Living Hope and Steadfast Prayer and Action
By Elizabeth Walters, IHM

We have worked throughout our lives, lifting up the values we hold dear and the hopes and dreams of the people we serve. Now some of us are shocked by what’s happening politically, socially and ecologically across our country, at the southern border and around the planet. Values including basic human rights are being challenged. Inequality grows by leaps and bounds. Without global cooperation, Earth and all living beings are facing a cataclysmic future. Children are ripped from their parents and put in cages. Nationalism, Me, Mine replace multilateral negotiation. Hate is electing politicians. Global institutions, birthed when we were toddlers, now risk collapse. Western liberal democracy is in crisis.

We do not know what life on Earth will look like in 50 years. We do know that the next election is very important. We know that we need compassionate, creative leaders to help us find the best pathway into the future. At the same time, we know that lots of people depend on us, so we keep hope alive by striving to deepen our values and spirituality and by continuing the good works with all the love in our hearts.

In these challenging times, here are some of the things that help to strengthen my hope:

- Experience is teaching us in new ways that prayer, coupled with active strategies, may be the best response to remedy injustice, violence and, at a personal level, the painful emotions today’s happenings evoke. For example, during the worst period in our nation’s history, slaves were devastated by slavery. Yet, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth refused to despair. They did not quit, nor did they join the oppressors and take an easy way. They hoped against all odds, and they continued the good work of ending slavery.

- Loads of social, economic and ecological advocacy and other good works are happening everywhere. The more we connect and network the better the movements.

- While we witness resiliency in our democracy, these times also teach us that our constitutional republic is fragile. We cannot take governance for
granted, nor can we elect representatives who would harm or destroy these institutions.

- We understand in new ways that silence worsens an unjust situation.
- Increasing numbers of people now know how important it is to vote.
- Thanks to the Poor Peoples Campaign and the efforts of well-informed advocates, for the first time in decades reducing and/or ending poverty is part of the early election considerations.
- More women than ever before are engaging in the political life of the country and getting elected.
- Growing numbers of young people are committed to social justice, reforming this country, and making it work for all, not just a few. Look at the young people in Parkland, Fla., and the millions more who are getting involved in their communities and in politics. They are the future and many won’t opt out or give up.
- For now, there is a grip on power and people who look different are not welcome, Nonetheless the diverse, multicultural majority is the future of this country and it is coming into being in many ways. How wonderfully inclusive and hope-filled this is!

The next major election in our country provides us with a great opportunity to do the good works. This election is scheduled for Nov. 3, 2020. It may seem like a very long way off but beginning to prepare now will give us lots of opportunities to invite conversations with diverse groups of people, listen well, learn from others and share our vision, values, concerns.