

Dale Hempen

Live Into Hope-Accompanying Antony

Jane Parker Huber's hymn, "Live Into Hope" best describes my accompanying Antony for the past five years. The first stanza could have been written with Antony's experience and faith he shares.

"Live into hope of captives freed, of sight regained, the end of greed. The oppressed shall be the first to see the year of God's own jubilee!"

We have "lived" into Hope! Antony and others were released from detention to protect them from COVID. A class action filed by NH ACLU was his first breath of hope after three years of incarceration. He came to the US seeking asylum. Our first meeting was at a motel in Portsmouth where he was housed for two weeks quarantining. A salmon dinner Cheryl cooked delighted his palate after years of institutional meals. He talked of his experiences and shared his delight of seeing his family via Zoom! Little did we know that this first meal would lead to a multitude of times walking, talking and sharing together!

We "lived into hope" as he moved from the Portsmouth motel, out of quarantine into a home in Greenland, where he remained under house arrest with an ankle bracelet! He began to settle in as numerous folks visited and became acquainted with him. All looked good until a fateful early October Monday morning, two carloads of ICE-Immigration Custom Enforcement Officers arrived at the home in Greenland. I'm grateful that we were prepared for this encounter, as an Emergency Response Alert was sounded among members and friends of Community Church, with nearly thirty-five people arriving in Greenland to stand with and by Antony. Our hope was accessed when calls from ACLU attorneys and American Friends staff, especially Maggie Fogarty, discovered the ICE Officers did not have the proper Judicial Warrant! When the two cars of ICE Officers drove away from the Greenland home, Antony came out of the home to the front porch, where he fell to his knees and led us all in a heart-felt prayer of gratitude. Indeed, we were living "into" hope!

Months passed as all were on alert for a return visit from ICE! Antony's ankle bracelet remained as did his house arrest, with more and more visiting him at the Greenland Home. We surprised him for his birthday in April with a party...well, two parties, as so many registered to attend that we had two shifts! This was the first birthday party he ever celebrated in his over fifty years!

His ankle bracelet was removed, he was able to open a bank account. We were "living INTO Hope!"

When Antony's country was granted Temporary Protective Status, he received a Work Permit, with volunteer drivers taking him to and from work at 6AM, returning at 6PM. Even in the

middle of Winter, volunteers signed up to accompany him, and some became upset when the volunteer sign-up filled. More Hope! One individual and Antony were so engaged in conversation early one morning, when they passed the Rochester airport, they knew they had missed his work turn!

With a Work Permit, he could obtain a driver's license! Dick Leavitt and Antony drove around the Durham area, learning the "rules of the road" as well as studying for the written test. When Antony passed both, together we purchased a car! Freedom and Hope, to work, earn money, drive to work and visit friends! Life looked hopeful, as he also served as sexton for our Church!

The attorney working with Antony and the church, was certain he would win his appeal, until in late May, the current Administration talked of canceling Temporary Protective Status for his Country, which would mean the end of his assured protection from being detained and possibly deported, as well as the cancellation of his Work Permit and driver's license. We were not hopeful! But mysteriously, his TPS status, Work Permit and Driver's License were extended for two months, until August 4th! Hope was Alive Again!

Just before August 4th we learned TPS was canceled, which meant his Work Permit, Driver's License and protection were withdrawn as well!

Now, we accompany him with volunteers trained and alerted to be with him when the church building is unlocked. Over 172 individuals have written to the Bureau of Immigration Appeal in support of Antony, as has the CEO of the company where he was employed, along with 35 signatures of fellow employees.

We continue to live into hope!

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