

Friends

I had hoped to write you a bright, bubbly piece on the joys of leave and looking forward to the autumn. Instead, turning to the news to ensure that nothing dreadful has happened that I might need to reflect upon, I find that dreadful things have indeed happened, and that lovely though the summer was, there is work to be done.

As I write (Tuesday afternoon) it is to the news that a further group of refugees seeking to reach Britain have been lost in the English Channel with 12 confirmed dead and more missing. Simultaneously, a group of 5 12- and 14-year-olds in Leicester have been arrested for the murder of an 80-year-old man walking his dog. What is going on? While some people are struggling so badly in life, that a rough crossing in an inappropriate vessel to get to inhospitable shores feels like a risk worth taking, others at an age that is both tragically young and definitely old enough to recognise evil, have killed in a brutal and inexplicable act of group violence.

Over the summer, I have been reading a book by Dave Kinnaman called "You Lost Me". Written in America in 2011, it looks at research on why children who grow up in the Church fall away as young adults. In the end, the answer seems to be that the Church is not able to speak relevantly to the world, or even about the world. Young people who are interested in fashion, finance, medicine, science, media and politics are not finding the Church saying anything in these areas, beyond a kind of generalised "steer clear", "beware" or even "Here be dragons"!

Sophie and I will be exploring the truth or otherwise of some of this with our young people at Geese over the coming term, not so much because the stories I highlighted above are personally relevant to them, but because they are symptomatic of wider community issues that we must address as a church and as a nation.

Methodism was born in an age of political upheaval where across the water, French nobility was sacrificed on the steps of Madame la Guillotine, and at home, there was a fear that

education, spiritual or academic, of the common people would result in the same. Perhaps there are areas in which we need to take up that early banner again!

God bless, Vicci