**Tweets are not the way to world peace Rector’s Letter: July 2018**

Last month I wrote about us all appreciating more the things we have in our lives, and at the same time thinking about some of the concerns in our world right now - giving examples of the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem and the violence it has triggered in Gaza, and the talks between the US and North Korea seeming to be in jeopardy.

Hard though it may be to believe, we have just witnessed a direct meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, the President of the United States of America and the leader of North Korea, in Singapore. There was sabre-rattling on both sides in the build-up to this; there was name-calling of the sort associated with a school playground; Trump vowing to release “fire and fury” if Pyongyang persisted; Kim calling Trump “mentally deranged” and a “dotard” (definition, for those who might be interested: an old person, especially one who has become weak or senile). A year ago you would have got very long odds on such a face-to-face meeting taking place!

More recently, President Trump managed to upset all the other members of the G7 in a quite spectacular outburst following the summit in Quebec. The message, and the delivery, again being worthy of a school playground spat, but using current technology - a social-media outburst that can never be taken back. A Tweet of 140, or even 280, characters is no way to conduct international communication and diplomacy; if only it wasn’t all so serious, it would be laughable.

However, credit has to be given that the meeting between the leaders of the USA and North Korea did take place. That must be good - communication is not only good, it is essential. Good communication, though, is not about sound-bites or point-scoring or photo opportunities.

Good communication is about speaking and listening; really hearing what the other person is saying, thinking and feeling. With Trump and Kim, we can normally expect a lot of talking but not much real listening, but maybe this time that wasn’t the case. If this meeting had broken down amid playground point scoring, it would have been an incredible opportunity missed. French President Emmanuel Macron said, following the G7 Summit, that international co-operation could not be “dictated by fits of anger and throwaway remarks. Let’s be serious and worthy of our people.”

I hope that by the time you read this we will be discussing something very positive coming out of this historic meeting in Singapore, and not lamenting a wasted opportunity; that this will be remembered as a step forward in the goal of world peace and eventual denuclearisation, and not remembered for more cheap point-scoring. It’s far too serious for that.

Revd David Commander, Rector