

How Big is Your Boat?

February 14, 2010. Women's Sunday
Rev. Gobledale with Barb A, Jo H and Nancy Ss
Kirkland Congregational Church UCC

“Don't go far! Last night thirteen people were brought into the hospital with broken arms. It is not safe.” We listen as the systematic terrorizing is described. Moving house to house, knocking on doors, demanding allegiance to President Mugabe. Or else...

Only last Sunday in the middle of our church service a visitor stands up and starts singing a song. Not understanding what is happening, and thinking it a religious experience, a soaring of the spirit, I do not interrupt – which as the presiding minister, I can do. Then I feel the tenseness in the air. The invitation is for all to stand and join in, but only two people stand and join the singing. Others avert their eyes and look down toward the floor. I then realize what is happening, and I do interrupt.

“Excuse me, this is a worship service, not a political rally.” All eyes are on me now. “We will continue our worship of God, Nkulunkulu, singing hymn number...” People open their hymnals, stand and burst into loud singing.

Times have been stormy in Zimbabwe. People are scared, and we have just defied a member of President Mugabe's political party. Not good.

The next day, last Monday, we decide to flee this land of unpredictable violence, our home for almost 6 years. We contact Thandiwe in Bulawayo at boarding school and tell her that she will not be coming home again, that we will pack up her things and pick her up on our way to the airport in the near future. This past week we stay close to home, giving away our goods, organizing our travel out of the country. Trying to act normal. With no phones, we are unable to contact the rural churches we serve to let them know of our imminent departure. We cannot say good bye. Stormy times. People are afraid.

Now we hear of more systemic violence. Thirteen people brought into the hospital with broken arms. We leave our home, staying within the walls of a local Anglican boarding school for 3 nights. Then we say good-bye and drive to Bulawayo. We leave our truck, and friends drive us – in the back of their truck – to the airport.

Times are stormy. I should be afraid. But thinking back on those two weeks I remember the deep sense of calm and trust that I had. Whether we lived or not, I knew we were held in the hands of God. No matter how stormy things got, I knew God provided for us a boat big enough to endure the waves and wind.

I wish I felt that secure when I face the little storms of life!

How big is your boat? I bet the disciples wished theirs was a bit bigger! With the waves crashing over the side, and the rain pelting down upon them. When the storms of life are crashing into your day –How big is your boat? Who is the pilot?

Facing storms? Lost a job? Lost a loved one? Looking at possibly losing your home? Facing mental illness or dementia? Aging? Being bullied at school? Got a reject letter from a college or job? How do you weather the storms of life?

On this Women's Sunday, three women of our church are going to share with us how they have weathered the storms in their life?

- 1) Barb A
- 2) Jo H
- 3) Nancy S
- 4)

Questions to ask:

Barb/Nancy/Jo, your life has not always been easy.

Q1: How have you weathered the storms in your life?

Q2: What sustains you today? Each day? What holds you up? What keeps you afloat?

Q3: How have God and prayer been a part of your life?

Q4: What would you recommend to young women, and men, when they find themselves in stormy times?

PRAYER: God, you are with us during the storms of life, and for this we give you thanks. Remind us to turn to you in prayer, and to trust when we are afraid. Thank you for friends and help us stay on a steady course. Grant us a steady faith that will buoy us through stormy times. Amen.