

JUNE 2016

Dear Friends,

'Positive Thinking'

In the run-up to the Scottish referendum, there was considerable dis-ease over the negative nature of the campaigning. Dire warnings about job losses and businesses moving away from Scotland in the event of a 'yes' vote led for example to the pro-union campaign, *Better Together*, being labelled as 'Project Fear'. Now similar concerns are being expressed about the debate over EU membership. Both sides are guilty. The remain campaign emphasise the economic risks of leaving (the 'gamble of the century as the Prime Minister David Cameron has described it) whilst the Brexit team have played upon fears of uncontrolled immigration.

Fuelling fear can be effective as a tactic, but only up to a point and only in the short term. People do not like divisive, dispiriting negativity, and this is true of every sphere of life, not just politics.

The success of St Paul's work in spreading the Christian message was attributable, I suspect, in no small part to his positive outlook and to his uncompromisingly positive message. His joy was irrepressible. Even when languishing in prison under imminent threat of execution, he urged his readers, 'rejoice *always*' (Phil.4:4). To his way of thinking there was always something to be thankful for. When he was faced with people within the Church 'stirring up trouble' out of envy and selfish ambition (sadly it does happen), he put a positive spin on it (Phil.1:15-18):

"The important thing," he wrote, "is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of that I rejoice."

We as Christians are messengers of 'good news' - God's amazing, unwavering love for us in Jesus. In the light of that love we should be inspired, both within the Church and within the wider community, to promote a positive message and a positive outlook. When we are tempted to indulge in negativity, we should resist it, for it can all too easily become a habit.

"Do everything without grumbling", said St Paul (Phil.2:14).

"Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged," added St James (Jas.5:9).

The Christian writer Jon Gordon suggests a fast on complaining, which is not a bad idea!

"A complaining fast won't just make everyone around you happier," he says, "... you'll experience more joy, peace, success and positive relationships."

Perhaps we should look for ways to encourage our politicians, leaders, ourselves and one another, to embrace a positive outlook and a positive vision for God's world, and to know the peace and joy which comes from doing so.

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