



From Charity to Solidarity

A Radical Return to True Christian Justice

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INTRODUCTION

June 19th has a particular resonance. It is my parents' wedding anniversary. Their ashes are buried under the floor in this great cathedral building. My father David and my mother Grace each had a distinctive ministry. His passion for justice was obviously better known, but her passion was for a spirituality of relationship. Both loved Liverpool and were shaped by the city, as of course, was I.

But I didn't like being the bishop's daughter. I preferred Liverpool's music scene. And I was estranged from the faith until a conversion experience led me to be received into the Catholic Church in my mid-twenties. After that, I avoided church related work until 2011. I was then in my late forties and both my parents had died. I experienced a movement of the Spirit, which led to the creation of Together for the Common Good. It wasn't my idea. As our Lord says, "you did not choose me, I chose you" (John 15:16).

Our work explores how we - the people of the church - are called to contribute to the renewal of our country in this time of great change. Tonight, I've been asked to focus on the church's role in terms of charity and social justice. We'll look at justice, power and class, Christian distinctiveness and mission drift, and explore what kind of response is needed now.

The 40th anniversary of *Faith in the City*¹ is the prompt for this evening but not the focus. The report inspired many, through its ground-breaking engagement with the realities of British life, but too much has changed since then for it to remain a guide to policy. Rather than looking back at what has changed, Christians must read the signs of the today's times, with care and attention.

READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

To understand the great malaise facing the West, we must question our political, social, and cultural assumptions.

Catholic Social Thought

Catholic Social Thought (CST) offers a valuable framework for this process. Rooted in the gospel, CST draws on social and political expertise, data, and lived experience from across the world.

Sometimes referred to as “the theology of the Holy Spirit in practice,” CST seeks to uphold the integrity of human beings and creation and to interrogate structures of power that dehumanize. It recognizes the tension between capital and labour, emphasizing the priority of dignified work. It acknowledges the importance of wealth creation and the social good that businesses can achieve, while remaining realistic about the damage that unconstrained capital can do.

CST is nonpartisan. Both conservative and radical, it has even-handedly condemned all dehumanising modern political-economic systems: communist, socialist and liberal as well as capitalist. All of them are judged to be deeply corrupted by the materialist, spiritually empty premises established by the narrow rationalism of the atheistic Enlightenment.

What we see

So first, we diagnose what we see. Looking through the lens of CST, we see what some describe as a meta crisis. We may disagree about which problems are most serious, but there are many to choose from.

We see young people struggling to afford a home, massive public and private debt, failing health and social care systems, extremes of inequality and deep estrangements between affluent and poor communities.

We see the collapse of trust in institutions and the fragmenting of society with communities living separate lives.

We see the tragedy of war, refugees and displaced people, human trafficking, the commodification of creation and climate change.

We see the cheapening of the human being in the liberalizing of abortion, assisted suicide, commercial surrogacy and body modification - exploitation on an industrial scale, fuelled by exploitative social media platforms.

We see a steep rise in symptoms of human distress, growing loneliness, addiction, self-harm, depression, nihilism and feelings of meaninglessness.

You may think this diagnosis is harsh, and of course there are many positive things happening as well as these realities. But what you see depends on where you live, who you know, and what media you consume.

Political Economy

But the great encyclicals of the CST tradition train us to see how systems of political economy affect our common life.

And so today we see a system that, while enriching big corporations, has undermined the dignity of work. Requiring units of labour to be cheap and mobile it offshored our manufacturing to low wage economies with no workers' rights - and encouraged the importing of workers, away from their own families, to take up low paid jobs that prop up Western business models. This is a system described as "frictionless" by investors, but this loss of skills and capacity to make things has weakened our national security, and in human terms, has become a recipe for social unrest.

Four decades ago, the idea that people should have to move to find work was regarded as right wing. This is now rebranded as "freedom".

The loss of jobs and investment - with no meaningful replacement - led to civic degradation on a vast scale. Not only in "urban" settings in cities and outer estates, but especially in our coastal towns and former industrial heartlands. The shift to the knowledge economy and the service economies then shamed manual labour.² To add insult to injury, these communities were then framed as deficient and backward.

What we've witnessed is effectively a politics of abandonment. The impact of the new, post-industrial economy has been catastrophic, devastating to the common good.

Liberalism

In 2015, Pope Francis asserted that "we are not living in an era of change so much as a change of era."³ Every era is shaped by a particular philosophy. The animating idea of the era that is in the process of breaking down comes from the philosophy of liberalism,⁴ in particular, a strain known as neoliberalism.

The optimal neoliberal arrangement features low wages, big governments that serve businesses - and large welfare states that keep away revolutionary discontent.⁵ The neoliberal conception of welfare does not rely on a culture of interdependence that we might recognise as Christian. Rather, it emphasises impersonal support, through money transfers and the government or non-governmental provision of services.

The impacts of this operating system are not just economic but also social and moral. Its amoral approach eats away at shared values and erodes our sense of citizenship. It dissolves the particularity of place and commodifies what it means to be human.

It is inherently unstable, because the ideology relies on a false anthropology – a desiccated, soulless conception of the human being which generates a false idea of freedom and leads to a cult of self. This is quite unlike Christian anthropology where the person is a relational being made in the image of God.

Neoliberal freedom is freedom from constraint, including from the constraints of family, country, borders, history, God, and natural law. It sees tradition and accountability as obstacles to “progress,” and relationship to place as old-fashioned. It drives us to outsource more and more of the things that we used to do as communities to the state or the market.

Ultimately, it “liberates” society from truth and from mutual responsibility. The motivation of this spirit is anti-human, which is why the system is now unravelling.

This has resulted in a de-moralization and the emergence of identitarian politics, distorted forms of victimhood and the culture wars. The result is a *distraction* from the fundamental problem, which is a dysfunctional political economy generating poverty in all its forms - economic, relational and spiritual. It is very important to understand this distraction.

DISCONTENT

Neoliberalism has been in control of British politics for 45 years. Both main parties have been captured, creating a “uni-party” disconnected from reality on the ground. Gross mismanagement by successive governments has been provoking increasing discontent.

But this is a global trend. Every country that follows this system is seeing the same effects. With a relativistic and materialist logic, its worldview ultimately brings about its own destruction.

Opposition has extended across the West, manifesting in opposition to its mismanaged migration and net zero policies, and its progressive social and sexual dogma. Despite a few bad actors, these grassroots protest movements for the most part reflect the frustration of the excluded majority. They are rejecting the hyper liberal project of globalisation and progressivism.

Efforts by a politically progressive “overclass”⁶ to control the media narrative are alienating the public further. As John Gray says, they cannot comprehend that what they termed “populism” is actually ‘political blowback against the social disruption that their policies have created.’⁷

In the UK, we find ourselves in a period of real upheaval. The question is who can deliver a common good political economy that can underpin a social peace⁸. Establishment parties have discredited themselves and though a populist insurgency is asking some of the right questions, they do not have all the answers. Good statecraft requires not only vision and competence but a framework of ethical principles. It is a hopeful sign that serious thinkers increasingly recognise this as a “hinge moment”. The political space is therefore wide open – there is a real opportunity to shape what comes next.

THE RESPONSE

So now we have the context we can begin to think about how to respond. To start, we should check our assumptions about justice.

Forms of Justice

We all have an idea what justice means. But it is not good enough to quote Amos, “let justice roll down like waters.” We must interrogate *how* justice is delivered to see if it aligns with our faith.

Currently shaping our political economy there are two secular visions of justice:

- the utilitarian tradition, focusing on *welfare*, and efficiency,
- and
- the libertarian tradition, focusing on *rights* and freedom from constraint

This utilitarian-libertarian “welfarist” combination is what underpins our current operating system. It is based on that false anthropology and that false idea of freedom. As a method of how to achieve justice, this approach is utterly different from the Christian justice tradition.⁹

Jesus was a common worker in a Roman economy that kept down the wages of the poor.¹⁰ His resistance to that injustice was rooted in the ancient rabbinical tradition, a transcendent vision of justice, where human beings are in right relationship - with each other and with God.

His justice took spiritual as well as civic form. He introduced the kingdom, a whole new way of living, bringing people together – rich and poor, across ethnicity, age and sex, educational background and across class – we could say to build a common good.

In God's economy, if you're having a hard time, I'm to walk in relationship with you - accompany you until you get back on your feet. Not just a cash transfer. Not create a system that rationalizes out opportunities for human connection. Not abandon our neighbour in their flat, surrounded by unpaid bills. Our primary relationships should be with each other, not with the bureaucratic state.

So we can start to see what an authentically Christian response would look like.

Quite different from the method adopted by successive governments - characterized by that toxic utilitarian-libertarian combination, where the state colludes with big business by subsidizing wages that are too low to live on.

But what about the church, how has it interpreted justice?

The service provider dynamic

Foodbanks and other ways of serving are often sources of pride in churches wanting to serve poor communities, and I want to honour the extraordinary Christian social action movements. However, growing need, together with the rising tide of secularism, can sometimes prove a temptation to justify usefulness by leaning into the service provider role. But the Church is called not to be useful. It is called to be the embodiment of love.

The word charity, of course actually means love, but somehow it acquired a meaning more associated with delivery of welfare and emergency food parcels – its meaning became stripped of relationship. At the very least, churches providing services should be places of conviviality with the opportunity to talk and to pray and be prayed for.

Pope Francis repeatedly called for our charity – our love - to be personal. He said solutions to poverty are not to be found in activism or welfarism.¹¹ He said we are not to keep poor people at arm's length. (Of course, he was not arguing for there to be no welfare state or no charity, and of course he supports welfare support for those in need).

His point was the same as the founder of the Catholic Worker tradition¹², Dorothy Day's, that if we institutionalise love and care then we risk losing what it means to be human. We are not like the state. The church is not meant to be an efficient delivery system.

But the uncomfortable truth is that too much of Christian social action has involved activities focussed on giving out resources rather than offering forms of help which build mutuality.

This unequal power dynamic is revealed in professionalised terms such as "outreach" and "client" or even "guest", which do not reflect friendship and mutual respect. Likewise "community development", "projects" and "facilitators" betray a managerial mindset – well-intentioned but unintentionally alienating the people it aims to help. The same dynamic can also – even if inadvertently – play into a culture of dependency.

From Dependency to Agency

To move away from the contractual and towards the covenantal, we need to focus on ways of helping which have empowerment and reciprocity at their heart, shift to approaches that enable people trapped in poverty to have agency.

The CST principle of subsidiarity is instructive here – that responsibility is taken at the appropriate level, empowering people to help themselves. As Benedict XVI said: 'Subsidiarity is first and foremost a form of assistance to the human person..[which]..respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others.'¹³

A relational, rather than transactional, approach is fundamental. Relationships must be two-way – inviting people into a dynamic where their *contribution* is a vital ingredient in the change that is happening. In food poverty initiatives, this means that beneficiaries will pay something towards the food provision they are receiving and have the opportunity to help out. In homelessness services, this means empowering people to pay their rent and contribute to their own recovery from the challenges they face.

Christian charity should aim to welcome people into participating in community rather than keeping them in receiving mode. People are not transformed simply through what they receive but through what they participate in and contribute to. This is why the 12-Step movement of addiction recovery has been so effective and sustainable, because everyone who truly benefits commits to helping others. Thus, one person's recovery is always bound up with another's in a community-based form of help.¹³

A practical way of expressing this is *the contributory principle*: all forms of social action should empower beneficiaries to contribute to their own welfare and to the welfare of others. We should reject atomising, transactional approaches which can deepen dependency, and instead create structures that enable people to realize their own capacity to act.

Solidarity

The paradox¹⁴ is that while essential, and despite being very well run by lovely people, many church-based so called “social justice” services have fallen into a trap. They have become a component propping up a toxic economy. And the risk is that the more efficient and vital their aid becomes, the less urgent economic reform appears.

The CST diagnosis of the economy shows us that any activity around material poverty must also be situated within a robust demand for economic reform.¹⁵ Without this, good intentions mask the prophetic. True Christian justice is not only about the mitigation of poverty, but “to restore the places long devastated” as we read in Isaiah 61. That means decent jobs and investment.

This is not to say that economics are the only driver of poverty: we have seen how the current system drives moral, relational and spiritual poverty too.

But this opens a challenge for the church. There needs to be a shift from charity to solidarity with and within poor communities. The church must not collude in a future of welfare and worklessness. The service-provider approach can create estrangement between a middle class church and alienate the very people it wishes to help.

My friend Dave doesn’t mince his words: ‘The church has become a woke foodbank. Handouts are soul destroying. People need dignified work so they can maintain some self-respect.’

We need to understand what solidarity looks like. When Christian charities engage in campaigns focusing on welfare, they inadvertently fail the solidarity test.

For most working-class people, their desire is to support their families through decent work – as Frank Field once said, “this is at the very heart of their moral code.”

There was a time when churches were known for their covenantal relationship with poor families. The story of the 1889 dock strike¹⁶ comes to mind - William Booth and Cardinal Manning knew their people, and understood the impact of capital and recognised it had to be constrained. They supported their communities in negotiating better pay and work conditions. They knew what solidarity looked like.

I can also recall my father and Archbishop Worlock convening the Michaelmas Group¹⁷ of Liverpool business leaders which met every 6 weeks for over 13 years and arguably acted as a brake on the withdrawal of jobs and investment.

In our own time the challenges are different. Each church leader must discern how they step up.

One area with potential is to explore ways in which church-based food aid infrastructure could be the catalyst for the development of local economies.

Building on the contributory principle, it should be our longer term ambition to help build robust forms of local economy and co-ownership structures that safeguard people from hardship. As

Andrew Forsey, National Director of Feeding Britain says, there are already examples of initiatives that suggest potential in that direction:

‘Churches up and down the country, through pantries, food clubs and co-ops, are expanding working-class purchasing power and reducing the need for food banks and remedying the inadequacies of both state and market provision. These institutions, built upon the contributory principle, seem adept at combining individual self-interest with the common good.’ Unquote.

This kind of solidarity necessarily should start small. It begins with a new imagination.

Christian distinctiveness

This imagination comes from a reacquaintance with our Christian distinctiveness. It is vital that we are clear about our identity in God and get our priorities straight.

Perhaps the drift to managerialism and transactionalism can partially be traced to the desire to satisfy funding criteria. Perhaps it is time to move on from the “funded project” culture turbocharged by *Faith in the City* and the Church Urban Fund.

The focus on KPIs and scale puts pressure on dioceses, churches and Christian charities to behave like businesses. Responsible governance is essential of course, but if strategic outcomes are prioritised over spiritual discernment, then this can compromise Christian distinctiveness. It can act as a distraction from who we are meant to be, who God is calling us to be – neighbours and friends who unveil the sacred in our communities.

Christian funders may want to reflect on the cultural origins of the service provider culture they are helping to perpetuate. If we’re not careful, over-programming can inadvertently engineer-out the workings of the Holy Spirit.

There is a well-worn path of secularization that many Christian organisations have ventured down and in doing so have cut themselves off from their own roots.

But in fact, the times may be ripe for a new confidence. Recent research¹⁸ shows a resurgence of interest in Christianity and that the so-called “new atheism” has passed its sell-by date. Young people especially are attracted to tradition, wanting what the historian Tom Holland calls “the weird stuff”¹⁹, the mystery of the Christ who was crucified and rose from the dead. This is a new time and we should not be shy about who we are and why we do what we do.

In the public square, we must articulate the vision of a political economy for the common good. In our charitable work, we must seek mutuality, change our language and introduce the contributory principle. At parish level, we must become a relational church and join with our neighbours in solidarity.

To reflect the grace and truth of Christ, we want our lives to draw people and society into this distinctive story, to life-giving energy that offers a constructive response to the socio-economic, cultural and spiritual malaise that has plagued our country for too long.

COMMUNION

So far tonight, we have explored what's been going on, the discontent and how neoliberalism has destabilised settled forms of life, how governments and the church has responded. We've looked at ways to correct mission drift – relational justice, power dynamics and language, agency, Christian distinctiveness and solidarity.

What other shifts need to happen? How are we called to act in these uncertain times, and what story the church called to tell?

My sense is that we are called to offer - and to embody - an antidote to the culture of individualism. And that antidote we could ultimately conceptualise as *communion*.

There are many ways to make the journey in that direction. But let me make some suggestions.

Reconciliation

The first is Reconciliation.

In Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral, at the other end of Hope Street, there is the chapel of Reconciliation, a side chapel dedicated to Saint Pope John Paul II. There is a triptych²⁰ centred on a carving of Christ crucified looking down over Liverpool, with the following inscriptions:

“Lord, restore your church on earth with the gifts of penance and reconciliation”

and

“No evil is greater than the infinite mercy of God”

He is addressing the truth that the church itself has become estranged from God – that penance and reconciliation are necessary.

This is a familiar theme that continues through the CST tradition. Pope Francis, who said the Church needed to be evangelised *by* the poor²¹, is echoed in turn by the new Pope, Leo XIV, who says that “the poor are a treasure both of the Church and of humanity because they offer crucial perspectives for seeing the world through God's eyes.”²²

They are both saying that in this sea of liberalism, reconciliation will come through relationships of solidarity with poor communities. This is at the heart of God's mission.

Jesus invites us to practice reciprocity – “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

Connecting with someone in need opens us up to a closer connection with God. This is the great mystery at the heart of God's special love for people who are poor. The church needs to learn to receive as well as give.

Personal

Next, charity must be personal.

The Good Samaritan story has always struck me, not so much in terms of where the stranger came from, but for the fact that he stayed over to the next morning. He didn't just pay the innkeeper and leave. A relationship was being formed.

I know that the *Network of Kindness* here in Liverpool is attempting to foster this spirit. Inspired by *chesed* – “lovingkindness” in Hebrew – this network is fostering local learning communities and practices of discernment. This kind of pathway is helpful because not only might it lead to concrete solutions, but it also cultivates listening, relationship, reciprocity, redemption and reconciliation.

Discernment

And so, discernment. Each of us is called to a unique vocational responsibility. God calls each of us in surprising ways. And to engage meaningfully in the neighbourhood, we must develop a dialogue with the Holy Spirit. This requires practices of discernment. Both individually and together as a congregation or a team.

Our Christian traditions are rich in these practices. Whether it is a daily *Lectio* or *Examen*, or the ancient practice of the Conversation in the Spirit, we can begin by asking: “how is God calling us in this place?”

Instead of beginning with strategy, begin with a period of discernment to sense what God is already doing. Blessing a preordained project with a bit of theology is not the way. The early monastics prayed and discerned for 30 days before acting, and then, set to work in an organised way. We must do both seriously: pray *and* be organised.

Some of you might be familiar with the practice of missional listening, a counterintuitive way of connecting in a neighbourhood. Experienced leaders must *unlearn* their instincts to control and are not allowed to initiate anything for *a year*. It requires great patience and humility. Success is measured not by the number of people in the pews, but by how many local invitations they receive.

The kind of leadership we need now is to enable life to emerge. Not a manager, a therapist, a celebrity, or running a professional services team, the enabling church leader leads people on a journey, and practices the subtle “art of social choreography” – knowing the spirit works among the people, he or she creates spaces for connection, and attentive to these movements, enables their leadership.

Listening

Then, there is listening. We need a church that adopts an intentional posture of listening in our neighbourhoods. This could begin with one-to-one conversations²³ within our congregations, and then extend to the neighbourhood. A practice of listening - for the honour of hearing someone's story.

When we really listen, we will find out what's going on - and it may not be easy listening. As Michael Merrick wrote for us recently when remembering last year's riots after the Southport massacre: and I quote:

“I felt a profound sadness. These were my people, the folk I grew up with, who I was proud to grow up with. I could not help but feel that we, the Church, have failed in our duty toward them. We have not been there for them. The affiliation between the working class and the churches used to be rock solid. They would have been in church, in our social clubs, calling their priest in times of crisis, putting their kids in our schools, playing for our sports teams, going through all the rites of passage. I don’t think we are that same Church anymore.

We made a space for the stranger in our churches – and all to the good – but we were no longer familiar with the reality of our own people. They became invisible to us. Worse, it appears that the Church not only dismisses their concerns but has no sympathy. They have become our Lazarus at the gate. Stepped over, day after day by people in his own neighbourhood, Lazarus challenges us because he demands an ongoing act of love for *someone we know*. Having been overlooked for so long, these communities are in a bad way. They have been abandoned and are feeling increasingly mutinous. We have been guilty partners in that abandonment, and that has been a disaster.²⁴ Unquote.

We could equally speak about the grooming gang scandal – the biggest scandal of our generation. But where has the voice of the churches been all this time? Too squeamish? Too afraid of the consequences of speaking the truth? There has to be a reckoning about the abandonment of these communities who have been so wronged. Until then the cover up will fester like a sickness at the heart of the body politic.

The church has language that could help – of penance and reconciliation. And of the truth that sets us free.

Do our congregations know what it looks like to live in solidarity with the poorest in our communities? Not as service providers, not as rescuers helping victims, but as neighbours and friends who share in each other’s local concerns, joys, hopes and fears – and who feel each other’s anger and pain - and act together to build a place where our children can make a life.

This solidarity also involves casting a vision of what life could be like.

A Better Story

We must tell a better story – a story of distributed power and vocational responsibility.

This is a story that our country needs to hear. A story of spiritual and civic renewal, of truth, beauty and goodness. Of what it means to be human, to love, to trust, what friendship means, what it means to be a good neighbour.

It is a story that must not only call out structures of sin, but also build a common good that can offer resistance to the powers that atomise and separate.

But not only resisting and defending. Most importantly, it is a story that can uphold that vital space – the commons – where the Holy Spirit among us generates that imaginal energy, that living water so essential to our transcendent nature.

A story that requires responsibility to be taken at all levels and power to be distributed, not concentrated: responsibility to be taken at international, national, regional, local, personal levels - in line with the principle of Subsidiarity, everyone has a part to play.

Let's briefly name what this common good vision of renewal could look like:

At the national level it would involve government policies that prioritise families and communities and respect the dignity of human life from conception to natural death.

It would promote a balance between rights and responsibilities. It would incentivise a balance of interests and harmony between those who have become opponents, such as employers and unions, young and old, urban and rural, black and white, men and women, faith and secular, migrants and host communities, the interests of capital and those of labour.

It would deconcentrate capital by enabling regional banks and energy providers and by shortening food supply chains. It would constrain the excesses of capital through a national industrial strategy incentivising job creation and retraining – balancing environmental measures with the dignity of work - that corrects the abandonment of the forgotten places.

At the regional level, it would promote institutional collaboration between educational bodies, employers, businesses, investors, religious and other networks – all working together for the renewal of their region.

At the local level, local governments would create conditions that enable people to run their own local organizations – to build back that lost agency - to foster a diverse interconnected layer of local associations - clubs, businesses, schools, charities, and religious bodies - each living out their own vocational responsibility, each enabling local people to find fulfilment, each meeting local needs, working together for the common good.

This local ecosystem would, at community level, cultivate family life - in all its variety – helping families help each other and their neighbours, teaching young people local civic responsibility and the importance of good relationships.²⁵

At the personal level we'd understand that as Saint John Henry Newman said, each of us is a link in a chain, with a unique purpose. We'd borrow and lend more, buy less and contribute to a reciprocal gift economy rather than weakening our common life by outsourcing everything to the market and to the state.

The people of the churches have a distinctive calling. To hear that, we must resist the determined attempts to discredit and privatise our faith, and the pressure to conform to secular ideologies. When we can discern clearly, we will recognise our responsibility to be authentic, according to our distinctive Christian charisms, to share our vision of Christian justice at every level. We are called to be a light in the darkness. As the new era unfolds it is our job to stay human.

Language matters

Finally, the language we use really matters. This journey to communion will be paved with the words we speak.

We must speak the language of covenant rather than contract, of solidarity rather than division, of making rather than consuming, of mutuality rather than individualism, of relationships rather than self, of trust not estrangement, of meaning rather than personal preference, of neighbourliness and friendship rather than service delivery. A language of balance, of partnerships, of collaboration across difference, of diversity of opinion.

At a time when many people in our country feel dislocated, our churches and centres are called to be places where people feel at home, where they can *speak freely*, and feel heard. We are called to create structures of grace - where the Spirit is at work, where we regard everything we do as an occasion for communion.

WE ARE ALL CALLED

So, to conclude. I suppose people will say I'm a chip off the old block. Well, despite my efforts to prove otherwise, that of course is true. I guess my parents and I each embrace the vocation of what my mother called "the friendship of Christ". In all our brokenness, with David's passion for justice, Grace's for relationship, and mine to help the church play its part in the world, we seem to have converged tonight.

People who know me know I ask awkward questions; I don't mind being that person. But the coming months and years are likely to be hard, so there is a serious reason for doing so. This is no time for complacency. As our Lord challenged us "if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional?" (Matthew 5: 43-48).

We are called to be distinctive and to sacrifice the comfort of safety.

I do believe that everyone is called to be exceptional - and to play a unique part in the renewal of our country. That doesn't mean grand projects. Small is good. If each of us here made one small step after tonight, that would be 100 steps.

This could be an inflection point for those churches willing to commit to solidarity in a meaningful way. What we need now is a new confidence and a renewed Christian imagination for our time.

Jenny Sinclair

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NOTES

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