



The Diocese of
Southwark

Diocese of Southwark - Jerusalem group

13 November 2023

A new group, chaired by Bishop Martin, has formed to take forward the relationship between the Diocese of Southwark and Diocese of Jerusalem building on the Jerusalem-Southwark Covenant Agreement signed in 2021.

The group is small at this stage and is designed simply to respond to the current crisis in Israel/Palestine. It will form more fully and more clearly identify its priorities in due course.

Drawing on the links we have with the Diocese of Jerusalem, we would like to commend the following prayer points given to us mainly by our partners there.

We would also encourage you to reach out to synagogues and mosques in your area to build and strengthen relationships.

In addition, Bishop Christopher has asked that parishes consider giving a percentage of their collections from Advent/Christmas services to the Archbishops of Jerusalem and Canterbury's joint appeal for the work of the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East which has been affected by the devastating war in Israel/Palestine. Donations can be made via the Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association (JMECA) cafdonate.cafonline.org/24666 Lastly, in a highly charged political context, it can sometimes be difficult for those who lead public prayers in our churches to know how best to do this. We have put together a few pointers which may be useful to them. Do, please, share them with your intercessors if you think it might be helpful.

+Martin, chair
Peter Welby, secretary
Wendy Robins
Moira Astin

Guidance for Intercessors - Praying for the Israel-Palestine Conflict

As Christians we are united with the universal church through our shared membership of the body of Christ; we are also united with all people through our shared creation according to the image of God. The role of an intercessor in a Christian service recognises these fundamental ties by including the leading of the people in prayers for the church and the world.

This task is especially challenging when global events are felt deeply by those in our own communities and churches, such as the current conflict in Israel and Gaza, and related violence in Lebanon and the West Bank. We may be tempted to avoid the issue so as not to cause offence; we may alternatively be tempted to pray according to the way that we understand the situation. Both approaches would fall short of our calling as intercessors.

The following guidance is intended to help intercessors to lead prayers for the Israel-Palestine conflict and may be used also for other divisive situations.

- Feel lost for words? That's ok. It can be powerful to suggest a collective time of silence, holding before God the peoples of the Holy Land and trusting in the Holy Spirit to intercede with us.
- Remember that our role in prayer is not to advise God, but to raise the needs of the world before His throne, asking for God's mercy, secure in the promise that He is full of compassion and abounding in love.
- Avoid using prayers to express a particular viewpoint on the situation. There will inevitably be diverse perspectives among those gathered for prayer and it is the intercessor's role to unite people before God in prayer - this is hard to do if some feel alienated or wish to disagree with your words.
- Focus on the needs of those for whom you are praying: pray for those who are suffering, who are fearful, who are grieving, and those who burn with rage and desire revenge.
- Remember the churches and Christians that are in the midst of this conflict, faithfully serving and worshipping God. It needs our prayers.
- Hold onto hope. We are called to pray for peace and justice and we trust in God's promise that in his restored creation there will be no more war or suffering or pain. We are assured that nothing is impossible for God - we can pray for peace even in the most intractable situations.

Specifically, please pray for:

- Archbishop Hosam Naoum, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, and for all the clergy of the Diocese of Jerusalem - who need strength, fortitude and wisdom as they minister to their congregations
- Young Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank who are living with great anxiety and fear of being stopped by the police and arrested and imprisoned
- For all held hostage, for those who love them and fear for their wellbeing
- Israeli and Palestinian peace and reconciliation organisations who are struggling to know how to operate in this new context
- All who seek to bring aid, support and safety to those most affected by the conflict
- St George's College, Jerusalem, its Dean, The Very Revd Canon Richard Sewell, and its staff and students
- An early end to the war, and for safety and security for all the peoples of the Holy land
- New pathways to peace with justice
- Peace on our streets and strengthened relationships with our Jewish and Muslim neighbours.
- For all who mourn

A prayer written by Archbishop Hosam:

O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land. Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths - Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land. While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples. Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children - for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.