Friends

With the American mid-terms and the Israeli elections coming up, both of which will have a global impact, there is a lot for us to be thoughtful about. Then there is the budget, carefully protected from leaks this year and announced after the deadline for this newsletter, but expected to announce a rise in minimum wage, although with 18 – 20-year-olds set to see lower increases than in previous years.

When I left school at 18 and went to university, it was still quite usual for people to leave at 16 and go straight out to work. Subsequent governments have wanted to break down the inequality that this could produce and continued a trend towards more time in education. Nowadays, although you can leave school at 16, you must continue in education or training until you turn 18. As Christians who believe that Christ came to offer "life in all its fullness" and as Methodists who developed the first Sunday Schools as ways of helping people out of illiteracy, we should be pro-education. Yet some people don't do well in the classroom. Matthew the tax collector, and Judas Iscariot who was trusted to be the disciples' treasurer were probably educated men, but it is likely that Peter, James and John were minimal scholars at the best. They could tally the fish, perhaps even write out a simple bill or receipt, but they were not the intelligentsia of the day. Indeed, it is suggested that the Gospel of Luke is the Gospel Peter would have given us, had he been as literate as Luke.

I wonder where that leaves us in a world where we know that there are an estimated 981 000 young people in the UK aged 16 – 24 who are not in education, employment or training (April – June 2026, Office for National Statistics). When we don't know these youngsters ourselves, it is particularly difficult to imagine what would be helpful, but we have a responsibility to be as aware as possible of the options available to our youngsters in terms of school, college, university and evening classes so that we can also be aware of the difficulties these organisations locally may be struggling with. Education is always good, and since one size rarely fits all, we should be looking to support as much as possible in our own areas.

God bless, Vicci