

World Day of Prayer 2022 Friday 4th March

'For I have plans for you declares the Lord' - Jeremiah chapter 29

Today we are joining in prayer with people all around the world and are inspired by the knowledge that God has plans for us all and we are coming together, through WORLD DAY OF PRAYER to confirm that we hear his message and are ready to serve Him whenever He calls us to put his plans into action.

To-day's service comes to us from the other side of the world, from England (where I was born), Northern Ireland and Wales, 3 of the 4 countries that make up the United Kingdom. Scattered around Britain are ancient churches, cathedrals and ruins, some in large cities, others deep in the countryside. Stonehenge is a pre-historic monument in England, the Giants Causeway in Northern Ireland is 60 million years old and Wales was once quoted as being 'the castle capital of the world'.

Each of these 3 countries has its own patron Saint, St David in Wales, St Patrick in Ireland and St George in England. The first English King, Athelstan, was crowned in the year 925 and the Monarchy remains to this day, despite many highs and lows along the way.. Today we are blessed to have a much loved Queen who is a faithful Christian and a shining light in to-day's world.

However, *these 'ancient' countries now exist in a modern world where you will see skyscraper towers, wind farms, nuclear plants, airports in just about every county, and motorways criss, crossing the land., There have been changes to the population as people from Commonwealth Nations have made their homes in Britain, as have many Europeans. This means that modern Britain has a multicultural mix of citizens whose cultures have enriched their new homeland.*

In this modern world the British people experience the same problems that are besetting many other countries :-

- poverty,
- loneliness
- homelessness,
- domestic violence,
- injustice
- poor educational outcomes,
- insufficient nourishing food in many homes,
- people struggling with disabilities and mental health conditions

Jeremiah's message was to people in exile from their country,

In today's world we need this message of hope for people who are experiencing a different kind of 'exile' in their daily lives .

It is to these people that Jeremiah's message brings hope today.

HOPE is the overarching theme in our service. I looked up the word Hope and found several definitions, the one that really struck a chord with me was this:-

Definition of HOPE - to cherish a desire with anticipation.

Hope – when a homeless person is told ‘We may have found a house for you’

Hope - when a mother is given a voucher for Foodbank

Hope - when an unemployed person is told ‘we have a job that might suit you’

Hope - when the victim of domestic violence is told that there is room for her and her children to move into a shelter.

There have been truly amazing changes from the time of Ancient Britain to the modern era -but the Christian character of English, Welsh and Northern Irish people, has not changed. True, the churches may be fewer the congregations smaller, but the character of the people is one of kindness and caring, living out the command to ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ – and we heard that loud and clear in the ‘Stories of Hope’ today.

Over the years charities have been established around the world by churches and other organisations; Red Cross, World Vision, Samaritans, Britons and Australians are dedicated volunteers and today’s young people are joining the ranks everywhere putting up their hands to help at foodbanks, community centres, youth groups and cultural organisations. Around the world there is a deep awareness of homelessness issues and a growing army of volunteers working to make a difference. Volunteering is shining the light of HOPE around the world.

When we plant a seed, we hope that it will grow and flourish.

When God tells us that He has plans for us, we have hope and faith that His plans will come to fruition in our lives.

Hope breeds resilience; it is God’s light shining in the darkness.

However, there is something else to consider; if God declares that he has plans for people, then who is he going to call upon to assist him in bringing those plans to fruition?

We began with words from Jeremiah and I would like to end with words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 - he said:-

We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.