

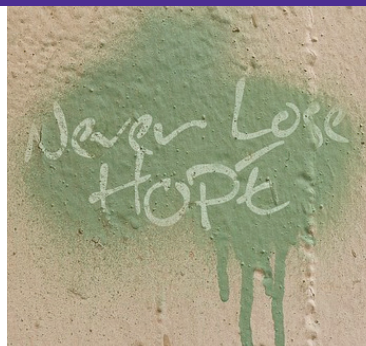
31st October 2019

The UK is in a hard place. We are living through a time of turmoil and division unlike anything I've known. Brexit is going to test all of our politicians, institutions, businesses, ideals and communities unlike much that we've lived through in my generation. Perhaps, as some say, we're in times as tumultuous as those surrounding the last world war. Certainly what will unfold over the next few months is, for now, unpredictable and its consequences are likely to touch us for decades. I've already shared via these reflections my sense of horror and sadness at the decision we've taken. Everything happening right now makes me far more horrified and far more sad.

One thing already happening, which I expect to get worse in the near future, is the attempt to lay more

and more blame upon the EU for our difficulties and for the chaos of Brexit. Already in much of the press coverage, in public statements and online the remainder of the EU is being set up as the supreme scapegoat for our woes. We'll be told that the UK has been reasonable and the EU intransigent. That is a profound lie. It is an evil myth feeding division, unkindness and inhospitality. As such, it will be one of the evil forces at work in the world that the Church must stand against. It is the direct contradiction of all that Westminster has always stood for and shown.

So I want to reaffirm all that we've worked so hard together to build and shape and foster these many years as one single team across Westminster. We believe in abundant, kind, generous and inclusive hospitality. We cherish one another in all of



our diversity of backgrounds, cultures, languages, beliefs and histories. We will hear harsh things said about all sorts of people in the coming weeks. Our vocation is to continue to ensure that Westminster is a thriving and highly visible beacon of hope, goodness, kindness, tolerance and unity. In doing so we justify all of the trust placed in us all by the URC. In doing so we help renew our commitments to find a better way to build the world than the ways of blame and abuse that can seem so powerful right now.

Westminster reflects some of the deepest and best hopes that the world needs. How we are matters.

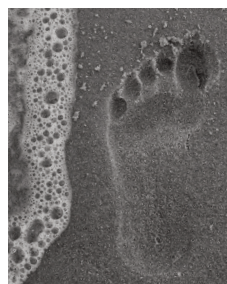
“Britain’s rightful place lies at the heart of the European project, fighting for a rules-based liberal world order... As an anglophile, I still believe the quiet majority of reasonable British people want to see their country engaged as Europeans.”

Guy Verhofstadt, Brexit coordinator for the European Parliament, former Belgian Prime Minister

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

When Sadness Strikes



Someone once commented to me that Westminster seemed sometimes to have to cope with more than its share of tragedies and sadness. Recently hurt, pain, loss and devastation have laid their weary hands upon our hearts again. I don't for a moment think we've been singled out for a particularly big share of suffering as a community. But I do know that we have

experienced much and will do so again. Any community of 70 or so people of all generations will know joys and tears because to live, love and share is to welcome our fragility and to risk our hearts being broken. But someone else's comments ring very loud to me right now: where else would we find a community within which to live, work, teach and learn that so truly enfolds us in compassion and care? Where else can some of our hardest days find sanctuary and words together in a chapel, regardless of what we believe? Where else can love be lived this well?

