

THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

Dear All

In 2006, President Obama wrote an autobiography entitled “The Audacity of Hope”. The Chairman of our District, Revd Dr David Hinchliffe, presented this as a book which for him, resonated with the journey through a winter Advent, in an unusual year like 2020, during which there was a need to grapple with what it means to be a people living and shaped by the audacity of hope. This imagery, as lives shaped by hope, persuaded me to get a copy of this book, and after reading it I obtained other resources which I will share with you in this pastoral letter, as we approach winter 2021. The Constitution of the United States was considered (chapter 3 page 74), to be revered by a legendary Senator who would wave a pocket-sized copy in the middle of debates. I pondered whether the Constitution was his source of hope? President Obama clearly remembered a reference to the credibility of the Constitution being designed to serve as a charter that guides politics like clockwork.

Despite such well-meaning intentions being depicted in the Constitution of one of the world’s leading nations, the world seems to be left to face some challenges that hopelessness may present, for example, “Black Lives Matter” and an end to various forms of slavery and human trafficking which exist even in modern times. During the COP26 meeting which commenced in Glasgow this week, countries such as the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, China, Australia, Brazil, the United Kingdom (the host nation), and many other players on the world stage will be expected to demonstrate how they will fund and regulate the activities of their nations, as well as help many of the world’s developing nations, which are already suffering the negative effects of climate change. The amount of meat we consume, the carbon-dioxide emitted by our vehicles and how we heat our homes will all be under scrutiny - if we are to make a difference towards protecting our planet earth and be responsible human beings mindful of future generations.

Presently, if we try to predict the situations around Covid-19 in the UK this winter, 2021, we have the privilege of learning from the past. We have some sensory alarms for the future, especially as the reported cases of infections have been rising recently. Nevertheless, whilst reflecting on the way that people are surviving the worst of Covid-19 attacks, over the past few weeks, the foundations of our Christian faith may be said to be a good source of hope, particularly to those of us with a first-hand experience of Covid-19. We may find hope from the Old Testament text that Jesus himself has carried our grief. As we read in Isaiah 53; 4-5, “He was wounded for our transgressions ... and by his stripes we are healed”.

Though the audacity of hope may be derived from a nation’s constitution, and as President Obama cited, such audacity of hope may be a worthy inspiration. On the contrary, to some people, hope may seem like a conceivable gamble or sacrifice which, after some reasoning, they may find difficult to take. An example of this is the mission undertaken by Jesus Christ to face the cross and bring salvation to human beings, who may or may not believe in him as being the Saviour of the world. Yet Jesus did not hope in vain, nor did he hope alone. He was in contact with his Father. So, when things got tough, he cried out to his father: “Why have you forsaken me”? Jesus trusted, but he knew that he should not do things alone. He prayed his way through his challenges to victory and asked his followers to wait on the Holy Spirit so that they should not go on alone. Shouldn’t we also walk like Jesus and partner with the Holy Spirit so that our hope may not flounder? Perhaps I have the audacity to say, “I hope so”!

Loving regards

Sydney Samuel