

“Faith Points” – November 16, 2008

*by Bishop Michael J. Coyner
Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church*



Several years ago I was visiting with a man who had lost his wife to cancer. It had been a tough time, and now after the funeral he was facing the continuing issues of grief. When I asked how he was doing, he answered, “I guess this is one of those Faith Points in life.” When I inquired about his use of the term “Faith Points” he explained, “We all face points in our life when we discover whether or not our faith is really real. When things are going well, faith is easy. But these Faith Points are times when we discover that we need our faith to point the way.”

Over the years I have often thought about his words. A “Faith Point” is whenever we are not sure about the way, the next steps, and we have to rely upon our faith to point the way. A “Faith Point” is also a time of testing when we discover if our faith is, as he put it, really real.

This seems to be one of those times for many, many people, and maybe even for our whole country. Times are tough. The stock market is up and down, mostly down. The economy is struggling. Some people have lost their jobs. Many have lost part of their pension or their savings. The nation has gone through a tough election. We are still in the midst of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here in Indiana we face increasing levels of poverty, failing children in school, and disruptions in businesses.

For our churches, these are tough times to conduct stewardship campaigns and to plan for the future. Many pastors are not sure whether the typical year-end giving which sustains our church budgets will happen this year. I hear a lot of church experts wondering, “Will our people be faithful during tough times, as happened during the Great Depression, or will our generation prove to be selfish and unwilling to share our limited resources?” No one seems to know for sure. We have had it too good for too long, and no one can predict how people will react to tough times.

Perhaps this is a Faith Point. It is a time that will test our faith, let us know if what we have said we believe is really real, or if those were just words. Perhaps this Faith Point will teach us to rely upon our faith in God to point the way, teach us that life is not all about our abilities and achievements, it is about trusting in God.

I don’t know. But I do sense that this is one of those Faith Points, and so I pray that our faith will be strong, our generosity will be extravagant, and our faith will point the way to the God who sustains us ... in good times and in bad. May our faith truly point the way.

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