

VOICES OF HOPE



DR. LASHARND A BECKWITH

MISSION

*Ignited by faith,
we live out God's love by embracing,
equipping and empowering
vulnerable people in
Southern California*

VISION

*Sharing the love of Christ,
we are a community to care
and be cared for...
Where the vulnerable are
safer and stronger
Where the dependent
are self-sustaining
Where the isolated dwell in community
Where the weary will be given hope*

VALUES

*Compassion / Advocacy
Collaboration / Respect
Innovation / Stewardship*

Happy Friday!

I was in Heidelberg, Germany, in 2001 when I heard people gasping and showing signs of terror and stress on their faces. I asked what was going on and was told a plane had crashed into one of the Towers in NYC. I ran to my office and turned on the television to watch CNN. As I watched with tears, I watched a second plane hit the other Tower in a split second. This was when we knew the first hit was no accident.

I was on a military base and automatically began hearing sirens and alerts. Knowing what that meant, I knew we were going under a lockdown, code red, we were now on high alert. Terrified, I didn't know if I would be allowed to leave the Base and go home to my family. As I watched CNN in my office, only moments later, it was reported that the Pentagon in Washington, DC, had also been hit. You had to be there to understand the shock and the emotions we were experiencing being so far from home (the United States). People were trying to call back to the States with no success. We needed to check on people, but the lines were down and stayed down for days. We wanted to know people we loved were okay, and, in some cases, they were not. What were we to do?

What I recall following those events is how people reacted after the horror of what had happened finally set in. You would think that we were filled with fear; that's not what happened at all. Instead of being fearful, we bonded together. Instead of being against each other, we cared for each other. We were Americans, and nothing would take away the honor of being known as such.

Today we remember September 11, 2001. What do I think about as I recall that horrible day nineteen years ago? I remember the evil, but more than anything, I think about what came out of the ashes was an unshakable determination to rebuild and to stand strong. Together.

The scripture that comes to mind today is *"To appoint unto them that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."* - Isaiah 61:3. I thank God for making something beautiful out of the ashes of my life.

As you contemplate yester-year, know, Jesus is with us through whatever we face. His Word says that He will never leave us or forsake us; His love for us is greater than we can ever imagine. As we honor the innocent lives lost during 911, don't lose sight that there is still beauty ahead. What happened that day in 2001 was a surprise to us, but in no way was God caught off-guard. You may ask, why didn't He do something? I cannot answer that. I do believe that something was done that some know, and others will never know about it. I trust God despite the things that I cannot explain. I hope you will too.

Dr. LaSharnda Beckwith
President & Chief Executive Officer

