

Thoughts from the Manse 29th January 2021

When we were children my brother, sister and I all had a different approach when we were given sweets. For my brother, the only place for sweets was in his stomach and he would eat them as fast as possible, and then try and scrounge more from my sister and me. I took them more slowly, enjoying them as I ate, but they were for eating! My sister hoarded her sweets, she would keep them for days, occasionally taunting my brother, and rarely sharing as she said we had eaten ours.



We all talk about sharing but I wonder what your definition of sharing is, and how you view sharing. I ask because of the current debate over the sharing of vaccine supplies. The vaccine rollout in the UK is one of the more successful aspects of the pandemic and other countries are not as fortunate.



It is interesting that the current debate between the UK and the European Union regards the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine when part of the company policy is the provision, at cost, to countries with fewer financial reserves, to allow a sharing of this valuable resource. Without this sharing we will never control the virus, as pockets will remain around the world and global travel will result in a constant transfer of the virus.

The facts seem to be that the European Union were later in placing their order, and so are further back in the queue. Contracts with the UK have been agreed and it is not for the company to divert supplies from one country to another. Rather, it may be that the UK should look at helping other countries by sharing what they have received. Hence my question about attitudes to sharing. It is easy to share when you have plenty, when you can easily replace something, but what about when it is something in short supply, or even you last Rolo? Do the same attitudes to sharing prevail then?



As Christians we are encouraged to love our neighbour, to want the best for everyone, and to share all that we have. This surely means that we should have something to say about the distribution of vaccines around the world and when there is an obvious discrepancy in supply we should be raising awareness of the inequality and injustice. After all many are desperate to see travel routes opened but if vaccination is not universal this will be delayed, so it is in our interest to share. The UK is at the forefront of science, and in particular the research into the vaccine with another vaccine currently undergoing trials. Love means sharing our findings and sharing the benefits to create a healthy and sustainable planet on which we can live together.



I know that many of you will have had your first dose, and I am waiting for my invitation, but I am aware that for the vaccine to produce the desired effect of unlocking restrictions we need everyone who can be, to be vaccinated. This is not happening, and sometimes precious vaccine is being thrown away because people have failed to turn up for their appointment and centres have been able to contact possible replacements recipients. This, when some countries do not have enough vaccine and their centres are empty. Within some areas of the country, and Luton is one such area, there is a real suspicion about the vaccine and some sectors of the community are very reluctant to be vaccinated. We need to reassure and encourage all in our communities that the vaccine is safe and is the way forward for Luton and the world. We are in this pandemic together, and the way out requires us to work together, to share and to love our neighbour through our own actions.

