



Mission Partnership Newsletter
October 2020

Dear Friends,

Since our Assembly in July and the analysis of responses that emerged from it, I have been reflecting a good deal on the values that rose to the surface that we together identified as being critical for the life of the church in this transitional “post Covid” period. It is important, I think, that we look at these values not as free floating nice-to-haves, but as ways of living that are deeply rooted in Christian faith. Hope, for instance, is not about some kind of wishful thinking that we can all return to “normal” some time soon, it is not an optimistic view of life stemming from a sunny disposition, but a recognition that the resurrection of Jesus fundamentally alters our perception of both present and future and therefore how we actually live now. This is the purpose of one of Paul’s longest chapters in 1 Corinthians 15. Piling up a lengthy argument about the reality and importance of resurrection he reaches his point: “Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.” Rowan Williams is echoing exactly that thought when he asserts, on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus, that “for God, no defeat is final, and that is the ground for *our* trust that no defeat is final.” Hope, in its Christian form, then, enables us to respond positively to whatever crisis, whatever circumstance confronts us, and it is in that response that we begin to share the reality of resurrection practically with those around us. Likewise humility, regarded not as a virtue, but a vice by the Greeks, arises from the Jesus “who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself.” (Phil.2vv6-8) It is out of that humility, which Paul encourages us to cultivate in that passage from Philippians, that we begin to be able to listen well to others in ways that may lead to positive change. See if you can identify the Christian basis for the other values we explored: unity, inclusion, creativity, simplicity and patience so that we can continue to build our churches as communities of character.



In terms of patience, at the Assembly we noted the importance of engaging prayerfully, theologically and strategically to discern our particular vocation and I raised the question as to what spaces we were developing for this to take place. May I commend our *coMPass* courses this autumn as places for such discernment? Do visit our website at <https://missionpartnership.org.uk/learning/compass/> to learn more and book a place. We like to use our Assemblies as places for discerning our vocation, too, Please note that our *next Assembly date has now been fixed for November 25th which is a change from an earlier published date.* Please put the new date in your diary and we look forward to seeing you there.

Every Blessing,
John