

Rector's Letter – March 2019

Dear Friends,

Judging by his State of the Union address, President Donald Trump enjoys putting his policies into rhyme. His latest catchphrase about the wall he wants to see built on the southern border of the USA is: 'Build a wall, see crime fall.' This pithy summary of his argument for a physical barrier between the USA and Mexico is succinct and memorable. Yet it is divisive like much contemporary Western politics. Walls separate: they define a 'them' and 'us.' In this case, the assumption is that the 'them' are criminals. That's all we are told, and all we need to know. That's it, an open-and-shut case. We need to keep them out.



At least President Donald Trump was clear about how he saw the rôle of the USA in international politics in his inaugural address. Then he repeatedly used the slogan 'America First' which was first used in the 1930s/1940s to signal a non-interventionist approach to the Second World War. In our own nation, we have been battling with Brexit for two years now. One of the depressing features of the ongoing debate has been the lack of an articulated vision for our life together as a nation, never mind any clear view on how we are going to play our part in making the world more just and peaceful. Instead, the arguments tend to focus on national self-interest and, particularly, what is good for the economy.

Nationally, we are facing the pressing issues of funding the NHS and our schools, of providing good social care for an increasingly elderly population, and trying to reduce the wide discrepancy in individual and regional wealth. Taking a global perspective, we are in danger of doing too little, too late, when it comes to combatting global warming. Then there is the growing number of refugees, and the staggering gap between rich and poor with the top 26 billionaires owning as much as the poorest 50% of the world's population.

As Christians, we cannot be blinkered and only concerned with ourselves. We believe in God who loves every individual, and whose prophets speak of caring for 'the widow, orphan, the refugee.' The Bible holds before us God's vision for the World: everyone without exception enjoying the fruits of a just peace.

These are challenging times, not least for God's Church. However, we need to be courageous and bold. The Church is called to be 'Light to the Nations.' Our vision needs to be wide and encompassing. Attractive as it might be to hide and shut out the wider world, we would be abrogating our responsibility as custodian of God's creation and a community characterised by a generous, all-embracing love.

The Church is world-wide. Our parish has links with South Sudan and Romania through our link mission partners and with Kenya through our diocese. Rachel Prior and John Saxon, two of my colleagues, recently visited the church in Kenya with a diocesan group. These collaborative enterprises exemplify how the Church and the World are supposed to work. Interrelationships of mutual benefit in the service of a greater good are the aim.

With the advent of the Internet, we are more than ever aware that we live in a global village.

The World's problems are not going to be solved by nations bunkering down and building walls. Only by collaboration can we mitigate the crises facing us, including 'climate change', offering sanctuary to refugees escaping famine or war, and helping raise the living standards of the billions barely eking out a living.

As we approach Good Friday and Easter Day, let us remember that Jesus came to break down the wall between Jew and Gentile to form one people. Centred on the Risen Christ, the Church, locally and globally, is called to model God's love for all people and to collaborate together and with others to fulfil God's loving purposes for our nation and the rest of the world.

I close with some verses from Ephesians chapter 2 '*...now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For his is our peace: in his flesh he...has broken down the wall of hostility between us...that he might create in us one humanity. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.*'

With love,

David Tomlinson

Previous copies of Rector's Letter

[February 2019](#)

[Dec 2018/Jan 2019](#)

[November 2018](#)

[October 2018](#)