DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS
Living God's Love

THE LORD BISHOP OF ST ALBANS
The Right Reverend Dr Alan Smith

22 March 2018

Dear friends

Punish a Muslim Day

I have been deeply saddened and horrified to learn of the attempt by some to promote 3 April as 'Punish a Muslim Day'. The letter, and the ideas contained within it, go against all the values which we as a church hold to and which are foundational to this nation. It represents a trend in our nation which we totally oppose.

Over the past two weeks there have several condemnations in Parliament, including one by a fellow Bishop in the House of Lords, the Bishop of Newcastle:

"On behalf of these benches and, I am sure, on behalf of the Church, I want to say that any attack on a person or community on the basis of their faith or their race is abhorrent and has no place in a decent, civilised society. As a Christian leader, I stand in solidarity with my Muslim friends and with all those in and outside this building who have been directly affected or are fearful and anxious."

In an address referring to the commemoration this year of the centenary of the end of the First World War, I recently made a call to the Church of England in the Diocese of St Albans. I repeat it here:

"... as well as looking back in remembrance, I would suggest that if we are really serious about the commemoration, we need to recommit ourselves to the serious business of working for peace and justice with renewed vigour. .... Peacemaking begins with us. We need to make peace in our own hearts, where it is all too easy to harbour resentment and jealousy. It was significant that, following the Brexit vote, there was a surge in hate crimes across our nation, some of it rooted in xenophobia. If such feelings are not challenged and channelled, they can become the soil in which the seeds of conflict can flourish."

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The full address can be found at:
www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Presidential-Address-March-2018.pdf

It is vital for us to stand in solidarity as people of faith to meet the various challenges we face as a nation. I am aware that my colleague the Bishop of Bedford has been working with you in a number of areas, and (in his absence on study leave) I know he would join his thoughts and prayers with mine.

I am heartened by the work that you are doing together with the churches in Luton and I know that they are seeking to stand with you at this time. I trust that this will be of practical help and comfort to you.

I am holding you and your community in my prayers.

This comes with my best wishes.

Yours sincerely

+ Alan St Albans