

## VICAR'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

As 2018 turned into 2019 I dare to suggest our mood was more positive (although perhaps not in Parliament!) than it is now. A new year is a time for new beginnings, new resolutions, new habits, new optimism and hope. Many of us will have made resolutions to be more active, eat more healthily, spend more time with family, or to better ourselves in some other way. These resolutions are positive yet take enormous amounts of determination to bring into fruition. The year began with hope but that seems to be evaporating. How many of us have already broken these resolutions, or in some way let them lapse?

At the time of writing this letter our national political life has been thrown into chaos. The largest defeat inflicted on a Government proposal and a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister. And still uncertainty reigns over the future relationship that the UK will have with the European Union. Regardless of where one stands on the Brexit divide it is undeniable that our political life is in crisis and our futures hang in the balance. What will happen on 29 March when the UK officially is due to leave the EU is still anyone's guess. With so much bitterness and resentment featuring in the discourse one must question whether the nation can ever be re-united regardless of how things turn out. Hope has given way to anguish and despair.

Into this situation, I believe the Church has much to offer – after all we are a people who believe that life comes out of death, and not just any life: life in all its fullness. The Church can help to heal the wounds of division within families, neighbourhoods, towns and cities, because the Church is used to disagreement and division – we have been disagreeing with each other for 2000 years and have divided many times – but on the issues that are most important we agree. We hold to be true, universally, that Jesus Christ is Lord – the Son of God; who has been revealed to us through his birth in Bethlehem and the visit of the magi, through his baptism in the Jordan and his first miracle in Cana of Galilee, through his presentation in the temple and subsequent teaching and healing ministry, and finally but ultimately through his sacrificial death on the cross for the redemption of the world.

We hold to be true that we now have a new relationship with the Father through the intercession of Jesus Christ. We hold to be true that we are forgiven children of God. We might still quarrel over questions of leadership and personal preference, but we no-longer (thankfully) deride other believers and denominations for the way in which they seek to live as disciples of Christ. We have been, and are learning how to disagree well. We have learnt to acknowledge the real pains and sadness of division and to share these openly rather than brushing them under the carpet. We have learnt to pray for those who do not understand us and to try to understand the other.

As we journey ever closer to towards 29 March I invite you to pray more and more for the health and wellbeing of our country; for our elected representatives; for unity in diversity; for hope in the darkness and chaos; and that in all things we may seek, in God's name, to be blessings to each other and to our wider community. Healing the divisions, if at all possible, will take time but what better way to start than to begin with prayer and hope.

Every Blessing,

*Mike*