



The Church of Scotland

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SJP/CAM

30 September 2024

Dear Friend,

I will be writing next week as we prepare to mark the anniversary of the Gaza/Israel conflict. It is heart breaking to hear of further escalation to hostilities. However, today, I am writing to you following the terrible atrocities in Lebanon which we are seeing on the news at present, to ask you to pray this week in particular for the situation faced by the people living there and caught up in the attacks in one way or another. We have heard from our Partner Church, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) directly, sharing the dire situation they are finding themselves in. This is a further burden on the people of Lebanon following the terrible blast in the port at Beirut in 2020, the Syrian conflict and earthquake and the continuing economic deterioration in the country at present.

The Revd Joseph Kassab, General Secretary of NESSL wrote to us *“these are dark days. The number of casualties and injured people in one day surpassed all expectations. More people are being displaced inside the country ... from every background and religion. Continue to pray for those innocent people who did nothing other than being in a particular place. We are afraid that Lebanon will turn into a second Gaza. We are prepared for the aftermath. The destruction is enormous and the needs are larger than the capacity of an already bankrupt government. God have mercy.”*

We have also heard from the Revd Rola Sleimann, a good friend of the Church of Scotland and particularly Earlston Church (where I will be preaching on Sunday 13 October) which is twinned with her congregation of Tripoli in the North of Lebanon. I had the opportunity to meet her recently on a visit to Scotland and at that time she told us about the tensions in the country and the anxiety of Lebanese people of what was likely to come. She has now shared this: *“It is really painful to see the number of deaths and injuries of innocent people and loss of homes in the South. In the North the displaced people are everywhere – in all empty apartments and in schools and community buildings. This means school term has been affected and they have not opened and Wi-Fi is not good enough to do online school. Although the strikes are mainly in the south every place is now affected; yesterday a thermal balloon bomb exploded in Tripoli and others in the surrounding area.”*

Both Revd Joseph Kassab and Revd Rola Sleimann have already thanked us for our prayers. I have written a short prayer and ask that you use it in your intercessory prayers. If you wish, you can support the work of NESSL who are providing safe accommodation, essential life sustaining assistance and psychological support to all in need, regardless of religious affiliation, by a donation through the Church of Scotland to NESSL.

Let us pray:

Rt Rev Dr Shaw J Paterson

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Almighty God, we bring our voices together to pray for peace, unsure of what to say or do. We see conflict, war, bombings, people fleeing to find shelter. As we witness an escalation in conflict, we pray for your peace ... a peace which offers justice for the oppressed and downtrodden, a real peace in which every individual may live free from the horrors currently being experienced.

Caring God, be with those suffering in Lebanon and across the Middle East. Bring healing to those physically and emotionally wounded ... and healing between individuals, groups and nations.

Comforting God, be with those who mourn the loss of loved ones and be with them in their grief and trauma, offering your grace and inner peace.

Loving God, you loved us so much you came into our world in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We have heard the Good News; enable us to share your love ... for love will overcome. Strengthen our resolve to love our neighbour, and work together for peace so that love might be shared, healing becomes a reality, and that we never lose hope.

In the Name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

With grateful thanks.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shaw J. Paterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Rt Rev Dr Shaw J Paterson
Moderator of the General Assembly
Church of Scotland**