



# The Church of Scotland

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SJP/CAM

7 October 2024

Dear All,

There are no words that can adequately sum up our feelings and emotions as we reflect on a year of conflict in Israel and Gaza. The massacre in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the war, with the widespread destruction within Gaza that followed, has brought suffering to hundreds of thousands and elevated tension between communities throughout the world. It is hard to imagine that we are still witnessing scenes of horror and devastation, and yet it is a reality. Innocents are still suffering; families are still mourning; what we see through media images are an everyday reality for so many. We are horrified by the extensive loss of life. While we cannot articulate words to describe what people are living through, we must use words to bring about a resolution to this dreadful situation.

Last year, my predecessor, the Very Rev Sally Foster Fulton made comment about the conflict: *"We call for calm and active consideration for the innocent civilians who are suffering in Israel and Gaza. Peace in our world can never come through violence. Peace in our spirits can never come through revenge."*

As events continue to unfold, we too pray for an end to the war on Gaza and Lebanon, an end to the attacks, and for a just resolution for all the people of Israel and Palestine, and call upon all parties to lay down their weapons and enter meaningful dialogue to bring this conflict to an end.

Our prayers are with those who are suffering the effects of this year of conflict that they might be comforted. We pray also for an end to hostilities and for meaningful dialogue that gives Israelis and Palestinians their rights to safety and self-determination. We pray that the familiar words from Isaiah will become a reality: *"they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."* (Isaiah 2:4)

## **A prayer for peace**

Lord God, you have commanded us to love our neighbour

... And yet we have failed.

Lord God, you have commanded us to love one another

... And yet we have allowed hatred to grow in strength.

Lord God, you have commanded us to follow the example of Christ

... And yet we have become motionless and silent.

Lord God, you have commanded us to reach out beyond every human made barrier

... And yet we have closed our senses to the problems that exist in our world.

Help us to turn the word peace into a verb that we become active in seeking opportunities for dialogue and meaningful discussion as a means to identify a path to peace for all people in Israel and Gaza.

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Almighty God, as we note this significant anniversary, we pray for an end to the war on Gaza and for a just resolution for all the people of Israel and Palestine. We condemn all acts of violence and atrocities and pray that every individual may live free from the horrors still being endured. May this anniversary be an opportunity to step back from further escalation as we see it unfolding in the Middle East, and may we work together for peace and justice for all.

We remember all those who endure continued trauma and distress, those suffering physical and emotional injury and those who have been bereaved. Give to them your comfort and enable them to know that they are surrounded by your love.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen**

You may wish to shape your own prayers, and in a Joint Partner Plan Letter from Stewart Gillan (Jerusalem) & Muriel Pearson (Tiberias) last month, they provided some specific prayer points. I encourage you to utilise these in your personal and public devotions. Our thoughts and prayers are with them both as they continue to minister in Jerusalem and Tiberias.

#### **Prayer points**

- As we contemplate the anniversary of 7 October, hold before God all who suffer from Hamas' attacks on 7 October, and for all who suffer as a result of Israel's war on Gaza. Hold before God all who suffer as a result of Israel's occupation of the West Bank.
- Pray for those in the North of Israel subjected to rocket attack from Hezbollah, displaced from their homes; and for those in Lebanon killed, injured and displaced by Israeli attacks.
- Pray for all bereaved, all wounded, all suffering trauma and distress, all held hostage or imprisoned, whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or Druze.
- Pray for those charged with care of the vulnerable on all sides, and raise up leaders with a vision of peace with justice for all.
- Pray for bold support for peace from the international community, and for international law to be upheld and strengthened.
- Pray for aid workers, UNRWA staff, medics and journalists who are struggling to bring humanitarian aid with limited resources.
- Pray for those struggling to hold onto their humanity, who come under suspicion for reaching out to neighbours who are different from them.
- Pray for us and our ecumenical associates at St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias, that we may know God's peace in seeking to carry out the ministry of Christ.

Yours faithfully,



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