

Break your heart open in love for the world

An Advent prayer letter from our Moderator

Movement of peoples, acts of terrorism, the clashing of political powers, religious extremism, hope and despair. They are the stories and images in our daily news. They are also a part of the first Christmas story.

Today we struggle to make sense of our world. What is happening to us? How can we respond to events of global violence and terrorism?

In considering these challenges the Christmas narrative has significant relevance.

It is into this kind of world suffering that God breaks in with the cry of a baby; the hope of the world. It is in our particular hopes, fears and brokenness God comes near.

Notice what is happening in your own heart; is it numb? Unable to feel? Gripped with fear or moved with compassion?

Is this where you might find the advent (coming) of God?

Start close-in with your own fear and brokenness.

Weep your own tears and for those whose name you know, only then you will have a heart broken open to weep for the world.

Ask God to come near.

May God break our hearts open in love for the world. This is the beginning of prayer.

Lovers Lament

(A prayer for Paris and the cities of the world affected by acts of violence)

*city of lovers
where the cello bow
acquiesced to the cadence
of assassins' fire*

*a city weeps
blood spilled
bodies broken
conceived in terror*

*we hold your silence
our hands cup your tears
our families host an empty chair
for the ones you have lost*

*we light a vigil candle
a sign of hope
a prayer for a world
in darkness*

*may fear be destroyed
wine poured
bread broken
conceived in love*

- Andrew Norton

Prayer is giving attention; it moves to words (spoken and unspoken) and is then embodied in both ritual and action:

- *Light a candle each evening as a prayer for the coming light into a world of darkness.
Place it next to your TV and read the text John 1:1-9.*
- *Host an empty chair at your dinner table to remember families who have lost family due to violence and terrorism.*
- *Dip a face cloth in water and ring it out as others catch the drips in their cupped hands to remember the tears of God for a broken world.*
- *Open your home to a stranger (likely a neighbour who is different to you) and eat together. Practice hospitality.*
- *Read part of the Christmas story (Luke 1-2:20, Matthew 1:18-2:23) and have a conversation about how similar the context is to the world today.*
- *Break bread and drink from a cup giving thanks for life.*
- *Have a conversation about the forces of love and fear. Will love or fear win?*

Arohanui ki a koutou

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