

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

12 April 2017: Sylvia Roberts, St Peter's Church, Petersfield

Home or away?

St Peter's Parish magazine is called "The Rock" and it has carried a series of articles recently interviewing people who now live in Petersfield but who were born abroad. It is fascinating to hear about the places people have come from; about what brought them here and to listen to their opinions about their life in Britain. So far we have met individuals from Sarawak, Romania and Slovakia, Hong Kong and China, north and south India, Iran, Thailand, Chile, Norway, Austria, Turkey and Italy. All these people are well integrated into society, fluent with English and relatively contented with their lives. They have no need to be "made welcome" as if they were visitors or aliens. They value living here because they experience equality and are regarded (or disregarded!) like any native born UK dweller.



I have a friend who has lived for many years in Spain but remained resolutely an "ex-pat." She enjoys the climate and the food but has little interest in the culture, the language or the people. She socializes and spends time exclusively in the ex-pat community speaking only English except when she is forced to use a few Spanish words whilst shopping.

I realize that the contrast I am drawing here is entirely anecdotal and not based on any statistics but beneath the surface of both the preceding paragraphs lies the reality of the much more fluid nature of life for millions of people in the world today, travelling – or being forced to travel - to countries other than their own with all the upheaval that entails - and some of that upheaval, perhaps, needs to be in the minds of those fortunate enough to be leading a settled, secure life – to allow those minds to be open, outward looking and kind as Jesus encouraged the young lawyer to be in the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke chapter 10 verses 25 to 37)