



'Love thy neighbour, as God loves you' – Bishops respond to rise in 'Christian nationalism'

Our bishops have urged churches across the diocese to continue to build strong and united communities across the Thames Valley following reports a rally will be held in London this weekend, purporting to put 'Christ back into Christmas'.

The rally, organised by Unite the Kingdom, is part of a rise in Christian nationalism which Bishop Steven, Bishop Dave and Bishop Mary have called on Christians to respond to with love.

Bishop Steven said: "Christ has always been at the centre of Christmas and our celebrations of the greatest gift of all. Jesus was born a refugee, in the Middle East and in poverty, running from those who were intent on harming him.

"The adoption of Christian values to exclude or ostracise others is the exact opposite of Jesus' teachings. At the centre of the love he showed us is the love he called for us to have for everyone.

Love thy neighbour, as God loves you. We must love our enemies and welcome the stranger, whoever they are."

Bishop Dave, who leads the diocese on equality, diversity and inclusion, added: "I have spoken to communities in Milton Keynes who are worried about the rise in hate and intimidation. When reflecting on Christmas, we should remember Jesus loved foreigners, and loving refugees, those whose skin colour and culture are different from our own, is how we are called to be as Christians."

We invite those interested in exploring Christ in Christmas, to come to local churches and find out more about the person of Jesus and be part of these communities.

The Diocese of Leeds has created some posters (pictured above) to spread love not hate this Christmas. They are part of a wider ecumenical response and are supported by the Joint Public Issues Team, a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

The posters, which can be printed and put up by anyone, including churches, can be found [here](#).

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