



The Diocese of Southwark

The Bishop of Southwark

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My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Gospels Jesus wept over Jerusalem as indeed he wept over the grave of Lazarus, his friend, where he sheds tears of loss, of grief and of pain. Over the past week many have wept over our cities. There have been tears of anguish and loss, tears of frustration and rage, tears of disbelief and pain.

It is now time to be of good courage, to pray and work together for the healing of our communities, the Lord being our helper.

The events on our streets have left several people dead and many more without homes and having lost livelihoods. They have presented us with events of wanton destruction, theft and a blatant disregard for lawful, peaceable living. They have left many in our communities bewildered and frightened, questioning the fabric of our society and prompting what will be a long hard look at our nation, our communities and ourselves.

Those caught up in these events as victims and perpetrators come from many different backgrounds, generations and groups in our society. The causes of these disturbances are already being recognised as diverse and complex. I hope that we will all reflect carefully on these events, eager to learn the lessons for our work and ministry, committed to the rebuilding of the physical, social and spiritual well-being of our society and slow to make quick empty statements and to apportion blame.

I have visited many of those places most deeply affected and been aware of the shock and pain that is still keenly felt as well as the support and help being provided by many of our clergy and churches. Bishop Richard and the archdeacons have also been fully engaged in the Episcopal areas of the Diocese, meeting and listening and giving encouragement. I am confident that our parishes will continue to offer hope, love and practical support in the name of Christ as communities are re-built and renewed in every way. This renewing and rebuilding needs to be in partnership with our ecumenical and interfaith partners as well as civic and other charitable agencies.

Yet as well as tears of pain this week, there have also been tears of hope. We have seen and been moved by the mobilisation onto our streets of a flood of charity and community pride as people have stepped forward to help clean, clear up and declare the places they know and love are built on foundations of tolerance, peace and harmony.

We have truly seen both the best and the worst of our country this week. The Church is in the business of healing and we declare with confidence that all are welcomed, all are loved and all have a dignity before God. Undoubtedly there is much we can do to play our part in the rebuilding of our communities and in the rebuilding of trust. We have a part to play in the national and local debate that will follow and in practical acts of loving service.

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The Diocese of Southwark

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For now there are two things we can do. Firstly, we can continue to live our everyday lives, using our community facilities, taking time to engage in conversations with those we meet on our streets, supporting local traders and those who seek to get back on their feet. We must not be afraid, but rather trust in the goodness that exists, seeking and recognising Christ in our midst and in each other. Secondly, but crucially, we continue to pray. Pray for those who have lost life and loved ones, those who have lost homes and livelihoods, those who are fearful, anxious and bewildered. Pray for our cities and our country, our political leaders and police service. Pray for those who work with young people and families. Pray for trust. Pray for forgiveness, healing and renewal.

This morning's gospel reading finds Jesus ministering on the margins of his society, encountering a woman of considerable tenacity. May we follow in service to those on the edge of our society and show the same perseverance in faith and work.

May God bless you in his service; fill our hearts and minds with faith, hope and love, that we may be renewed in strength and courage to meet the challenges ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Southwark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

+Christopher Southwark