

## Friends

As I write this I have just returned from Windsor, where the town is gearing up for the state visit of President Trump. A strong police presence and the barricading of the Long Walk remind us that it was only two weeks ago that one of Donald Trump's staunch supporters was shot dead on an American college campus. The state visit has risks that must be managed, but is also a classic example of the soft diplomacy that this country performs in an almost unique fashion through the work of our royal family.

As Christians, we ourselves are constantly about the work of God's kingdom. We may not see ourselves as diplomats, responsible for the safety of the visitor, or important in the organisation of international trade and relations, and yet we are. 1 Peter 2:9 says: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into the light." We too are responsible for ensuring that the message of the Kingdom is shared with as many people as possible, that people are kept safe from harm, and that the lines of communication are kept as open as possible between God and the people around us. We do that by offering opportunities for worship, but also by recognising that when people are worried about what to eat, what to drink, and whether they can pay the fuel bill this winter, then there is not necessarily the space left to think about the things of God, and so we try to support people in that need. We do it too by maintaining good safeguarding practices, and by being as kind and loving and easy to talk to as we know how, sharing that love of God wherever possible.

Ultimately, the circus will move on, the President will return to America, and Windsor will return to its usual daily round. We have

no such luxury. We are always ambassadors in the places where we have been set. As such, we have a responsibility to both tell and live God's word to the best of our abilities. May our soft diplomacy achieve, not the easing of tariffs and better trade deals, but the winning of souls, and the sense of hope and love that we have known ourselves in our church membership.

God bless, Vicci