the hopelessness of an institutional religion that was so firmly established in the old that it could not see when the new had truly come.

I appreciate the quote from Brian McClaren. As McClaren proclaims—we are stuck with Jesus; Jesus won't go away; Jesus cannot be contained. Jesus rises again and keeps coming back. In other words, Jesus entered the hopelessness of the economy and society and government and institutional religion—not to fix them, not to make them better, not to correct them—but rather to infuse them with hope. And once infused with the hope of Christ, each of those dynamics of human life can become an instrument for God's kingdom to move forward.

So, yes, I have hope because of Jesus!

*Alan*