

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 1st Friday of the New Year!

I open this message today with one word, **HOPE**. Over the last couple of days, I have looked around my home office at the certificates and awards hung on my wall from various state governors, with plaques from military generals, and with flags flown over South Carolina, Texas, the State Capitol, and Iraq. All were given to me as I retired from a 25+ year career with the federal government. I found myself staring at the American flag in my office, given to me because I served in Iraq supporting our troops there.

This week has caused me to reflect on some things that have happened during my lifetime. I experience the thrill of the wall torn down, separating East and West Berlin in 1989. I remember when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. I have watched countries move from communism to democracy and so much more. I saw chaos in Greece when people could not access their money in banks and scared that I would not get money out of an ATM to eat. None of those things would have been something I would have imagined seeing in the United States of America. So, I guess you can imagine how horrified I was to watch what happened in our Capitol this week. To ignore it would go against who I am, so I have chosen to speak out on this one.

I found myself angry, shocked, and ashamed. I have lived in two other countries, excluding the USA. I have traveled and worked in too many other countries to name, but I will try. I have worked in Germany, England, Korea, Japan, Honduras, Greenland, Kuwait, Iraq, Cameroon, Italy, Romania, Ukraine, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, France, Greece, Guam, India, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Cuba, Netherlands, Panama, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, and Turkey. Do you get the picture? Everywhere I have visited, I was proud to be the American in the crowd. Not because I thought we were better than others, but because of what I knew others thought we stood for. I believe this week's events weakened that reputation across the globe—a shameful day in our nation.

Can we be redeemed? Yes! You ask how?

How do we get over all that is happening in the United States today? How do we hold out **HOPE** when we are crippled by a virus that seems to be uncontrollable? How do we have **HOPE** when there is so much division? How do we give **HOPE** to others when we ourselves are losing it because we are disgusted by the acts of racism and sexism? How do we extend love to those who hold opposite views that seem to support intolerance and rationalize what happened this week?

It is hard, but it is not impossible. I want to turn to what I have held as my Life Scripture for more than 30 years, Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you,"* declares the LORD, *"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* We are facing some of the most horrific acts I have ever lived to witness in our country. Still, I remain committed to holding onto God's promise found in this scripture despite what is happening. God does not promise to rescue us from our problems immediately, but He promised that He would be with us amid the mess. He has a plan for all that is happening, and we can still walk through this time that seems to take away our **HOPE** and prosper us. He always gives us hope that tomorrow things will change. Trust me; things are changing even now.

Thank God that His mercies are new every single morning.

Dr. LaSharnda Beckwith
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