

Dear Friends

Two comments following the Paris bomb atrocities have stuck in my memory. The first, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was widely publicised in the UK media. Very publicly, he shared his doubts. He wondered aloud where God was in all this. Perhaps that was an attempt to identify with the questions he expected many people to be asking, but actually this got a very mixed reception with some puzzled Anglicans finding this response inept and unhelpful. My own initial response had little to do with doubt. I was shocked and awed by the intensity, the power and the reach of evil. My response was simply to hope that such evil would not have the last word, and that in the end the power of goodness would prevail over it.

The second comment came from a female French politician who was asked whether this year it would be a different kind of Christmas in Paris. Her immediate and spirited response was that it was essential to celebrate Christmas. "We must preserve the innocence of our children," she said.

The service of Nine Lessons and Carols, which is held every year in the Christmas season, and which will be held at St Helena's this year at 6pm on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December, begins with a reading from the book of Genesis. It's a complicated tale that describes the introduction of evil into a former paradise. This coincides with a loss of innocence that is connected also with the increase of knowledge and sexual awakening. It introduces one of the main themes of the Bible: whether good or evil will eventually win out, and by implication, what it means to be truly and creatively human.

The remaining lessons chart the pathway through the Bible to the eventual answer, as contained in the first chapter of John's Gospel. In this chapter creation is given a second chance, and the choice is once more placed before the reader, whether to choose life or death.

The run-up to Christmas this year has been dominated by what the UK's response should be to the Paris bombings and indeed to the phenomenon of so-called ISIL. In this Diocese we have first hand evidence of the misery it is causing, as our church in Baghdad cares for the refugees from the north and west of the country who have escaped its clutches. They will be in our prayers specially at this time. However, no-one can visit Iraq without seeing the disastrous results of thinking that the region's problems can be easily solved through the presentation of military might. The debate in the UK parliament about whether Britain should join a bombing campaign sometimes betrays a feeling that salvation and peace can be achieved in that way.

Speaking as an adult who lost innocence long ago, what I want this Christmas to preserve for me, is that hope which John's Gospel spells out. It is evident that men prefer darkness to light, he says, but the light has come into the world, the light persists in the world, and the darkness has not and will not overcome it.

A Happy Christmas to you all from Sue and myself, Geoff and Deb.

*John Holdsworth* Chaplain and Parish Priest

## Events and Services for Advent and Christmas at St Helena's

Sunday 6 December	Christmas Fair 4pm Christingle Service 6pm
Tuesday 8 December by refreshments	Ladies Carol Service 10am, followed
Wednesday 9 December	11am Quiet Service
Sunday 13 December and Confirmation with the Bishop	9.30am Morning Eucharist Service
Monday 14 December	6pm Carol Service at Perivolia
Sunday 20 December	9.30am Morning Service 6.00pm Nine Lessons and Carols, followed by mulled wine and mince pies
Christmas Eve Communion	6.00pm Crib Service and Holy
Christmas Day Service.	10am Christmas Day Communion

**All are Welcome**



**St Helena's Church, Larnaca**

**Pastoral Letter Christmas 2015**