

News story: Easter 2017: Theresa May's message

Easter is a moment to reflect and an important time for Christians and others to gather together with families and friends.

This year, after a period of intense debate over the right future for our country, there is a sense that people are coming together and uniting behind the opportunities that lie ahead.

For at heart, this country is one great union of people and nations with a proud history and a bright future. And as we face the opportunities ahead of us – the opportunities that stem from our decision to leave the European Union and embrace the world – our shared interests, our shared ambitions, and above all our shared values can, and must, bring us together.

This Easter I think of those values that we share – values that I learnt in my own childhood, growing up in a vicarage. Values of compassion, community, citizenship. The sense of obligation we have to one another.

These are values we all hold in common, and values that are visibly lived out everyday by Christians, as well as by people of other faiths or none.

I think of those who go out of their way to visit the sick or bereaved, providing comfort and guidance to many in our country at some of the most difficult moments in their lives. I think of the sacrifices and service of aid workers who put themselves in harm's way to bring much-needed relief in war-torn parts of the world.

We should celebrate all these contributions and others like them, and the difference they make in our society and around the world.

In doing so, we should be confident about the role that Christianity has to play in the lives of people in our country.

And we should treasure the strong tradition that we have in this country of religious tolerance and freedom of speech.

We must continue to ensure that people feel able to speak about their faith, and that absolutely includes their faith in Christ. We must be mindful of Christians and religious minorities around the world who do not enjoy these same freedoms, but who practise their religion in secret and often in fear.

And we must do more to stand up for the freedom of people of all religions to practice their beliefs openly and in peace and safety.

So this Easter, whatever our faith, let us come together as a nation confident in our values, and united in our commitment to fulfil the obligations that we have to one another.

Let us work together to build that brighter future we want for our country. And let us together build a stronger, fairer Britain that truly does work for everyone. And let me wish you all a very happy Easter.