

The events of Friday night have affected us all. The capital of the country we call home has been under attack. Most of us with a sermon to deliver today have had to redo it, but as far as we know the teams leading the Anglican churches in Paris are all unharmed, but we are not sure of all congregation members yet. Beirut suffered bombings two days before Paris, a bomb went off at a funeral in Bagdad this week, Russian aeroplanes fall from the sky, what horrors are yet to come?

As we pray for Paris, we have to pray for our enemies as well, as Christians this is not an optional extra however difficult it may seem. Most Muslims are not terrorists, Islam is not a religion of terrorism, most refugees are not terrorists they are fleeing from this. Martin Luther King Jr. said "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Yes, in this darkness we must keep the light of Christ shining, we must stand firm in our faith. Christ, the resurrected Christ brings us the

message of love, he has won the final battle. He asks us to forgive as we have been forgiven, to love our neighbours as ourselves. In these very difficult circumstances we are asked to love, not the deed, but the person.

Retaliation, whether verbal or physical is not the answer and many Muslims have written articulately about how much they reject the actions of a few. It is these few who would like to inflame anti-Islamic views as it will justify their escalating actions. President Hollande said yesterday, understandably, that this is now war, I am not sure how that will be interpreted or put into action, but what happened on Friday night was murder not war, and that is forbidden in the Islamic faith as much as it is in ours.

Where is God in all this? He is with those still in pain, he is with the exhausted workers, he is with those who are grieving, he is with those who will never recover from the events whether physically or mentally. He is seen in the faces of the grieving and the worried, he is seen in those who go beyond the call of duty, he is in the

queue of those offering blood for transfusions, he is seen in all those who offered help and hospitality. He is reaching out in compassion and love to his people whether they know him or not, whether they are aware of his presence or not. He is with us and everyone as they pray.

The reading from Hebrews reminds us that Christian life is not meant to be lived in an atmosphere of fear and anxiety about whether God is gracious and forgiving, but in the certainty that we have access to God's presence. The reading from Daniel is one of the key Old Testament texts undergirding the more explicit New Testament teaching of the resurrection of the dead. The New Testament can be clearer because it is written on the other side of Jesus' life, teaching, death and resurrection.

All of the readings talk of difficult times, but there is an emphasis, a theme, of resurrection, of us needing faith, hope and love. We live in difficult times, we are living through spiritual battles as well as human ones, all we can do is

stand firm in the Word of God, the promises he has made which will one day be fulfilled, and pray; pray for the world, the church, each other and our enemies. We can pray for light to come into the darkness, for hatred to be replaced with love, for peace to overcome war.