



God at Work

By Bishop J. Michael Lowry

In my recent Kairos event at the Boyd Unit (Texas Department of Corrections), I was once again privileged to see God at work through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Love trumps evil. Sacrificial love can crack the hardest heat. At Boyd, this wasn't theological musing but practiced reality.

A team member shared his own story of struggle to turn his life around. He shared his story of 36 years of walking with Christ. Listening was a brother-in-white who had been in and out of jail for most of his adult life (something around 25 + years). God was at work in his life. Christ was claiming his mind and the Holy Spirit was restructuring his heart.

The next day, that brother in white sought me out as a clergy to talk to. He told me he had tried Islam and two or three other things that (as he put it) "didn't work." He'd tried to control his life and it "didn't work." He wanted to (and did!!!) surrender to Christ. Surrender wasn't a nice church term; it was a heart-wrenching change. Christ as Lord meant for him to "turn over leadership" of his life to Christ. This wasn't theological cotton candy but tough stuff. He leaves the safe place of Kairos and goes back into the compound. This chapel is holy ground. It will be hard out there, and there will be trials. But I saw (see!) God at work. (I learned later that after a dramatic public profession, announced to all and celebrated with great joy at Kairos, the brother- in-white told the chaplain to change his papers from Muslim to Christian. News spreads fast in the prison community and his change caused upheaval for he was one of the leaders of the Boyd Muslim community.)

This may sound prosaic, but it isn't. Stories of heart-wrenching, risky change abounded at Kairos. The cost and risk of being Christian is high. It can (and does at times) involve beatings and persecution. It is not an easy way but brings more true joy and freedom (even in jail!) than anything else offers. We free-worlders have much to learn from the courageous faith of the brothers-in-white. God truly is at work!

Bishop J. Michael Lowry

Bishop Mike Lowry is the resident bishop of the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, where he is the spiritual leader for about 164,000 United Methodists in 320 congregations and developing faith communities. A 1972 graduate of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, Bishop Lowry earned his Master of Theology from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University and his Doctor of Ministry from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Jolynn, have a son and daughter. Family time over the years has also included trekking in the national parks, an adventure Bishop Lowry enjoys whenever time and schedule permit.