



## General Election: aftermath

If you're reading this, then one way or another, you are an outlier. As someone who lives in Surbiton, we are one of fewer than 2% of constituencies that returned a Liberal Democrat MP. We are not a typical place.

If you didn't vote Liberal Democrat, however, and voted Conservative, while you didn't have your views represented locally, boy, they hit the mainstream nationwide. In particular, if you voted Leave at the Referendum, that was backed up strongly at this Election.

This presents a new environment.

For the last three years, for millions of people, there has been a huge rallying call to stay in the EU, to find another Referendum in which the British people will "come to its senses" and vote again, but this time to stay in. In this situation, by one bound, we would be free from all the tricky negotiations and settlements and we would feel full Europeans again.

That will now never happen. Granted there were other things at play in this election, so we'll never definitely know, but if this result is anything to go by, even if there had been a Second Referendum, Leave would have won again.

This is a reminder to Remainers (and I voted Remain), that we are fundamentally out of step with the majority of England. However passionate we may feel about this, and critically, however much we may be

surrounded by friends who all agree with us, nod along sagely and demand a second vote, more people felt the opposite than agreed.

One of the stages of grief is 'Denial'. People don't believe their loved one can have died: it must have happened to someone else. And since the 2016 Referendum, that's been an emotion experienced by a lot of people.

The later stage of grief is acceptance. In this case, that the UK (or England at least) IS going to leave the EU. It may have been valid to campaign, to rally, to work hard, in the last three years for a second referendum, but to do so now is pointless. That match is over.

Now it is the time to see what remains on the battlefield as it actually is, rather than as we wish it to be.

So this is the time for acceptance, and an end to argument. For Conservatives, it is time to go on and get on with the programme in their manifesto. For Labour and Liberal Democrats, one key argument has been lost. There will still be constructive things to do, but it is just they aren't the things they hoped to do last week, or indeed yesterday.

In the words of Niebuhr's famous prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

*Dec 2019 Thought. for the Train is a short column by the Rev'd Robert Stanier, vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "Thought for the Train" at [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*