

ELECTION – REFLECTIONS 2020
A non-partisan Christian Perspective

Dear Prayer @ Parliament Supporters

ELECTION RESULTS

The Preliminary Election Results were reported on Election Night of Saturday 17 October 2020. The Final Results as well as the two Referenda Results were reported on Friday 6 November 2020. I preferred to wait till after the final results were declared before writing my Election Reflections. The configuration of the 53rd Parliament (Parliament Seat allocation) is as follows: Labour 65; National 33; Green 10; Act 10; Maori 2; - Total 120.

Some observations: This is the first time since MMP Electoral System began in 1996 that one Party is able to govern alone (Majority Government). Labour has chosen to sign a Co-operation Agreement with the Green Party. Labour has all 20 Cabinet Members. Green has two ministers outside the Cabinet. This is also the most diverse Parliament. The voter turn-out was very encouraging. 82% of enrolled voters actually voted. (2.9 million People); highest turnout since 1999. Enrolment rate was 94.1%; highest since 2008.

Labour supporters will be over the moon. Green supporters will be very pleased and relieved that they crossed the threshold and with additional MPs. Act supporters too will be overjoyed with 9 new MPs added. National supporters will be deeply disappointed and NZ First supporters will be devastated as they are no longer in Parliament. Among the minor parties that did not enter Parliament, New Conservative supporters will be encouraged but will have to play the long game.

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Regardless of what party we supported as Christians we will be disappointed that at least seven strong committed Christians will not be returning to Parliament. They are:

Tim Macindoe (12 years in Parliament and our Parliamentary Host); Jonathan Young (12 years); Alfred Ngaro (9 years); Joanne Hayes (6 years); Agnes Loheni (3 years); Paulo Garcia (under 3 years) and Denise Lee (3 years). They have all participated in Prayer @ Parliament and are my good friends. Please pray earnestly for them as they will be deeply hurting. I have been in touch with all of them and assured them of our continuing prayers for them and their families and their future careers.

There are about 40 new MPs (one third of Parliament). It will take some time to discover how many of them are Christians. We know of at least one, namely Christopher Luxton, the former CEO of Air New Zealand.

I know also that thousands of Christians will have mixed emotions. Some may be deeply disappointed, others feeling disillusioned, others skeptical, others ready to throw in the towel and still others perplexed asking “where is God in all of this?”

My main purpose in writing this reflection is to assist this large group of Christians, to strengthen their faith, to give them hope, to encourage them to stand strong and continue to fulfil our responsibilities to the State conscientiously.

Over the years I have found the little book of Habakkuk, an oasis of encouragement, comfort, faith and hope. We are all warned, “Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do flows from it” Prov 4:23 (NIV). Toxic emotions can be like a worm at the core of an apple gnawing away from the inside. How do we cope with fluctuating emotions and conflicting thoughts, grappling to reconcile what we know about God; with what we see happening in our nation. We are becoming more and more a morally permissive society. How do we reconcile God’s righteousness and justice with rising evil in our society. How are we supposed to think and feel when we see a raft of permissive legislation passed through parliament, for example legalisation of same-sex marriage; prostitution; liberalisation of abortion laws and now in the End of Life Choice referendum: ‘yes’ votes (65.2%) ‘no’ votes (33.5%). There was some good news in the referendum on Cannabis where the ‘No’ vote prevailed by a small margin 50.7% voting ‘no’; 48.4% voting ‘yes’. The cumulative effect of negative results from a Christian perspective can erode our confidence.

We are however, not the only ones to experience this kind of rational and emotional earthquake. Among many others in the Bible, Habakkuk was one of them and I want to share what I have discovered and am still discovering even as I write this reflection.

The book of the prophet Habakkuk is unique in at least two ways:

Firstly, the function of a prophet is to hear from God and to communicate to the people (the signature preface “Thus saith The Lord”) but this book is not about addressing the nations (whether Jew or Gentile) but it is a one-on-one face-time between God and Habakkuk.

Secondly, unlike other prophets, Habakkuk is not about delivering God’s message to his people but about solving a problem. A problem which escalated a war within his soul. A kind of war we too experience within our souls. What Habakkuk experienced some 600 BC ago, is what we experience in the 21st Century regarding how God governs the nations of the world. It often appears to be an enigma. God had called Habakkuk to be a prophet and a prophet spoke on behalf of God to the nations regarding moral and spiritual degeneration and called them to repent or face His judgement. The moral condition of Habakkuk’s nation (the Southern Kingdom of Judah) was characterized by violence, injustice, wrong doing, conflicts, paralysis of the law etc (Hab 1:2-4). It is the same kind of moral condition prevailing in our nation. So the prophet faced the Lord and complained to Him, “You show me what is wrong in our nation and I am crying out to you day in day out and nothing seems to be happening”. He cries, “How long Lord must I call for help but you do not listen”? We too are perplexed, like the prophet wearied by God’s long silence, his apparent lack of action, his apparent indifference. Our minds are bombarded with unanswered ‘whys’ (Hab 1:3). We can express our emotions honestly before God and we must prevail in prayer until the Lord speaks.

Finally, the Lord speaks but His reply does not reduce the prophet’s perplexity but heightens it. God informs Habakkuk that will He will use the rising super power Babylon to chasten Judah for her evil ways (Hab 1:6). What increased the prophet’s perplexity was this: Judah’s condition was bad but the Babylonians were far worse. Habakkuk could not reconcile the justice of God with his choice of Babylon (Hab 1:13). This can be a body blow to us as well. It seems as if the Lord is being unfair. How does the prophet overcome this dilemma? In the midst of this confusion he begins to move from the perplexing issue to the person and nature of God. He focuses on

- The person of God (Hab 1:12a)
- The Holiness of God (Hab 1:12b)
- The Strength of God, my rock (Hab1:12c)

In the equation of life, there are many variables but only one constant – God and His nature. “I the Lord do not change” (Mal 3:6). The Father does not change like shifting shadows (Jas 1:17). We too must refocus on God when we are overwhelmed by the issues at hand.

Next the prophet makes a steely resolve to wait on God, to hear from him again (Hab 2:1). We don't know how long he waited but we do know he waited until God answered (Hab 2:2). The Lord essentially gave him a two-fold answer.

Firstly, “The just shall live by faith” (Hab2:4). We can either walk by sight (mindset and behaviour governed by the information that comes through our senses) or we can walk by faith (our mindset and behaviour are governed by God and His Word) (2 Cor 5:7). It is imperative that we choose the latter. **Trust Him even when we cannot track Him!** Secondly, we must keep an eye on God's ultimate purpose. In the (present) intervening period we all see all kinds of moral fluctuations but in the end “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:12). This hope is an anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19). In His appointed time God used Medo-Persia to conquer Babylon. History is His Story! It will culminate in Christ's Second coming!

The prophet began to focus on living by faith in the present and living by hope for the future. Faith and hope are two cardinal virtues, the third and greatest being love and love undergirds our hope (1 Cor 13:13; Rom 5:5).

Finally, remember God's interventions throughout human history. As Habakkuk was encouraged and inspired by remembering God's intervention for Israel (Hab 3:1-15). As he worked through this spiritual process he broke through the clouds of darkness into God's sunshine (Hab 3:17). His faith became unconditional; His heart bursting with joy (Hab3:18); The Lord made him resilient and sure-footed (Hab3:19).

I earnestly appeal to you to meditate on these reflections and if they have been helpful to you, pass it on to your circle of influence. You may if you wish send me a brief feedback (about 20 words maximum).

Let us continue to steadfastly.

1. Pray for our Nation
2. Be well informed
3. Be salt and light of the world
4. Encourage others, knowing righteousness will triumph in the end. Righteousness exalts a nation. (Prov 14:34)

I conclude these reflections with a doxology, *“Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, How **unsearchable** his judgements and his **paths beyond tracing out!** Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor; who has ever given to God that God has given to God that God should repay them? For from Him, and through Him and for Him are all things. To Him be glory forever! Amen!*

2021 Prayer @ Parliament Dates

The 53rd Parliament will open on 25 November 2020. It will sit for a short period of time. It will adjourn 9 December 2020 for the holiday period. Once the Parliamentary Sitting Calendar is finalised we will inform you of our first Prayer @ Parliament Date in March 2021.

In the meantime pray for:

1. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet
2. All MPs
3. Christian MPs who have lost their seats
4. Christian MPs who have returned
5. Speedy discovery, manufacture and distribution of effective Covid-19 vaccines.

There are some promising developments emerging.

Praying together for the welfare of our nation

Rasik Ranchord

Convener Prayer @ Parliament