



A Message of Peace from the Moderator

The Dove with the olive branch in its mouth has its origin in the story of Noah. It is the Dove returning to the ark with the olive branch that symbolises a new beginning, hope for the future and of course it has become an abiding symbol of peace.

Throughout the Moderatorial Year I will be presenting doves made at the workshop of al-Kahf in Bethlehem. They are made from pieces of glass picked from among the rubble of past invasions of Bethlehem. For me this dove holding an olive branch in its mouth is a symbol of hope and the artwork itself shows that something beautiful can arise from the ashes of despair. I hope that this little project to make doves will be taken up by every congregation and that when they are all gathered in they can be used to declare our support for finding peaceful means to resolve conflicts across the world. Most particularly, however, it is my prayer that a just peace will reign for Israelis and for the Palestinian people, whether in Gaza or in the place where this symbol was first conceived and where the glass doves are being crafted.

Prayers for peace are, of course, needed for many other places in the world and sometimes it is hard for us to know how to pray and what to pray for. Prayer too is sometimes not enough. With such savage violence being perpetrated against innocent people in conflicts across Syria and Iraq our prayers for those who have been driven out of their homes and who are under threat of genocide are also for appropriate intervention to save lives and restore the dignity of those threatened by the forces of such shocking evil. Nothing in all creation will, however, diminish our heartfelt prayers for abiding peace across the nations of the earth.

A Prayer

Jesus, Light of the World in whom hope endures and burns brighter than the sun, we give you honour and praise.

Reconciling Jesus, through whom all relationships that are broken may find a way to heal, we give you honour and praise.

Compassionate Jesus, for whom justice is immersed in grace and in whom there is a longing to bring all creation back to God, we give you honour and praise.

Almighty God, whose heart breaks for the suffering we cause to one another, we bring our prayers to you for every place where deep division and enmity have brought peoples to war or the brink of war. And we pray for all those who fall victim to such conflict:

- for the innocent bystander of every conflict, for those who are collateral damage and those who are so displaced that they lose everything and every security they ever had.*
- for those whose sons and daughters are sent to fight and who under orders are killed and maimed and whose lives are devastated forever after.*
- and we pray today, for the soldier, and the General, for the politician and for the enemy.*

Most especially we pray for wisdom among the nations so that the right things are done to save the lives of innocent women and men and children trapped in unthinkable circumstances in Gaza, and on Mount Sinjar, a hill far away from shelter and safety and peace.

We pray that one day the sun may rise on a world that does not have war built into its economy and that one day the sun may set on a different way of dealing with our differences so that the dividend of peace may outweigh the dividend of war.

So with earnestness of heart we pray for peace in the lands of the bible and in every war torn place on earth:

- that enmity may be replaced with understanding*
- that the dignity of every human being should be preserved*
- that hatred be set aside for the sake of peace and*
- that out of the ashes of destruction may rise a land where all may live secure and free.*

And this we pray, in the strong name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Adapted from prayers used by the Rt Rev John Chalmers at the General Assembly