

Address by the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher OBE, Bishop of Dorchester

Given at the Commemorative Service to honour Edward John Mott VC DCM
Sunday 22nd January 2017, St Peter's Church, Drayton

As I read of the story of Jack Mott's courage – both in The Dardanelles, where my own Grandfather also fought – and on The Western Front, so I was reminded of the significance of individuals – the difference that people can make individually to their worlds.

When I read for a degree in History, almost 50 years ago, it was still popular in some quarters to follow a rather crude Marxist view of History. Whether or not one believed in its philosophy of historical inevitability, the message was clear – individuals are not significant; what matters are the inevitable tides of social change. But whilst no one would doubt that social forces are incredibly strong levers shaping social change, few would argue that that individuals do not matter.

When we planned this service, few of us linked it to the inauguration of the 45th President of The United States. But, whatever you think of Donald Trump, there is little doubt that he has already made a major political impact. How far his hopes – and some would say his nightmares – are realisable, remains to be seen, but few would argue that, as an individual, he cannot play a significant role. For that reason, The Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church has encouraged people to pray for him - not because he agrees with all his politics - far from it - but because he recognises the significance of the individual who holds office as President of The United States.

Jack Mott never held the power of a President, but on January 27th 1917, his actions under fire not only played a significant role in the left flank attack, but they also shaped his life, and the lives of many of his colleagues, who were saved from being wounded or gunned down. Individuals do matter – and our actions matter. Whether that is in war, or in civilian life, how we behave, and how we act towards each other, matters.

Nowhere is this more true than in the life of Jesus himself. In Him we have an individual far more significant than all the presidents of the United States, all our prime ministers, and all the leaders of Russia and China combined. He was someone who, through his life, death and resurrection, changed the course of human history for ever. He is someone who is still changing lives today. He is the one who, quite properly, we come to worship, as the life-transforming person He is, now and evermore.