

Address by

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8<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Romans 12:1-5

**'Hope'**

Back in the 70's when I was but a young thing I recall my then careers teacher asking me the question, "Ellis, what do you hope to do with your life?"

I replied, "I want to be a policeman or maybe a pilot."

Well as it turned out, I achieved one of those and am currently close to the second, well in uniform at least!

**That teacher didn't try to put me off** what I hoped to do because it was just that, it was a hope. **Thank goodness life is full of hopes, it's full of aspirations too,** and they are the very thing we all thrive on. Indeed, it is important for each of us to have something to look forward to in life. Some years ago, when I entered into the world of military chaplaincy I began to think about 'hope' again, this time about its place in leadership.

My years as a police officer were a really enjoyable time of my life and I was undoubtedly exposed to many and varied unique experiences and I truly believe that this time provided me with a unique understanding of leadership, in its broadest sense, an understanding that I was able to take into ministry, and more particularly into RAF Chaplaincy. I was quick to learn that the place of the chaplain within the military is perceived by many as a leading and guiding role. This was highlighted for me particularly during my time as a chaplain at the RAF College, Cranwell. There I was involved in the delivery of the Beliefs and Values Programme to Officer Cadets. I became very aware of the leadership content being delivered and of its importance when exploring with them such things as morality and the promotion of self worth and the value that each individual has and we would explore the core values of the Royal Air Force - Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence (RISE) and what that means to each of us.

**It's a reality of life that the focus each of us may have will be challenged at times,** but it is how we respond to those challenges that matters. Hopefully a response that is rooted in our values and tinged with humility. I think there is a message about values in our reading from Romans. It talks about a self-awareness that we all need, about thinking outside of your own setting so **that you don't become so** well-adjusted to your own situation that you forget that sometimes we need to adjust, to embrace differences and join with the hopes of others without compromising ourselves. There are many influences in this world and not all are good and they can often challenge your values and your focus. Know your values and know your current focus and be confident in them.

My own focus has had to change over the past couple of years particularly in respect of my current post. I believe that as a military chaplain and as Deputy Chaplain-in-Chief

one of the things I have to focus on is that of leadership. And what I offer is an alternative perspective on leadership to that of, for example, the head of a company, or even a regular military leader. Through its very nature the form of leadership that I exercise will be different in many ways from that exercised by those following a business or military model. I believe that my leadership has to be grounded in my faith and understanding of it. **Underneath the Chaplains' Branch crest are the words 'Ministrare non Ministrari' ...to serve, not to be served. A simple statement that has its place at the heart of many of our world's religions - yet it is a statement that I believe underpins the very nature of leadership from a chaplains' perspective.**

For some this might be seen as turning conventional leadership on its head, personally I believe it is much more than this. From my own perspective I try to lead **'from within'**, attempting to convey a vision of morality and spiritual welfare and then taking that vision into reality. This is a reality that often involves difficult and life changing circumstances which in turn can present difficult leadership challenges.

I recall talking with a colleague once and discussing how we could describe what we do as chaplains. Somewhere in that conversation we talked about being **'purveyors of hope'**. I see that more and more as my journey of ministry moves on. It was Napoleon Bonaparte who supposedly said that, **'a leader is a dealer in hope'**. **What better place to do this than from 'within' - being part of the whole.**

The hope here is **not focussing on what I 'hope' for but what 'hope I can bring and give to others.**

Many of you gathered here today will become leaders in the military, business or even politics. Your leadership will undoubtedly take on many shapes and forms and will draw from and be fed by the people and circumstances you find yourself in.

Returning to that reading from Romans, I think it is like each of us being various parts of the human body, with each part getting its meaning from the body as a whole and not the other way round.

My hope and my prayer for you all is that in whatever you do and from whatever values you draw from that you will fulfil your hopes and be able to give others hope in return.

John R Ellis