

9th April 2019

Dear Clergy and Wardens

Brexit Update

As we approach Holy Week and Easter it is no time for the Diocesan Secretary to be daring to suggest to anyone what to say, think or pray about Brexit. We would all prefer that this season should be a time to cast our gaze upon much higher things. In his rather splendid Blog the admirable Rev. Michael Sadgrove manages to find a way to marry the two things more elegantly than I could dream of. He writes:

Given that the divisive politics of our own day is the context in which we shall be commemorating the cross this year, it would be surprising if we didn't hear all kinds of political echoes and resonances in the passion story. Some of the themes that have haunted the rhetoric of the Brexit debate are clear in the narrative. We could think of financial inducement and betrayal (Judas and the thirty pieces of silver); the strain on personal relationships ("Are you not one of his disciples?"); the naked populism of the crowd that sucks everyone into its craving for a victim ("Crucify him!"); the indecisiveness (some might call it non-alignment) of the political leader who could have saved the victim (Pontius Pilate who found no fault in Jesus but for all that turned him over to be crucified). And so on. There is more on this at: (<http://northernwoolgatherer.blogspot.com/>)

On a more temporal level there are things that we are trying to do from the Diocesan Office in London and the Bishop's Office in Brussels to try to assist at this time of great uncertainty for so many of our chaplaincies and their congregations. I would like to fill you in on these:

- Amidst the uncertainty and discomfort we have been seeking to communicate a message encouraging reconciliation and one urging clarity from our leaders. We have been urging that practical attention be paid to the needs of British nationals who live in the EU. Bishop Robert has continued to advocate strongly in Church and wider media on these issues. He gave a series of BBC interviews which you can access at <https://europe.anglican.org/main/latest-news/post/1465--bishop-robert-brexit-latest>
- We have been engaging with politicians to attend to key issues which affect many of our chaplains and members our congregations. One issue in particular is healthcare. Following our letters and conversations, Dame Caroline Spelman MP (Second Church Estates Commissioner) raised these issues in Parliament in February, including the future of the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) . There is more on this at <https://europe.anglican.org/main/latest-news/post/1463-brexit-diocese-gets-support-at-westminster> From further contact with Health Ministers, we are told that the UK government is now engaging with the EU27 in an effort to continue the reciprocal health arrangements until December 2020 even in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit. We can only watch this space.

- On our Diocesan website we are gathering together a set of links and resources which may be of value to our congregations. Many will have their own places to go for this kind of information but we hope this 'Brexit Resources Hub' will be useful: <https://europe.anglican.org/brexit/welcome-to-our-brexit-resources-hub-1>. It will be continually updated and if you have suggestions of things that you think could usefully be added do get in touch with our Director of Communications Damian Thwaites damian.thwaites@churchofengland.org
- Many chaplaincies have had useful meetings and consultations with UK Consular officials to exchange information about the consequences of a no-deal. The UK and EU27 respectively have published the following guidance on a no deal, accessible here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/important-eu-exit-information-for-uk-nationals-if-theres-no-deal> and https://ec.europa.eu/info/brexit/brexit-preparedness_en The EU site includes links to each of the EU27 member states' guidance on Brexit. In the event of a no deal scenario, we will be in touch with all UK Ambassadors in the EU member states across the Diocese with a view to further meetings taking place.
- We have sent a full briefing to the Secretary-General of the Archbishops Council, William Nye and the Chief Executive of the Church Commissioners, Andrew Brown so they are fully briefed on the possible consequences of a No Deal Brexit for our Diocese. We have also briefed ++Justin.
- In England the Church of England has launched an initiative to encourage conversations and prayer about Brexit within congregations. The particular approach did not feel quite appropriate to the context of many of our chaplaincies but you may find some of the prayers and liturgical texts useful, particularly where they focus on reconciliation. <https://www.churchofengland.org/together>

I hope these initiatives will be useful and do be assured of my prayers in what feel like particularly difficult times. If you have any queries or suggestions please do not hesitate to get in touch. May I send you all good wishes of the final days of Lent and for a joyous Easter celebration. It is certainly one that transcends the actions of our political leaders.

Kind regards

Andrew Caspari
Chief Operating Office (Diocesan Secretary)