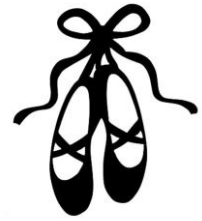


## **‘Free to Be’** - Jesus’ promise to us all.

Our MU display in the Cathedral of ‘Footsteps in Faith’ includes a pair of dance shoes beside the message ‘Free to Be’. I met 2 visitors looking at them and crying – thinking of Bebe, Elsie and Alice, the three little girls killed at a dance event in Southport.



As I write this, I am aware that we are all deeply saddened by this event; and also angry about the mindless, wilful vandalism and targeted attacks which have spread across the nation since. They are the result of a handful of powerful influencers spreading conspiracy theories and false information on social media. This is NOT representative of who we are in Britain. This is NOT legitimate protest.



### **Yet ‘Something Wonderful’ then happened across the nation;**

including in Benwell, where MU gathered in June. People from all faiths and backgrounds across our city gathered in counter-protest outside the mosque and asylum support centre to make it quite clear that such hatred has no place in Newcastle nor anywhere else.

*Revds Chris, David and Claire in Benwell.*

It is very sad to see youngsters influenced by social media, for they know not what they do. They are being manipulated by hatred masquerading as ‘defence’. They need our prayers that somewhere, somehow, they will discover what it means to receive compassion and kindness when your world is turned upside down. They need the chance to see themselves as agents of compassion instead of being agents of violent destruction.

As Mothers’ Union we can pray for the situation. We can pray for the families of Southport and the unimaginable agony they live with. We can also pray for the police and community workers, for asylum seekers and foreign nationals and those targeted, for politicians struggling to find the right course of action, for lawyers tackling court cases. We can pray for community cohesion, and for the perpetrators of violence themselves – for a change of heart and mind.

Let’s pray for a world in which people do feel **‘Free to Be’** who they are - not as targets for hate or ridicule, but as fellow citizens in God’s kingdom.