

ST LUKE'S NEWS November 2023

St Luke's website:

www.stlukeschurchbuckfastleigh.org.uk

St Luke's Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/StLukesBuckfastleigh

Dart & Avon Mission Community website:

www.dartandavonmissioncommunity.org.uk

CHURCH SERVICES IN NOVEMBER		
Sunday November 5 th	3.30pm	INSTITUTION OF GINA RADFORD AS TEAM RECTOR
Sunday November 12 th	10.45am	REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY Service
Sunday November 19 th		No service at St Luke's
	8.00am	<i>Holy Communion (BCP) at St Petroc's, South Brent</i>
	9.30am	<i>Morning Worship at St Petroc's, South Brent</i>
	9.30am	<i>Holy Communion (BCP) at Dean Prior</i>
	10.30am	<i>Matins at St Paul de Leon, Staverton</i>
	11.00am	<i>Holy Communion at St John the Baptist, Littlehempston</i>
Sunday November 26 th	11.00am	Holy Communion

GINA RADFORD APPOINTED AS TEAM RECTOR

Our recent advertising for a team rector drew no applicants. However, the good news is that Gina Radford has now been appointed to this post. She is already of course well-known to us in her current role as team vicar, and she is thoroughly immersed in the work of all our churches, including St Luke's. She has in effect been acting team rector for the last two years, but will now officially step into the role. She will continue living in South Brent, and will still serve on a half-time basis, (though in fact Gina usually does far more than half-time!) Meanwhile Laura will continue to live in Buckfastleigh and serve as our curate, and as curate for the whole mission community.

There will be an Institution and Induction service for Gina here in St Luke's on Sunday November 5th at 3.30pm. All are welcome to that service. The service will be followed by a cup of tea in the lounge.

Because of this service there will be no Compline or Sunday Stories.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Please note that the Remembrance Sunday service on November 12th will start at 10.45am, i.e. 15 minutes earlier than our usual Sunday service time. It will be followed by a service at the war memorial at Holy Trinity at approximately 12noon.

On Remembrance Sunday we shall read the names of those who died in the two world wars of the last century, but we shall do so against the background of two awful conflicts of the present day – Russia's evil invasion of Ukraine, now well over a year and a half ago, but with no prospect of any sort of resolution in the near future; and the terrible attack by Hamas on Israel, and Israel's response of massive bombing, with probably land invasion to follow.

So as we think of those who gave their lives in the past it is important that we also think about those who suffer in war today, and also important that we think seriously about how we view these two present-day conflicts. We need to avoid glib and simplistic judgements, but we also sometimes need to condemn evil for what it is.

Before the second World War, with the rise of Nazi Germany, there were attempts at conciliation, famously Neville Chamberlain's "peace for our time", said just 11 months before Germany's invasion of Poland started the war. Conciliation does not always work, and sometimes it is necessary to call out evil for what it is, and to do all we can to oppose it. On the other hand, it is often only too easy to naively see one side as utterly good and the other as utterly evil. So how should we as Christians view the opposing sides in these two conflicts?

In the case of Russia's invasion, its so-called "special military operation", it is surely right for us to see it as evil, and to see the Russian suppression of any opposition within its own country, and its frequent total distortion of the truth, as being equally morally wrong.

In the case of Israel and Gaza the situation is more complicated, and below is an updated version of the reflection sent round by email to church members by George Day.

A MOUNTING TRAGEDY – WHICHEVER WAY WE LOOK AT IT

We have all watched with horror as events in Israel and Gaza have unfolded over the past weeks. As I reflect on this, I am aware of the danger of rushing in with ill-thought-out words, and yet the equal danger of feeling this is just too much for us to grapple with. However, Remembrance Sunday reminds us that while we must never glorify war, we cannot avoid its reality. And that includes the reality of the situation in Israel and Gaza.

There is the whole complex historical background of the formation of Israel and its relationship to the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

There is the political and religious clash that has resulted, which in these recent years seems if anything to have become more hardline. On the one side, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies have spearheaded a policy using settlements to effectively take over large parts of the Palestinian West Bank, and they have kept Gaza as a semi-prison. As a result Palestinians complain of appalling and derogatory treatment. On the other side there has been the rise of the extremist militant organisations Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas is now surely rightly described as a terrorist organisation, and it is to be noted that once it came to power in Gaza in 2006/7 it has not held any further democratic election, and seems to have shown more concern for opposing Israel than for the well-being of its people.

Internationally there have been attempts to bring peace, but it is perhaps arguable that there has been an international collective failure to find a way forward. And this of course has been aggravated by the involvement of such destructive elements as Iran, which often seems to be intent on widening the conflict, and the chaos of nations such as Syria and Lebanon, and Russia now offering support to Hamas.

So we have seen the terrorist attack by Hamas, with the utterly vile slaughter of adults, children and babies, including mutilation, and the abduction of people as hostages. Hamas lacks all humanity, including, incredibly enough, for its own people, whom it must have known would suffer dreadfully in the Israeli response. And that of course is what we are seeing currently, with the awful death toll in Gaza, the destruction of much of Gaza city, and the blocking of fuel, water and food supplies. Clearly Israel has a right to defend itself, and it claims its bombing is hitting terrorist targets, but questions remain over how far that claim can be justified.

In the midst of all this there are the people, adults and children, who are suffering – the wounded, the bereaved, those taken captive, those who do not even know if their hostage relatives are still alive, the homeless, and those who are now without food, fuel or water.

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It can all seem too much for us to cope with, and we are tempted to move on to happier things. But Remembrance Sunday reminds us of the dreadful consequences of human conflict, and our Christian faith calls us not to ignore or avoid the harsh realities of what happens around us. We follow Jesus, the one who himself suffered at the hands of political and religious leaders. We see his compassion. And we are called to share that compassion.

That of course immediately rules out the anti-Semitism that we have seen only too frequently in the last weeks. Jews in this country and elsewhere living in fear of attack, and the tide of

hatred seen on much social media. Criticism of Israeli policy is one thing, but this visceral and extraordinary hatred of Jewish people, hatred that is as bad as that seen in Nazi Germany, is nothing short of evil.

Rather, we are called to share, even if in a small way, the pain of those who are suffering on both sides of this conflict. We live in a world where so often anger rules, and people thoughtlessly take sides, often even supporting evil. In this situation the Christian churches need to try *where possible* to avoid taking political sides, for or against either Israel or the Palestinians. Instead we are called to pray, as we shall do on Remembrance Sunday, and to love and to do what we can to work for ultimate peace and reconciliation. And probably the one practical thing we can do as individual Christians is to give financial help, for example through Christian Aid, or the JMECA (Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association) appeal for the Anglican hospital in Gaza, both of which can easily be found online.

Rays of Light in a 'Situation of Almost Unredeemed Darkness'

(Reprinted from Exeter Diocese "Roots and Shoots")

The Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken of two 'rays of light' despite the darkness of the current conflict in the Middle East. Justin Welby was speaking during a debate on Israel and Gaza in the House of Lords. It followed his return from a four-day pastoral visit to the Holy Land to show solidarity with the Anglican Archbishop and the Christian community there.

Archbishop Justin said he had met with Israeli families whose relatives had been killed in the Hamas attacks. He said "As well as huge anger, there was an absence of hate from those families. And that dignity that they are showing is the first ray of light in a situation of almost unredeemed darkness."

He also said that Christian leaders in the Holy Land are united in their response to the conflict: "They sat literally shoulder to shoulder on the day after the destruction at Ah-Ahli Hospital. They sat with the Anglican Archbishop, it's an Anglican hospital, and surrounded him with their support, as the extraordinary Archbishop Hosam Naoum spoke of the need for peace and reconciliation – with the knowledge of his friends who died, and the hospital, which I visited in 2019 and opened a section of, which has been so badly damaged. That visible sign of unity is a second ray of light."



The Christian heads of churches in Jerusalem have called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to enable the safe passage of food, water and medicine.

MOTHERS' UNION

At our meeting in October, Marigold Seager-Berry gave us a very interesting talk on 'Visiting MU in Tanzania'. Members enjoyed the talk of her experiences with the women of Tanzania and she showed the meeting the gifts of craft work they had given her. Members also discussed our plans for our Christmas Events.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 2nd November at 2.30 pm at St Luke's Church; our speaker will be Janet Jones on the subject of 'Safeguarding for the MU'. Visitors will be welcome to join our friendly group.

REMEMBER, IT'S NOT TOO LATE....

...if you haven't already done so, to contribute to our Gift Day – we do need the generous financial support of all our members – or to the Christian Aid appeal for the Middle East. For the first, gifts can be left in church or alternatively you can donate by BACS transfer to Buckfastleigh PCC, sort code 30-90-89, account no 39165768, with the reference Gift Day. For the second the easiest is online at <https://give.christianaid.org.uk/donate/CAM-005943>