

30
SEPTEMBER
43 DAYS

See, I have inscribed you
on the palms of my hands
Isaiah 49:16a (NRSV)

Revd Dr David Pickering is Moderator of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland, his friend is Pfarrer Martin Henninger, minister of the Lutherkirche in Frankenthal, part of the Church of the Palatinate in Germany.

LETTER TO MY GRANDPA

Dear Grandpa,

I'm shortly to set off for the Somme to meet a German, retracing the journey you took just over 100 years ago to face the Germans. I'm taking your identity tag inscribed with your name and military number, and scanty memories of what you experienced. My uncle, your youngest son, told me that your service included collecting those injured and the bodies of those killed from no man's land.

The German I'm meeting is named Martin, a personal friend from a partnership between the churches we served. We discovered that we each had grandfathers who served at the Somme. Like you, his grandfather was a Christian. You share Christian names too, you being Frederick and he was Friedrich.

As we meet, Martin will remember his grandfather and I'll remember you, and we'll both reflect on the folly of war.

I wonder if in another 100 years, other friends may meet to remember the folly of conflicts fought in our lifetime, for we have not yet learned to live in peace.

Yours in love, sorrow and hope,
David



PRAYER

Dear God, Thank you for our names, Frederick or Friedrich, Freda or Frida, engraved on identity tags in conflict, inscribed on the palms of your hands in eternity. Help us to forget 'sides', recognise the child of God in each person, and draw closer to living as sisters and brothers in peace.

ACTION

Write a letter either to someone from the other 'side' seeking reconciliation and peace. What would you say to them? If you could meet, what gift might you take?

24
SEPTEMBER
49 DAYS

I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must
bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.
So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
John 10:16 (ESV)

Gerry Stacey is a researcher at Christian Research.

WE WILL REMEMBER

We must always remember. But remember what? History is not just written by winners, everyone has their own history. In John, Jesus says, 'There will be one flock, one shepherd' and many feel that was what we were fighting for, allied with Russia, in World War I. Yet, Bulgaria and Romania, on opposite sides in World War I fought together in World War II. Ukraine fought Poland for independence in 1918, yet in 1945 one of the first people to open the gate at Auschwitz and free many

Polish prisoners was the Ukrainian, Ihor Pobirchenko. Jesus calls us to bring all sheep into his fold, yet we are constantly being separated by the corruption of politics, business and lust for power. Can brotherhood be so cheaply traded?

PRAYER

As I walk with friends Lord, they will hold my hand. As I walk among strangers Lord, help me hold their hand. As I walk with you Lord, you will hold my hand, Amen

25
SEPTEMBER
48 DAYS

'Is your heart as true to mine as mine
is to yours?' Jehonadab answered, '
It is.'... So he gave him his hand.
2 Kings 10:15 (NRSV)

Owen Roberts is Heritage Officer for the Methodist Church.

GIVE ME YOUR HAND

The key text for John Wesley's famous sermon on catholic spirit might appear at first to be a strange choice for Wesley's sweeping account of Christian love, its generosity, and, as he puts it, 'unspeakable tenderness'. He argues that diversity of opinion or belief need not prevent our walking together peaceably; 'though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?' The joined hands of Jehu and Jehonadab provide a glimpse of 'tenderness' amidst an otherwise brutal

catalogue of massacre and judgement. In a context of stark enmity in the house of Israel, Wesley identifies a moment of kinship, and its wider resonance for universal love. A truly catholic spirit, Wesley writes, is a heart 'enlarged toward' all humanity.

PRAYER

Loving God, you urge us to the way of peace and kinship. Enlarge our hearts towards those we find difficult to love. May your unspeakable tenderness be known in the world.

26
SEPTEMBER
47 DAYS

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! ...For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.
Psalm 133:1-3 (NIV)

Clive Langmead works with the armed forces in disaster response. After a career at sea he joined the BBC for 20 years and has written seven biographies.

SEA CHANGE

In 1982 I was First Officer of an 8,000 ton ocean liner sailing South American waters: 300 volunteers from 35 nationalities, including 25 Brits and about 30 Argentine. The Bos'n was the senior Argentinian; I the British. In April came the Falklands crisis. Warm fellowship cooled. Familiar friendly greetings turned to embarrassed silence. Departmental organisation suffered. I met the Bos'n on deck. 'Roberto' I said. 'Can we pray for some solution?' So all the Argentine and British

volunteers met to pray that afternoon. And peace, with some tears, returned to us. And us to our calling.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to take a deliberate and provocative step for peace this week by speaking caringly to someone I know is offended by me, and to apologise to them even if the offence is not real, or meant, or my fault. I do this in Jesus name. Amen

Set free those who are crushed. Break every evil chain.
Isaiah 58:6-7 (NIRV)

27
SEPTEMBER
46 DAYS

Enid Gordon is a Methodist Minister who has served as a human rights observer with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompanier programme.

PEACE AND JUSTICE

Peace is not the absence of war. True peace involves seeing 'the other' through the eyes of God as someone loved and cherished, even worth dying for. By standing alongside people who are oppressed, meeting their need for clean water to drink, nourishing food to eat and shelter to protect them from freezing cold or scorching heat, we are offering hope in what appears to be a hopeless situation. By offering friendship, we are continuing the work that Jesus began. Spending money on

making or buying weapons that kill and maim and poison our environment does not contribute to peace or justice, but causes even more deprivation and suffering.

PRAYER

Loving and generous God, we thank you for all your goodness to us. Strengthen our resolve to listen to you, to discern how you can best use us to share in your work of answering the prayers of those who long for justice, peace and reconciliation. Amen

28
SEPTEMBER
45 DAYS

Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.'
John 18:33-38 (NIV)

Robert Jackson joined the Navy from school, got kicked out, became a Christian, got ordained, and was a school chaplain for a couple of decades before returning to the Navy as a chaplain.

WHOSE KINGDOM?

late, as an agent of Rome, has, in his hands, the ultimate sanction of any human authority - the power over life and death. Earthly kingdoms, ultimately, rely on their ability to inflict suffering and death in order to prevail. The Kingdom of Heaven, that Jesus inaugurates, overcomes death and ushers in a new age where suffering and death are no more. I have recently started working at Faslane, where the ability of the British Government to inflict suffering and death has its ultimate and most terrible expression.

Lord Jesus, we look forward to your return in glory with keen anticipation, but in this current age, we pray wisdom and grace for those who hold the reins of power. May they recognise you as the source of all authority and seek to govern in Truth and in Love.

PRAYER

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'
John 20:19 (NIV)

RESURRECTION PEACE

The disciples had witnessed the death of Christ. Fearful of the land in which they lived, what might happen to them, the authorities that ruled in the city, and the uncertainty of their situation, they had locked themselves away. Similar fear can grip many of us in a number of countries and communities: where war grips the land, where safety cannot be ensured, where corrupt governments or the mob rule, and where the future is certainly unclear. Yet to all Christ says the same: 'Peace be with you.'

Peace is the message of the risen Christ, and it is for peace that he is now revealed to us, just as he was to those first disciples.

PRAYER

Risen Christ, remembering your resurrection, and the message of peace that accompanies it, we pray for peace to be with us. May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, as we hear the call to live in peace through unity. May we see you, and know peace here. Amen

Tim Lucas is church liaison officer at Saltbox, a charity based in Stoke-on-Trent.