

COMMONS TOUCH

Key priorities to make our district fit for the future



**CHARLIE
ELPHICKE**

MP for Dover
and Deal

HAPPY New Year! After a year of huge change, what lies ahead for Dover and Deal? The past 12 months brought us Brexit, a new Prime Minister and big questions about the future of Britain.

Brexit brings us great opportunities. 2017 will be about making Brexit Britain work for places like Dover and Deal – not just London. That's why I'll keep campaigning in Parliament on the things that matter to families and businesses in Dover and Deal.

Let's start by making sure Brexit works for the Port of Dover – with stronger border security and trade that continues to flow freely. Everyone knows that the best way to get growth without gridlock on our roads is to boost the Border Force budget. We need a new, state-of-the-art system in place to show the world that post-Brexit, Britain means business. Investment must start here at the Dover frontline.

We need a better deal for motorists too. I head the Fair Fuel campaign in Parliament and last year we managed to stop a rise in the tax you pay on petrol. Now we will be



GUARDING OUR BORDERS: The Port of Dover is critical to the nation's security

making the case for the Government to invest in more regional road projects like the long-overdue dualling of the A2.

We need to build a Brexit Britain that works for everyone – and where everyone makes a fair contribution to pay for the public services we all rely on. That's why I am campaigning to make the super-rich and big corporations pay their fair share of tax. Too often it seems like it's one rule for them and another rule for everyone else. I am working to change that and get a better deal on taxes for the hard-working classes of

modern Britain too.

Meanwhile, the long-running battle to get beds at Buckland Hospital goes on. This has been a really tough struggle. But there is real hope now of success.

We are also working hard to get a new secondary school on the former Walmer Science College site. Too many children in Deal are forced to travel out of town. That's why we need a new school for Deal

I continue to press Highways England to hurry up and get rid of the hated 40mph limit on the A20. They have caved in to our campaign

and said they would do it by March. They need to get on with it and deliver.

Brexit was about giving the boot to Brussels. Yet everyone wants to keep Britain open for business. That's why I am working with Calais' political chiefs to deepen our trading links with France. All this means exciting times for Dover and Deal – the gateway and guardian of our land.

There's lots to be getting on with. The hard work starts now. Here's to a fantastic 2017 where we make the most of all the opportunities that now surround us.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Christ isn't a taxman – we must offer him everything we possess

TOMORROW is the feast of the Epiphany when we celebrate the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus. Most of us know the symbolic significance traditionally placed on the gifts they brought. Gold acknowledges the kingship of Christ. Incense, used in worship, stands for his divinity. Myrrh, used to perfume a corpse, symbolises Jesus's giving of himself in death.

But there is another way we could look at these three gifts; not for their significance as regards the one who receives, but for their significance as regards the ones who give.

Gold, the precious metal by which the value of everything else is measured, reminds us of our duty to offer Jesus all we have. Our possessions are



**THE REV
MICHAEL
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precious, but they do not really belong to us. They all belong to God – and I stress *all*. We are not entitled to say to Christ our King, as if he were a taxman: "Here is some part of my money and time; now let me keep the rest." What we ought to say is: "Here is everything I own; use it as you see best."

Incense stands for something even more fundamental. It stands for all that we are. Incense is a symbol for worship, which means worship – offering God his due. We mustn't just

offer him what we possess and hang on to our inmost selves; because it is our inmost selves he wants most of all.

We have a life going on within us which may not show itself in words or actions, but which is the most real thing about us. It is the life of thought and feeling, of fantasy and imaginations, of attitudes and intentions. This is the inner self which we must offer to God, so that he can take it over and remake it according to his will; so that we may eventually be able to say with Paul that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me".

We may think it hard to offer God the gold of all we have, but it is harder still to offer him the incense of all that we are. The gift of myrrh

reminds us that hardness is to be expected. Myrrh symbolises a sacrificial life perfectly offered, and so it reminds us that we must offer God all that we endure.

The definition of the word 'endure' is 'to continue in a certain state or condition'; so when we offer God all that we endure it means that we look at everything which happens to us as another step upon our spiritual journey, and offer it to God so that he can use it for his purposes and for our salvation. Whether our lives are full of happiness or grim and miserable we should endure – offer what happens to God so that he can protect us from temptation, strengthen us in the good and help us to continue to grow. That's not easy; but whoever said life was meant to be easy?

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