

Trust Inclusion and Fairness

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On Wednesday, listening to BBC Radio 4, I gained insight into what the people of Ukraine want to preserve and what they resist.

One speaker said that for twenty years in Russia, a state of lies and suppression has grown. Now it is a one-man dictatorship where the President meets senior advisers separated by an absurd distance. How can a leader know the truth if it cannot be spoken and if it is, the sound and effect will have dissipated?

A different leader's name was adopted by our local Catholic high school. The students at Saint Oscar Romero will this Friday assemble for Ukraine and Russia on the beach at the southern Goring Gap. If I can adapt commitments, I hope to join them.

I shall remember how Archbishop Romero stood with the oppressed. He put his arms around the weak and he chastised the powerful when their actions and indifference harmed the people of El Salvador.

On Advent Sunday in 1980, representing the British Council of Churches. I joined 25,000 mourners at his funeral. One of the ten 20th century modern martyrs, there is a statue of him holding a baby at the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey. He was inclusive and people trusted him with their lives, knowing he was prepared to die in their interests.

On Tuesday, I was delighted when two female backbenchers pushed me down to third place in the 'Backbencher of the Year' awards.

The top MP, Daisy Cooper is my Liberal Democrat co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for leasehold and commonhold reform. I cheered when she spoke about the cross-party campaign for fire safety, so leaseholders have homes that are safe and saleable. We are most effective when we can work together. I thanked the organisers for making me the chosen MP from the Conservative and Labour parties; I did name others in each party who could be rated higher.

The second most powerful was Joanna Cherry, the SNP lawyer who bravely makes the case that modern interest in fairness for trans people should not trump fairness and protection for women in areas where sex matters.

A minority of extremists attack her. When I say what she says, I am ignored because I am male, straight and on the centre-right.

Here is my proposal to resolve the sports issue. In swimming, say, one set of events should be for women by sex with another being open to anyone, including men who have either declared gender as a woman or who have made a physical transition in recent years.

Girls and women think it fair, and they trust that they will not come in front of people with male physical attributes in a female changing room, in a female hospital ward or in a woman's prison.

The big local issue is fighting for the Goring Gaps and all the green fields around our villages and town communities. Join Romero campaigners and everyone at the junction of Goring Street and The Strand, 3pm this Friday. Come on Wednesday to Ferring village hall to consider the proposal to build over the Highdown vineyard. Include yourself to fight for fairness: stop these excessive developments. Trust me: I shall be there.

On Tuesday I took a call from a young man I visited when he was a young offender. His mother has asked me to help him feel accepted. For twenty years he has not been in prison. I remembered the statement: Every one of us has a past; every one of us has a future.

We are more likely to find that better future when we develop a sense of responsibility and when we have been trusted, we have been included and we have been treated fairly.