

Hinde Street Methodist Church

Sunday 28th April 2019 10am

Rev Peter Cornick

Peace be with you.

*Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'
After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the
disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (John 20: 19-20)*

Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka; terrorists walk into churches and hotels, indiscriminately killing hundreds of worshippers and tourists. The scale of the atrocity, the loss of life in a single incident, is deeply shocking. Christians celebrating the most holy day of the year; tourists enjoying breakfast.

What is our Easter response – where is the hope and resurrection, in the face of such carnage. If Jesus is risen, where is he?

Yesterday, in this church, there was a multi-faith vigil of prayer for peace.

Many Sri Lankans had marched in peaceful protest from Westminster to the vigil, and afterwards, marched to the Sri Lanka high commission. As they came to the church steps, I could read their placards.

'Stop attacking places of worship.'

'I am a Muslim – terrorism not in my name.'

I felt a strong unity with these visitors, many from other faiths to mine, from another country, who came in grief, anger and prayer to stand together in this church.

Speakers at the vigil included the President of the Methodist Conference, Michaela Youngson, a Buddhist Monk, an Islamic leader and a statement was read from the Jewish board of deputies. Several people gave moving accounts of discovering they had lost a family member; worshipping in church, or in one case, a waiter serving breakfast in a hotel. Each speaker prayed in his or her own tradition. The sentiments were the same. This horror cannot be allowed to divide communities, religions, Sri Lankans, humans. Violence cannot

be solved by more violence. Praying for peace is a common feature of each of our faiths and doing so together is a strong symbol of God's presence in the world.

Hinde Street was able to offer a place of hospitality, sanctuary, and hope to a people, torn apart by terror. Hope that in the midst of despair, and in the face of evil, the common good and positive relationships will flourish and build human community.

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²⁰*After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*

The Easter message is one of peace being with a group of disciples, torn apart by the events of Good Friday. From disciples who betrayed one another and ran away, the resurrection transforms their confusion and bitterness into peace. But this peace, this resurrection comes from the scars of crucifixion. The peace of Jesus is set in the context of the scars on his hands and his side.

One Muslim speaker told the congregation how peace is central to the Islamic faith. This was echoed by other faith leaders. Peace is central to the resurrection.

In the face of violence and those who seek to divide, people of all faiths and none, need to stand together in peace.