

Our Future Hope

The general election campaigning, to which we have been subjected over the last few weeks, has highlighted for me the wisdom of the central teaching of Jesus, as set out in the New Testament. This is, that to experience life in this world to the full, we should love God, and, in practical terms, this means loving our neighbours as ourselves.

At a national government level, our leaders and representatives are too much influenced by personal ambition and dogmatic ideology. To gain votes and power, they appeal to the baser motivations of human nature - envy of what others have, selfishness, fear of people different from ourselves, desire to better ourselves at the expense of our neighbours. I feel anxious that this is divisive and will lead to discontent, conflict, a lack of respect for others, and a mindset of blaming others for an inability to achieve one's own ambitions.

In sharp contrast to this, my experience of community in Burnage encourages me to believe that there is a growth of neighbourliness with increasing evidence of residents and agencies coming together with the shared purpose of improving the life experiences of those who live within the boundaries of the ward. Indeed, Christ Church has contributed not a little to this development, as have the other churches, putting into practice the instruction of Jesus.

Love for neighbours is not, of course, the monopoly of the Christian faith. It is one of the great pillars of Islam, and the mosque and its adherents in Burnage have contributed much, often in association with the churches.

Other initiatives have come from the local housing associations, the City Council, central government, charities and schools. All have depended upon the energy and selfless service of individuals, who have shown their love for their neighbours in the meaning of the second command of Jesus. It's a love that is infectious, or rather contagious, in that it spreads through contact with those already infected. Business leaders have also contributed much, for instance, the support of Tesco for the Burnage Food Bank and the other initiatives to combat food poverty.

Helping others is a basic instinct in our species, as is co-operating with others to achieve a common goal. When these instincts come to the fore in a community, something wonderful happens and wonders can be achieved. Burnage is becoming such a community and great things have been happening, the greatest of which is that more and more residents are finding that sharing a common interest and co-operating to achieve a common goal beneficial to your neighbours is one of life's best experiences. Christians see this in terms of building God's kingdom on earth. There are many others in the area who do not see it in these terms but are nonetheless making it happen.

So each time I feel upset about unseemly electioneering techniques over the next weeks, I shall turn my thoughts to the people of Burnage who have discovered that acting out their love for their neighbours as themselves is what makes life worthwhile.

Wishing you all a good Christmas and hope for 2020,

Robert Lock