

After Brexit

I watched history tremble as 11:00pm on January 31st rolled past me. For some, the majority who voted in the 2016 referendum and the electors who returned the big Conservative majority in our recent General Election, this was a job well done and about time too. After an increasingly fractious, wasteful and undemocratic 47 years, the UK finally left the EU and could set sail for a brighter future of freedom. Brexit was done.

You'll know that I wasn't rejoicing. For me this was catastrophe. I probably know only the tiniest fraction of the list of failings of the EU. I can see that it got things wrong and that it was as subject to human failure and wickedness as any other institution we ever invent.

But the force of the loss of our belonging to something bigger than ourselves is what still haunts me, as it

has since the referendum. That force truly hit me earlier in the week of Brexit.

It came sitting in the silence of our dining hall as the Federation gathered, as we do every year, to commemorate those who died in the Holocaust and all who have suffered in the genocides that have so cruelly scarred our world since the Second World War. January 27th marked 75 years since the Russian Army liberated Auschwitz. International Holocaust Memorial Day helps us remember even as the generations pass.

For me, part of the profound significance of the EU, and of our belonging to it, was that it led us away from the ashes of war into peaceful cooperation amongst nations that had, twice in a generation, sought only to kill and destroy on a scale that shattered the



world. The EU was a better way of being nations together; worth belonging to.

No longer. I have to live into the new reality and work to mend the divisions and evils unleashed in recent years. And it seems to me that hospitality has taken on an even greater significance. I have often thanked you for the depth of hospitality shown across this college as so many come and go from across the world and around the Church. After Brexit, our hospitality must be real for all of you who live and work here from other nations. You matter and you are welcome. Together, we have built and still build a Westminster open to the world; always.

“As the body of Christ, the Church exists beyond human borders; our calling to live out the generous love of God in our communities, in our country, in Europe and beyond remains, steadfast and unchanged.”

Rt Revd Susan Brown
Moderator of General Assembly,
Church of Scotland

Professor Sir Christopher Martin Dobson (1949-2019)



At the end of January, Jenny and I represented Westminster at one of the memorial services for Professor Sir Chris Dobson, Master of St. John's College. Chris was a gentle and generous man who was a strong supporter of Westminster (we sit on land bought from St. John's by the sisters). He knew the Cambridge Theological Federation and encouraged our work together. He was renowned for his ability to

greet everyone at St. John's, regardless of their status, by name and to remember his conversations with them all. Yet he was also a world-leading researcher into biochemistry and some of his discoveries are at the heart of ongoing work to find treatments for such diseases as Alzheimers and diabetes. Cambridge is filled with very clever women and men from across the world who are often working to transform the world for better. But few have the humility and kindness of Chris. May he rest in peace, and rise in glory.

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