

Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Geoff Read at Te Deum 2025

Bible texts: Exodus 3:1-15, John 3:1-15

So VUCA has given way to BANI

The summary of our world as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous that has served us well for around forty years, particularly following the collapse of the Soviet Union and demise of the eastern block has now been called into question by a once again changed, now BANI world shaped by climate and global systemic change

BANI? In a nutshell those letters each help paint a clearer picture of how the world looks to us nowadays

- B: What used to be albeit volatile benchmarks have now **ceased to be reliable, so it is B for brittle.**
- A: People do not just feel uncertain anymore, they are A for **anxious, often fearful.**
- N: Things are not just complex cause & effects anymore, instead they have become N for **non-linear.**
- I: What used to be ambiguous **appears I for incomprehensible** to us today with more and more data.

How are we to live well in the BANI world?

I have just returned from our Diocese in Europe's Diocesan synod. It's the gathering of lay and clergy representatives from around our Diocese that covers the whole of Europe, plus Turkey and Morocco. Part of our work together was to consider developing a new Diocesan strategy, a process that began with careful listening about our changing context and what we might need to respond to as a church in the next 5 to 10 years

As is so often the case the real work happens at coffee and over meals

It was a privilege to spend time with a lay member of Christchurch, Kiev and the Indian Anglican priest who each month makes the 18-hour journey there from Warsaw to lead a service of Holy Communion, teach and offer pastoral care

Likewise, the Anglican chaplain in Latvia who is herself Latvian. Over lunch she spoke of a vastly different perspective on life where hope has become focused away from the future and into the things of today. She had grown up under Soviet rule and spoke of a society with little experience or now expectation of passing on intergenerational wealth or property but instead a deepening sense of valuing and hope in the present – the importance of relationships, beauty, life in the here and now

It was the same story from our community in Kiev

Hope has become a very important but nuanced and present reality

The two Bible readings we heard are at moments of need and bewilderment, liminal moments for the individuals and the peoples of which they are a part

Moses, strangely exiled from his Jewish people of origin at birth, saved in a basket in the bulrushes finds himself exiled again, but now from his adopted people of Egypt. So he is wandering the desert when he sees the amazing site – a bush on fire from which he hears the voice of God

We talk about burning bush moments and here is the original one – an intense, disorientating moment but one which has within it the seeds of something new, often about identity and vocation – burning bush moments are life changing moments

The image that Nicodemus encounters, a religious leader of his day, is not a burning bush, but Jesus, a man burning with the reality of God, so much so that Nicodemus begins to wonder whether, in Jesus, he is encountering God himself

For Nicodemus the image is of new or second birth – people ask me if I have grandchildren and I reply I have two and a half, the half due in early October. Have you ever paused to wonder why Jesus might have used this image: how profoundly different life is inside and outside the womb – one safe, warm but dark. The other full of risk, but also life, light and possibility

Vuca and Barni and useful terms to describe and analyse the world we live in

They also bring with them insights into how we might respond

So too do the Christian equivalents of burning bush and being born again, ways of understanding not only what is but also what can be

The added value that burning bush and born again bring is the vital reminder that in such liminal, Vuca and Bani moments in the life of the world and in our personal lives, we who live within it for this fragile and short three score years and ten, burning bush and born again are reminders that the initiative lies with God

It is He who first burns and speaks

It is He who brings about life and new possibilities

and all held within His loving, just and peaceful purposes, what Jesus called God's Kingdom

So, as another of my fellow synod members said: in life stuff still hits fans, as it always has, but as it does, we can live in hope in the here and now: the hope that in the midst of this VUCA and BANI world Jesus

- continues to work out His burning, born again love and power to be both with us and for us
- He continues to invite us to be aware of that day by day
- and as we do so, He invites us to embrace and to join in His ways and work of justice, peace and love