

Pastoral Letter 62 30.6.21

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I approach my “sitting down” (retiring) time and becoming a supernumerary, I want to thank all of you for the many ways you allowed me to serve as presbyter (minister) in this Circuit. As the years go by I will look back fondly on our time together; I trust the same will be true for you.

In the last nine years I have watched children grow up. I have baptized and performed funerals. I have visited the church family members in hospitals and in residential and nursing homes. Together, we realized a few dreams, lived through a few trials, and persevered.

While we presbyters come, serve and leave, there is one who never leaves us - Jesus Christ. Jesus has been here from the beginning and will be with us for the rest of time. If through the power of the Holy Spirit, we allow Jesus to guide us individually and collectively then the congregations and the circuit will always have a relevant and fruitful mission. It may not look like the church we have today. The pandemic has changed many things in life and there may be difficult decisions which need to be made. But a passion for our Lord and Saviour will see us through all our future trials. This passion guided the earlier congregations in this circuit, a passion which allowed them to navigate their own trials. They managed and flourished; so can we.

The Bible is full of stories about people who faced harder trials than we. A few times the people of Israel were exiled from their land; every time they returned. When Elijah was on the run from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel he prayed, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life” (1 Kings 19:10 NKJV).

The LORD heard Elijah’s prayer and encouraged him with these words: “I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him” (1Kings 19:18 NKJV). When Elijah had done the math it looked to him like it was all over. God’s math was different from Elijah’s. God made a way where there was no way, and God will do it again for people who trust and obey him. Covid might have shaken us and made us to think that things can change in an instant and so much is out of our control. But it has also strengthened our faith in that God is the God of yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is the one constant we can rely on, no matter what season or stage of life, the goodness and grace of God is always there to give us hope and stability.

I hope you have a wonderful future. I know there are wonderful leadership teams in all churches and at the circuit level too and they have worked tirelessly over the years. I hope and pray that your dreams and visions are fulfilled and that you find new ways of being church, serving our God, each other and the neighbourhoods we live in and invite more people to join us on Sunday mornings. Finally, I share with you the biblical blessing, “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV). Amen

Rev Asif Das