

To say that 2020 has been an unusual year is clearly an understatement, and we have long exhausted our quota of the word 'unprecedented'. For us in Europe, the year began with Brexit, which for many in the Community of the Cross of Nails was a deeply sad moment. Much of the debate had veered far away from celebrating diversity, or learning to live with difference, or building a culture of peace. Indeed, at times it felt to me like a dismissal of the very institutions which have guaranteed stability in Europe for the last 75 years, a betrayal of international partnerships, a rejection of diversity, a loss of the common good which we are called to seek.

Brexit did shine a light on our failure to heal the wounds of history. Sweeping changes in our global economy since the second world war have devastated parts of the UK and elsewhere, and many in our post-industrial society are left behind. Long before Brexit and Covid-19, many were already hanging on for dear life to the edges of society, struggling daily to make ends meet. I have no right to speak for those who are excluded left behind, but I must speak *up* for them. Jesus' example compels me to.

This extends of course to those who are left behind in all parts of the world. Like Brexit, Covid-19 has exposed the gaps between rich and poor. In countries with the highest levels of poverty there are also no government bail-out schemes; there is very limited access to healthcare, and people have little resilience to economic shocks. Many are already suffering from malnutrition and disease and therefore have reduced immunity to infection.

Covid-19 is also having a massive detrimental impact on funding for charities and churches, including those who are CCN partners. The sad irony is that many of these organisations are those on whom we will rely to help pick up and put back together the people all over the world whom the events of 2020 have broken.

Some months ago, a friend shared with me a German cartoon, which read "Dear God, please can you turn 2020 off and on again? It has a virus." Our Christian faith calls us daily both to start afresh and to bring light and healing to our broken world, and it is this which continues to give me hope.