

Canopy of Prayer

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Dear Prayer Partners in Europe

Romans 12:18 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone'. A word I've heard a lot recently is sovereignty, but in a biblical perspective there is only one sovereign and that is God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When nations talk about sovereignty, what they often really mean is my selfish desire as opposed to yours. Paul in these words is urging us to respect others whether we agree or not. We can see the value of this in our individual lives but can the same be applied in terms of international dealings? As the Church and as individual Christians, can we look at ourselves and see the resonance of Paul's words in our lives? If not, how can we be a prophetic example to society and speak life and peace into the world?

Brexit, the final hurdle?

This should have been an article about how the UK and EU will move forward having reached an agreement on their trading relationship after 31st December. However the two sides are still locked in negotiations and the outcome will not be known until after this issue of Canopy.

How has it come to this? Many of us may not realise what an important time this is for the future relationship between the UK and EU, as most of our focus this year has been on the Coronavirus. This situation does raise certain questions that need to be faced. Why has it taken four and a half years and yet there is still no clear understanding on what Boris Johnson claimed would be an 'oven ready deal' (i.e. prepared in advance and simple to achieve)? How are businesses across our continent supposed to get ready for a new trading relationship in 5 weeks? What is a "level playing field" and how can we achieve it when the UK government has proposed legislation to rewrite the agreement already made in the withdrawal treaty signed by both sides earlier this year? Or is the EU making the negotiations more difficult as a warning to other member states, that the idea of leaving is not in their best interests?



As those called to intercede for our continent, we need to address these questions in prayer and bring them before the Lord. The temptation though is to pray from our own individual perspectives. These may have been shaped by our nationalistic backgrounds or the media that we read or some other influences, be they spiritual authority figures or others. We are all susceptible to these temptations and as Europeans we should know all too well how this can lead us down dangerous roads.

I'm sure we can each look at our own nation and see both good and bad in our histories, but if we are to learn anything from the pandemic then surely it is that sometimes we need global answers to global questions. Brexit is also a global question; you only have to look across the Atlantic and wonder why both the UK and the EU are looking for approval from the incoming US presidency for their own particular Brexit arguments.

Perhaps humanity's biggest failing is that we haven't learnt the importance of what Jesus calls the second commandment, that is, to love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:39ff). It doesn't need to be a physical or ideological war which divides nations, it can be economic or territorial aspirations, or perhaps simply pride in who we once were.

By the time you read this, perhaps we will have answers to the questions above, but let's pray that we can all find the answer to the question: How do we live in harmony as good neighbours preferring others, whether individually, ethnically or as nations? This may be too simplistic but often it takes the simple to confound the wise.

Let's pray

- For wisdom, open hearts and minds and willingness to compromise in the remaining discussions between the EU and UK.
- For all those businesses that are waiting for clear instructions on how we are to trade from the 1st January.
- For the national Parliaments and the European Parliament, who will have to ratify any agreement before the end of the year.



As this year of challenges draws to a close and we look forward to Christmas, let's seek the Lord for His mercy. From today, with what has become known as Black Friday sales, many will be venturing out to do their Christmas shopping. While governments are struggling to make decisions on how best to allow as normal a celebration as possible, we can look forward to the prospect of the new vaccines but, even more importantly, the birth of Jesus gives the prospect of new life.

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. Pray for those women and children who have suffered various types of abuse during times of lockdown.
2. Pray for rapid, fair and equitable distribution of COVID vaccinations in the near future.
3. Pray for the EU, currently facing a challenge to the setting of the 2021-28 budget by a veto from two countries, which also blocks the release of the pandemic relief fund.

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