

From Bishop Philip Huggins: Interim General Secretary

25th July 2014

Greetings on St. James Day,

We remember Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, calling James and John as they mended nets. They responded, as we have, to Jesus call: "follow me"

Thereafter, our life of discipleship takes us where it takes us.

We learn, along the way, to serve, in Holy Spirit, as best we can.

Jesus word to those ambitious disciples (and their mum) also disciplines us:

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you.." (Mt.20:25).



The wisdom and way of Jesus critiques our life of leadership in the church just as it is a counter-cultural model we offer the wider world.

Anyway, with all this in mind, I write to you on St. James day, beginning my endeavours as Interim General Secretary for the NCCA. It has been quite a week on which to begin. Various international crises have drawn our prayers, service and advocacy: the destruction of MH17; the conflict in Gaza and Israel; the plight of Iraqi Christians, forced to flee their ancient home in Mosul.



Whilst seeking to respond collaboratively to these serious matters, I have been finding out how the NCCA office works.

First impressions are powerful. Mine are very positive. People have been very welcoming and helpful.

Meanwhile, these compassionate and capable people here have been responding to the above named matters.

In particular, you would be aware of Act for Peace Appeals as regards Gaza and Iraq.

www.actforpeace.org.au

Please bring these Appeals to peoples notice. We know that many people want to assist as best they can.

In addition, in partnership with the General Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council the Very Rev Fr Shenouda Mansour. I have met folk from the Assyrian community, prayed and spoken with anguished Church leaders of the Middle East and sent requests to our Government for special assistance.

We all wish we could do more, quicker but we are responding as best we can. To reiterate. I am very grateful to meet and now work with (at least for a time) this fine team on level 7 at NCCA!

Please let us know your thoughts and feelings.
Please keep us in your prayers.

Prayers for Sunday: Iraq

Fr Shenouda and I wrote this prayer

Gracious God,

We give thanks for your gift of peace, first gift of our Risen Jesus to the frightened disciples.

We pray for the raising up of peacemakers in the region and for the cessation of religious persecution in Iraq and elsewhere.

We pray for divine generosity to inspire our Appeal for the support of disciples of Jesus now in Kurdistan.

We pray through the strong name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen

Gaza and Israel

The Jerusalem Prayer: A reminder THE HEADS OF CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM INVITE CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD TO PRAY WITH THEM

O God,
We give thanks to you for every
Community around the world that is praying with us this day for peace.
In the unfathomable mystery and love for all,
Let the power of your redemption and your peace
Transcend all barriers of cultures and
religions and fill the hearts of all who
serve you here, of both peoples –
Israeli and Palestinian –
And of all religions.

Amen

You will be aware, with us, of the many calls for ceasefire, access for humanitarian care of the wounded displaced and dead. Where ever diplomatic and political dispute–settlement fails and there is resort to military violence, we grieve the impact on the poor and vulnerable.

To speak of the “cycle of violence in the Holy Land” is to speak of that which breaks our hearts.

We can but echo Pope Francis call to our diplomatic and political leaders that they are “not to spare prayer or any other effort to end every hostility and seek the desired peace for the good of all.”

In our prayerful imagination, we return to the sea of Galilee and recall Jesus walking along, calling James and John to follow.

We imagine the sunshine upon the sea as we pray within Jesus Beatitude:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.” (Mt: 5:9)

A prayer for Sunday:

Gracious God,

Help us better respond to your love within us, that what we do in the NCCA community, in the name of Jesus,

helps our human family find the unity and peace which is your divine purpose.

We pray for the people of the land we call ‘holy’ including, Gaza and Israel.

We pray for healing and peace through the precious name of Jesus. Amen

P.S. Pictured with Very Rev Fr Shenouda is Sarah Hunt who also began this week doing PA / Communications work with me.



As you respond to our Newsletter, please say hello to Sarah!

Love and Peace in Jesus,

Bishop Philip Huggins
Interim General Secretary NCCA