

Prayer for others Sunday 8 January 2017

Our God, as followers of Jesus we come to you in prayer on this second Sunday of a new year. It is only two weeks since we celebrated the birth of Jesus and it is so easy to forget its significance for us as we begin to get organised for a new beginning – back to work, starting a new job, going back to school or tertiary study, or for retirees, a new round of routines, opportunities and commitments.

We are so grateful for the gift of Jesus, born in such a humble situation so long ago. Who would have thought that the young man he would become could be the inspiration for so many millions of people ever since – an example of how to treat everyone with respect and love in the knowledge that we can all be children of God. And yet we know that there are so many who do not show this love and respect for others – we find it hard to understand the motives behind oppressive leaders and their followers. We pray today for the victims of war, particularly in Iraq and Syria. We thank you for the compassion shown by Turkey's leadership in granting citizenship to the many thousands of refugees they have accepted. We live in hope that the Russian withdrawal will contribute to a lessening of the killing and reverse the disruption of the normality we take for granted, and that it will not lead to an increase in inhuman treatment of others.

Again we pray for the families of victims of a shooting in the United States, at Fort Lauderdale airport. Be with them as they grieve. Surely more of the American people and the new leadership will realise that tighter gun laws would almost certainly have made this incident impossible because the young Alaskan could not have taken a gun in his luggage.

Father God, help us however not to dwell only on the bad things happening in this world. We really are grateful that so many more people, whether Christian or not, live far closer to the ideals Jesus taught. They love their families and friends, they respect their neighbours, their colleagues and others they interact with every day, they care for the sick and elderly, they help their children to grow into purposeful, caring adults, they give to charities which take that care, love and respect to people in places they cannot go to. Bless our own people, who show your love in the way they run our Church shop, the way they help with hospital services, the way they witness to the Christian way to those they meet day by day. Bless Hilary as she continues to get to know more and more of the people in our community and keep equipping her to brighten their lives as she moves among them.

We pray for the remaining family and friends of Malcolm Jackson, brought up in this church years ago, who died of a brain tumour last week. People at his funeral acknowledged that his moral compass was established in this place and helped direct his life. We thank you for that.

We pray also for our present members who have suffered bereavement, illness and some of the negative effects of old age. We thank you that our health professionals keep increasing their knowledge of how to help to lessen those effects and how to minimise pain.

As always, we pray in the name of Jesus, who taught his disciples to pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that sin against us. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.