

From the Vicar - November 2023

I'm writing this on 18th October, as I scan the news headlines regularly to keep abreast of the terrible events in Israel and Gaza.

The recent Hamas attacks on Israeli citizens were despicable; and the Israeli response has led to the unjustifiable and tragic death of many civilians, including innocent children. Israel and Palestine are currently arguing over who is to blame for the explosion which killed almost 500 people at the Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City. Israel's threatened attack on Gaza "by air, sea and land" has not yet materialised – but I live in fear that, by the time you read this, Gaza City will be no more. I fear, too, for all those who have fled Gaza City and who seek sanctuary elsewhere in the Gaza strip – waiting, and praying, for the border with Egypt to open so that food, water and medical supplies can be taken into Gaza, and those who wish can leave. The situation in the Gaza strip is desperate. It's a humanitarian crisis. I also fear that Iran, Lebanon and other nations will be drawn into the conflict, and that the conflict will continue to escalate, and spiral out of control. Meanwhile the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, and many other nations, show little sign of abating. Sometimes it's hard not to despair, not to lose hope, not to fear for the future.

Several friends shared the following prayer on social media today, offered by The Methodist Church:

Loving God

I see the news and I am afraid.

Violence is spiralling out of control.

I don't know what to think or feel.

The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair
feels very close at hand.

Help me to remember that nothing in all creation
can separate me from your love

that I know in Jesus.

May your perfect love for me cast out my fear
and free me to discern what is mine to do
amidst the chaos of this suffering world.

Amen.

Perhaps you could pray this prayer, as you continue to pray for peace in the Holy Land, for the release of all hostages; and for an end to the cycle of oppression, violence and retribution.

On 5th November, while the nation remembers Guy Fawkes' foiled plot to blow up Parliament, the church will celebrate our Patronal Festival of All Saints', during which we celebrate the great company of saints who surround us. We also have an opportunity – at our annual Service of Light, at 3pm on 5th November - to remember, and give thanks for, our own loved ones, family and friends who gave us life and love, or who nurtured us in faith. And on the following Sunday, we remember those who gave, or lost, their lives in war; and we reflect upon the terrible cost of war, as we continue to pray for peace. All are always welcome to any of our services – and to pop into church whenever it is open (almost every day) to pray, or just to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of our beautiful church.

All Saints' Church has been a beacon of hope and light, on "God's Holy Hill" for hundreds of years, offering a sacred space for divine encounter, prayer, worship, celebrations, and personal and national lamentation, remembrance and mourning. I hope that you will consider becoming a Friend of All Saints' Church, so that we can continue to serve the local community, and promote the values of justice, love, peace, faith and hope, for generations to come. Please pick up a leaflet in church, or visit www.rcc.ac.uk/friendsallsaints if you would like to become a Friend. Thank you.

May God bless you abundantly, as we remember and pray for all

those who have lost their lives in wars and conflicts, and as we pray for peace on earth. May the light of Christ shine in your hearts, and lighten the darkness. Amidst the chaos of this suffering world, may you know the peace of God which passes all understanding, and may you know that you are loved, unconditionally, and all the time.

Peace be with you. Shalom and salaam.

God bless

Karen x