

PRAYER FOR OTHERS 16 DECEMBER 2018

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft; einsam wacht

Silent night, holy night

Everyone sleeps, no-one's awake - a little different from the translation we use today of Joseph Mohr's carol, written in haste 200 years ago, but the meaning is still clear – Christmas is a time for peace. A time when we celebrate Jesus' birth to a very ordinary young couple in an outhouse for animals, with all the mixed messages that conveys. Even on the western front during the First World War 100 years ago, troops stopped fighting and shared the peace of Christ.

Of course the baby grew up and shared the peace with his friends, teaching them that our God loves us and we should love him and his creation. That is why we worship you here today.

Jesus' told us in no uncertain terms how we should treat others: we should treat them as we would like to be treated –

- He told us to love our enemies – please give us the grace to do this.
- He told us to love our neighbour as ourselves and in the parable of the good Samaritan, made it clear that anyone in need is our neighbour - please give us the grace to love our neighbour.
- He said "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." - please give us the grace to be peacemakers in our community.

We hear daily, however, that the whole world is not at peace. So many parts of Africa, like Congo and Sudan desperately need new leaders who are peacemakers, able to create a new political and social order based on respect for one another. We often feel powerless to help in this process, but thank you for the aid agencies who enable even us to do something loving for the poor in such countries, as we donate our money so their humanitarian work can carry on.

We pray for the family of Grace, the young visitor to our country, so brutally murdered last week, and for families of the other women, victims of violence in our own society, remembered by the many, young and old, who marched in support of the peace we all want for our communities.

We often feel helpless to change things, but we can ensure that peacemaking begins with ourselves as we show love and respect for our own families and neighbours, for those with whom we work each day. God, give us the wisdom to use the right words to help those we know with relationship problems to be reconciled. May families who need our foodbanks know the love of Jesus through the help they receive. Help us to show our love for those in our own church family needing encouragement and support.

Above all we pray in Jesus' name "let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."

Amen