

Ruth 1:6-17 – The hope of companionship

Written by Rachel Friesen, GC sophomore

⁶Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." ⁹The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me." ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

Throughout my life, I have always felt a personal connection to the story of Ruth, traveling to a foreign land and making a new start among strangers. Having moved a few times and traveled quite a bit with my own family, I am familiar with the feeling of being unfamiliar. Being stared at, questioned, lost, judged, excluded from things of which I'd like to be a part, included in things of which I'd rather not be a part... it comes with the territory, literally. These experiences of loneliness and insecurity can be tremendous opportunities for learning and growth, but more importantly in my life, they have allowed me to experience God's personal attention and provision.

In all of my moves and travels, I can't think of one single time that I was left completely alone. Just like God led Ruth to be a companion for Naomi, God provided companionship for me, sometimes when I least expected it. Occasionally it was in momentous ways, such as my first day at a new school in first grade—a little girl appeared at my side during our restroom break and said, "Will you be my best friend?" (I said yes, of course, and the rest was history.) Or other times, in much more subtle ways—while flying alone last summer, a sympathetic smile from a stranger regarding the unwanted attentions of the passenger next to me. In both of these situations and many others, God took care of my needs before I even knew what to ask. How wonderful it is that we have such an attentive God, who both cares for us when we are strangers and allows us to be companions for the strangers we come across in our lives.

Psalm 43:1-5 – God of refuge

Written by Crystal Zook, GC sophomore

¹Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me! ²For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off? Why must I walk about mournfully because of the oppression of the enemy? ³O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. ⁴Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. ⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Today's passage comes from Psalm 43. I have always felt that it should be connected with Psalm 42. In fact, they are two of my favorite psalms. I turn to them at the times I feel God is so far away and has forgotten about me. With the psalmist I say "Why have you forgotten me? (Psalm 42:9). We ask him to send us his light and his truth in the midst of our pain, in the midst of feeling lost and alone so that we know he is there. We want to praise him, but we don't always know how.

It helps me to know that the writers of these psalms felt far from God at times. I know others have gone through hard times and have come through. God has not forgotten me just as he had not forgotten them. These psalms resonate with my pain but remind me that there is much more to life. There is always hope even if we can't seem to find it.

I find this assurance in verse 5 which is repeated three times in 16 verses. "Why are you cast down, O my soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall again praise him, my help and my God." Because of this verse, I have written in my Bible that God is someone we can always hope in even when we think he has forgotten us.

One of my favorite songs is "Praise You In This Storm" by Casting Crowns, which reminds us that God will never leave us; we can turn to him to seek refuge in any storm. Even if the storm around us does not stop, we will not be on our own. "And I'll praise you in this storm and I will lift my hands, for You are who You are no matter where I am, and every tear I've cried You hold in your hand, You never left my side and though my heart is torn, I will praise You in this storm." Can we do the same?

Can we continue to place our hope in God even in the midst of a storm?

Psalm 130:1-8 – Crying out, waiting

Written by Emily Graber, GC sophomore

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. ²Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! ³If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? ⁴But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. ⁵I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. ⁷O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. ⁸It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

When we were kids, one of the best parts of Christmas was the week or so before, when a few presents were put under the tree. I would always get excited, wonder what I was going to get, and hope that the rest of the family liked my gifts to them. Opening the presents was fun, of course, but the wondering, the questioning, the waiting made the ‘season of giving’ more ‘magical’ than the event of opening presents itself.

Sometimes life is like the week before Christmas. We all have ups and downs in life. When we go through trials and struggles, we wonder why these things happen. When we don’t see any end in sight, when we are in the dark night of the soul, when life is being its meanest, we cry out to God.

We cry variations of Psalm 130. Sometimes we can only moan the first two verses. We recognize that we cannot do this ‘life thing’ alone. We realize again, in our brokenness, that we need God to put us back together, to make sense and meaning in a seemingly senseless and meaningless situation.

Eventually, maybe one day, we begin to depend on God. And so we wait for it all to end, we begin to have hope. We wonder, “What will I ‘unwrap’ at the end of this trial? What gift will I receive? Hope, faith, a deeper understanding of love, a better way to connect with others?” The gift at the end of a trial is not always obvious, and maybe we won’t see it for a while. But there is a hope. When we cry out to God, when we wait on God, God will be there, by our side, walking beside us, helping us with each painful, struggling step we take.

Psalm 146:1-10 – Praise for a creative, just God

Written by Tamara Shantz, assistant campus pastor

¹Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! ²I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. ³Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. ⁴When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. ⁵Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; ⁸the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. ⁹The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!

Hope can seem trite. Cute. Naïve even. In the past, I have often wanted to scoff at those who would raise the notion of hope in the context of what I considered to be terrifying realities. Hope seemed like a form of denial (still can sometimes). But I now believe that hope, true hope, does not deny tragedy and suffering. True hope, that roots itself in God, takes a deep breath as she looks around, wipes a tear from her eye and says this too belongs to God.

In Psalm 146, there is a wonderful intermingling of words like praise, hope, and trust. We are challenged to not put our trust in human rulers. Rather, we are instructed to practice hope by trusting in the liberating God of all Creation. We praise God because She has made the sea, the heavens, and the earth. We hope in God, because our Lord executes justice. It is interesting to see how strongly the psalmist emphasizes the activity of the Lord. Over and over we are reminded that *the Lord* releases the prisoners. *The Lord* watches over the stranger.

I believe that God has a vision, a hope, for this world. And this divine hope calls us to search for that tenuous balance between blindly trusting in God in a way that leads to denial and irresponsibility (you know, the “God will take care of it....I don’t need to feed the hungry” sort of way), and trusting so heavily in humanity that we drown in our despair over our inability to solve all of our world’s problems.

Even amid wars, climate change, and a series of broken political and economic systems, this is still our Father’s world, and our God has promised to be with us always. It is in this truth that my hope lies. Praise the Lord!

Jeremiah 29:1, 10-14 – God of intimacy and future

Written by Ross Peterson-Veatch, CITL curriculum director

29These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon....¹⁰ For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. ¹²Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. ¹³When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

When I was a teen-ager I took an extended trip to Taiwan and Hong Kong, traveling alone. My memories of that trip have served me since as a lesson in coping with doubt and even hopelessness by reaching for God's presence and love. Even though it was exciting to be abroad, spending most of my days alone sometimes felt more like exile than adventure. In those afternoons wandering through the markets and streets of Taipei, visiting the monuments and museums, my goal was to see as much as I could of that unfamiliar place. But I had no frame of reference for my experiences – no community to share them with, and my life was at once hectic and purposeless. The excitement of newness became the kind of distraction I seek when I know something in my life is not right – and after a few weeks, though surrounded by literally millions of people, I began to experience a deep loneliness. Back in my room at night I uncovered my miniature Bible and read. Then in quiet moments of solitude, I reached out for God's presence, and felt hope and love there. There are no better words of assurance than those God gave Jeremiah for the exiles in Babylon: "I will hear you...you will find me...I will bring you back."

The Exiles in the book of Jeremiah were, like me on my extended trip, displaced geographically, but I believe that today, like many of us, if I don't pay attention, I can exile myself from God in other ways. As my attention migrates from one task to another and I cross off items on my "to do" lists, how much closer am I to God? And if I search for security and solace in acquiring things, or in pursuing a life I assume I deserve, how can I see the fortunes God will restore for me? But when I seek God with all my heart, I find the hope I lost as an exile. Just as God assured those in exile in Babylon, I am assured today that God has plans for my welfare and a future with hope.

Prayer:

God, as I seek you with all my heart,
Grant me a future with hope.

Lamentations 3:19-30 – A glimpse of hope in the midst of destructive chaos

Written by Reuben Sancken, GC sophomore

¹⁹The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! ²⁰My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. ²¹But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²²The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ²⁵The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. ²⁶It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. ²⁷It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth, ²⁸to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, ²⁹to put one’s mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope), ³⁰to give one’s cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults.

There are times when everything seems to be going right and other times when everything seems to be going wrong. During those times we can feel so lost and helpless. I feel so saddened when I see people who have messed up priorities and who give up on themselves. I feel helpless when wars continue because of hate and lack of life’s basic necessities. I think about the thoughtless way we are treating the environment. Add our own personal struggles and it is hard to have hope sometimes. When the world and ourselves are broken, how can we have hope?

Lamentations is filled with violent imagery of the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet, through all of this destruction, the writer shares encouraging words of hope. The Lord loves us and is faithful and merciful. The Lord will not leave us to suffer. Jesus helps us through our challenges and saves us time and time again from our brokenness. Many times it takes awhile to heal, but hope and patience are rewarding. I think about the times I’ve said that a circumstance in life will never get better. When I look back at where I was and where I am today, I realize that a situation can turn out better than even what we anticipated. We can have more hope when we let go and trust in God’s love that everything will be okay. This can be hard at times, but we are reassured by God’s promise of love and mercy that will never fail.

Luke 24:13-27 - A "hidden" Jesus eventually revealed

Written by Ana Yoder, GC sophomore

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

How often does Jesus reveal himself in our lives, only for us to completely miss it?

In this passage, we meet two of Jesus' followers who have lost hope. They had been waiting for the Messiah to come, yearning for the prophecies to be fulfilled, but buried those hopes as they saw Jesus crucified. On this day, they are walking away from Jerusalem, engaged in discussing the past days' events, expressing their sadness, and deeply feeling that loss of hope. Their minds are preoccupied, perhaps trying to reason through recent events, unable to comprehend them.

What strikes me in the face of this lost hope is not Jesus' power to open his followers' eyes, so that they realize his true identity. Don't get me wrong, that offer of renewed hope is crucial. But instead, I am drawn to ponder how much I resemble those travelers walking towards Emmaus, before their eyes are opened. Perhaps they are too involved in discussion, or too spent from the emotional disappointment, but somehow they are totally blind to Jesus' identity.

In the same way, I think, we are often blind today. I wonder how often we miss an opportunity to experience God's hope because we are somehow blind to Jesus' presence along that road to Emmaus? I wonder how we can best invite Jesus to reveal himself to us, like he did to his followers that day?

As we journey along that road, may we learn to claim that hope - the hope grounded in a God who does continue to actively reveal himself to us.

Acts 24:10-16 – The hope of Apostle Paul while on trial

Written by Lane Miller, GC senior

¹⁰When the governor motioned to him to speak, Paul replied: “I cheerfully make my defense, knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation. ¹¹As you can find out, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. ¹²They did not find me disputing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a crowd either in the synagogues or throughout the city. ¹³Neither can they prove to you the charge that they now bring against me. ¹⁴But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets. ¹⁵I have a hope in God—a hope that they themselves also accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. ¹⁶Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience toward God and all people.

Paul would have made a good lawyer. He carefully complimented the judge and then skillfully countered each accusation made against him earlier in the passage. He also does well under pressure. He spoke off-the-cuff. And if he's such a great guy, why's he in court in the first place? He goes into more detail two chapters later. “It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by the Jews! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:7b-8) It's hope that got Paul in trouble. In the defense above, Paul claims that he and his accusers share a hope in the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, which they do. But Paul's belief goes further than that. He believes in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ specifically.

I watched the news yesterday and felt rather depressed. The environment, wars, genocide, poverty, and even the economy, worry me. I could use some hope for the future. That is the hope that Paul carried for the church. If Jesus rose and defeated death, then the kingdom he proclaimed will defeat this world's. The kingdom Jesus envisioned conflicted with the dominant consciousness of Paul's time- with that of Paul's accusers. Jesus' resurrection was a validation of that vision and a call away from the status quo. It promises a future, a hope that can sustain us in the desperation of our situation. It cries against that powers that be, and the powers over Paul took him to court for just that reason. The irony is that it was that hope which they denounced that drove Paul to share Christ's vision even going all the way to Rome.

Romans 8:18-27 – An invisible, saving hope

Written by Julie Armstrong, assistant professor of ASL

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. ²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Yesterday I went to visit a friend of mine who is dying from cancer. On the way to her house, I went over in my head of all the possibilities of what I wanted to say – to tell them how sorry I am – to tell them that I'm hurting for them. I had difficulties trying to find the words to express my sorrow and also hope – hope for life eternal.

My sister and I went to take her cat, Barney. Barney is the least of the family's worries – but this was a tangible thing that we could do to help the family and our friend. It made us feel better. Hospice and her family are now doing their best to make her comfortable and cared for. My heart ached for them. I wanted to say words of comfort, peace, and encouragement. I didn't know what to say. And I didn't know how to pray.

There are times in our lives when we are suffering or we see people suffer and we don't know how to pray. I am sure there are people in your circle of friends who are dealing with sickness, divorce, death and uncertainty. I feel confident, however that when these times come, the Spirit can intercede on our behalf. The scripture says that the Spirit searches and knows our heart and mind even when we have no words to communicate our feelings and thoughts (Romans 8:26-27).

I'm thankful that yesterday when I didn't know what to say and that all I could do was take Barney – and let the Spirit intercede and do the rest.

I Corinthians 13:1-13 – Faith, hope, love

Written by Becky Horst, grant director/coordinator

13If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13 is often referred to as “the love chapter.” You have probably heard it read aloud at a wedding. But this passage could also be called “the hope chapter” because it leans toward a positive future, energized by two enormous hopes:

- Hope that true and lasting love between humans really is possible.
- Hope that, though we “see through a mirror, dimly” now, someday we will see God face to face and know God as fully as God knows us.

It is often said that love is a commitment, not just a feeling. When we make a marriage vow to love someone “for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health . . . as long as we both shall live,” we cannot rely on emotions alone to keep such a weighty vow. Emotions will shift. Feelings will be fickle.

To keep a marriage vow, even when we do not feel love we must act out our commitment to love, praying for the emotion of love to return. I have found, in my own 32 years of marriage, that God honors such prayers. The emotion of love does return, time and time again.

Hope is similar to love. It is an emotion, yes, but it is also a way of life based on deep trust in God. In Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase *The Message*, I Corinthians 13 ends by calling us to do (not feel) three things: trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, and love extravagantly. Trust, hope and love are not just emotions. They are actions that we can do each day.

Dear God,

Come peel off my mask of cynicism, and help me to sense and claim your hopeful future. Today, may I trust you steadily, love extravagantly, and hope unswervingly.

Hebrews 6:13-20 – Certainty of God’s promise

Written by Bob Yoder, campus pastor/assistant professor of youth ministry

¹³When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “I will surely bless you and multiply you.” ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. ¹⁷In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Patience. What a struggle this is for me at times. Yet this passage screams out the virtue of patient endurance. Why would Abraham bother to yield to such a virtue? Perhaps it had something to do with God...God’s blessing, God’s promise, God’s hope. God promised to bless Abraham and multiply him, yet Abraham also did his part. Though the specific situations this passage refers to are not identified, he “patiently endured.” In similar fashion, we humans who have taken refuge in God are “to seize the hope” before us. This seems somewhat paradoxical...the call to patient endurance while also seizing the hope. Patience. Seizing. One word feels passive and the other appears active.

Sensing God’s Hope, Claiming God’s Hope. Though the first part of the theme is not passive, it certainly demands our patient endurance. Sensing requires our attentive ears in case the sound of God’s hope whistles, or when the taste of God’s hope tingles the taste buds, or as the smell pleasantly opens the nostrils. All the while we are to patiently sense. Yet once we’ve patiently sensed, we are to claim the prize of the hope that is a steadfast anchor of our soul. That hope is the blessing and promise of God. Will we seize it? Claiming God’s hope requires our confident activity. Do we have the guts to claim that which God offers?

Claiming God’s blessing is not only for personal sake, but also for that of others. Just like Abraham, God’s blessing is to flow through us to the world around us, thus multiplying the blessing. Will we bother to do our part? Will we yield to the virtue of patient endurance while seizing the hope of God?

Hebrews 10:19-25 – A Persevering Hope

Written by Meghan Hoover, GC senior

¹⁹Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

When I first read this passage, the last three verses stood out to me the most. It seems to really be speaking to the spirit of what we have on campus. 'Let us not give up meeting together, but let us encourage one another.' Encouragement, open relationships, helpfulness are huge parts of what I see everyday in our community.

This year I have more fully felt God's hope in the world by interacting with friends and those in the community who rally for justice, enjoy peacemaking, and love one another as simply as they can. We need to keep these passions together, tied up in a creative and inventive hope in Jesus' teachings.

The Message version of the bible says to be "inventive" when we encourage one another toward love and good deeds. We are such a creative body of people – let's show what we have to the world in all the ways we can. Continue to encourage one another toward God, toward love, toward the hope that we can find in living as Jesus would live. As a community we can already feel these things; now we must recognize them, hold on to them, and encourage others by our hope in them and in the God who is revealed through the compassion of Jesus.