

## Time for Reflection at the Scottish Parliament

A trailer for a television documentary to be broadcast this evening featuring Lachlan MacQuarie – the first Governor General of Australia has Professor Tom Devine saying ‘*England ruled the Empire – the Scots ran it*’. Pithily he described the worldwide influence of the Scot. There are all kinds of reasons for such influence: for example the Scottish Reformation and the Scottish Enlightenment and the emigrations of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

One of my commitments in my year as Moderator is to be an advocate for the joint initiative of the Church of Scotland Guild and Ministries Council. ‘*A Place for Hope*’. This seeks to develop methods of conflict transformation where confrontation is not the first option, rather through mediation people strive to find better ways of resolving conflict so that relationships are repaired and opportunities are created for new constructive ways of working together in the future.

Hope not only springs eternal in the human breast, It features in early literature and the apostle Paul reminds us too that hope is, with faith and love, one of the things which last forever.

In a recent correspondence column of the Guardian Weekly a writer reflecting on Pandora's box and the hope which was left in it says ‘*The activation of Hope in Pandora's box for the survival of our species will depend on two improbabilities. First the curbing of the testosterone-driven tendencies to homicidal mania, promoted by ideological bigotry and the power of the military industrial complex. Second should be a reduction of hubris and an implementation of our responsibilities to the biosphere.*’

The ‘*Place for Hope*’ initiative marks a new way of doing things. It is about offering methods which don't involve the adversarial, it is about working with people to help resolve difficulties, it is about being a non-anxious presence to assist in relationship building. One of Scotland's leading mediators, John Sturrock, has a firm belief that Scotland can build on its historical reputation as a place to debate new ideas and solve challenging problems to become, what William Ury – one of the global authorities on mediation, calls a ‘Third Side’ nation

May I draw to a close with a suggestion? That we seize the moment contributing to a new Scottish Enlightenment which will enable Scots – if not to run the world – at least to change it! How about looking at each other in a new way? And remind ourselves of one of the greatest ethical statements of all time which, in one form or another, is found in most faiths and none though I, as I am sure you would expect, quote Jesus

‘*Do to others as you would that they to you would do.*’

How that ethic, firmly grasped, would enlighten us all.