

**December 1, 2019**  
**First Sunday of Advent      World AIDS Day**  
**Still : HOPE**

**Ancient Reading ~ *Isaiah 2:1-5***

*The Future House of God*

The word that Isaiah ben-Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of YHWH's temple shall be established as the most important mountain, and raised above all other hills-- all nations will flow toward it. Many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb YHWH's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that we may be instructed in God's ways and walk in God's paths." Instruction will be given from Zion, and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem. God will judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation will not raise sword against another, and never again will they train for war. O house of Leah and Rachel and Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of YHWH!

**Second Reading**

*~ adapted from Rachel Held Evans in "Searching for Sunday"*

I had a conversation with someone the other day who said they wondered if perhaps LGBTIQQ Christians had a special role to play in teaching the church how to more thoughtfully engage issues surrounding gender and sexuality. I told him I didn't think that went far enough, that ever since the Gay Christian Network conference, I've been convinced that LGBTIQQ Christians have a special role to play in teaching the church how to **be** Christian. Teach us to be Christians who tell each other the truth. Christians who confess our sins and forgive our enemies. Christians who embrace our neighbors. Christians who sit together in our pain, and in our healing, and wait for resurrection.

Sometimes people ask me if I believe in faith healings. What I think they're asking is if I believe a pastor can lay hands on a person and cure them of alcoholism, or if a religious shrine possesses the power to coax the paralyzed out of their wheelchairs, or if rallying around a little girl with twenty-four hours of prayer can reverse the progression of her cancer. I don't know. I've watched too many people of strong faith succumb to illness and tragedy to believe God shows any sort of favoritism in these matters.

***(And yet, inexplicably, I always pray.)***

So... when I'm asked about faith healings, I tell people about Thistle Farms, which offers a safe place to live, jobs, and community to women who have survived sex trafficking. I tell them about Q Christian Network, an ecumenical ministry serving the LGBTQ communities and allies. I tell them about the widows I met in India who haven't been cured of their HIV but who are healing from their poverty and hopelessness by loving one another well. I tell them about the Epic Fail Pastors Conference, and the abuse survivors I've met through my blog. I tell them about my own journey away from and back to church. Then I shrug my shoulders and say, "I suppose anything's possible."