

Dear Friends

The diversity of my reading this Christmas ranged from 'Old wit for Old gits' to Jonathon Sacks's recent 'The Home we build together'. In the latter, the Rabbi explores three models of emergent society. The first is analogous to a Country House in which guest communities are made welcome on arrival, live comfortably, but have no real sense of ownership. The second, is a Hotel where incomers live equally in hermetic comfort, retiring each evening to social isolation. In the third he reflects on the poignancy of 'home'. Community, he suggests, is '*a group of people who build something together*'. To support this position he reflects on the second half of the Exodus story in which the Israelites are united as a people through building the Sanctuary. He notes that the detail and extent of the narrative reflects its significance, even when compared to the weight given to the presentation of law for instance. He notes the commitment of people in wanting to do God's will unconditionally, he notes the willingness of people to provide their giftedness and links the affirmation after each construct, to faithfulness with regard to God's instruction. He elevates the value of *faithfulness* as an identity defining proposition as opposed to the differentiating focus many place on *faith* itself. He would prefer to talk not about 'faith schools' for example but schools where 'faithfulness' is taught and practiced.

This part of scripture is relevant to us, for several reasons:

- i) It coincides with the section being read by those following the annual reading plan. (Not that I have the daily discipline, but I have read most of Exodus this month and am surprised to confirm the merit of this approach.)
- ii) Building community in and from diversity is a challenge that confronts us as a people.
- iii) As a people, we place more significance on the sanctuary service, the heavenly sanctuary and less on sanctuary building as a coordinating theme of societal bonding.

Having sat through a month of committees, and wrestled with a variety of divisive issues and conflicts, it seems to me that we need to ask the question '**what are we building together?**'. We are encouraged to draw together in embracing 'Evangelism', which I take to be the public proclamation of biblical truth for these times, and to commit ourselves to further discover what that truth is in our reading plan. The author of Exodus reminds that society building involves collaboration in both process and purpose.

Whilst belated, may I take this opportunity to thank you for continuing to participate in sanctuary building and the commitment you have to your personal calling. I trust that 2009 will result in building more than a BUC office, rather a renewed spirit of purpose. May God bless us to this end.

Yours truly

Victor (Being the current wit of an aging git)