

Dear friends, in the light of the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza, I thought it might be helpful to give a few guidelines to those people who lead intercessions. We should be aware that they may well be people in the congregations with connections to the conflict, perhaps because they are Jewish or Palestinian, or have friends or relatives caught up in the conflict. This requires great sensitivity

- Though it is such a difficult, emotive subject, don't be afraid of praying for the situation. We should be crying out to God over it.
- Please do not approach the situation in your prayers in a binary way eg apportioning all blame on one side or the other.
- Please avoid overtly political statements.
- Please recognise that there is great suffering on all sides.
- Remember that there are people in our country who are feeling fearful and unsafe at the moment because of being Jewish or Palestinian.
- Please avoid touting solutions to the crisis.
- If using "facts or statistics" in your prayers, please ensure that they come from trusted sources, committed to fact checking. In wars, truth is always a casualty.

I know that it can feel a minefield praying at times like this, but try to pick up themes of lament, compassion for the suffering, wisdom for the peacemakers and negotiators, de-escalation of tension, healing from trauma, permission for aid to civilians, freedom for the hostages etc. We are holding the pain of God's world before him.

You might find it helpful to use a prayer from the Church of England:

Heavenly Father,
We look with horror upon the conflict in Israel and Gaza;
upon acts of terrorism; destruction; and death.
Hear the lamentations of all who suffer.
Heal the fear that begets violence.
Bind up wounds which are so deep
that peace seems unimaginable
except through your merciful intervention.
Grant peace. Grant justice. Grant hope.
We ask this for Jesus Christ's sake
and in the power of his Holy Spirit;
Amen.

Thanks for your ministry among us.
Best wishes. Geoff