



# The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

*all things in love*

*1 Cor. 16:14*

October 18, 2023

Beloved of God in Delaware,

The morning of Saturday, October 8, I was celebrating the confirmation and reception of thirteen candidates at Christ Church Christiana Hundred. In my sermon, I preached energetically on Jesus' gospel call to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." The day was joyful, and I once again departed an Episcopal parish inspired anew by its people and its faith.

We had no idea that only a few hours before, hundreds of civilians were massacred by Hamas terrorists who crossed into southern Israel from Gaza in a massive terrorist assault. Hundreds were taken hostage, and the catalog of inhuman treatment inflicted on others (murder, rape, and other brutalities) is abhorrent. Hamas continues to fire missiles into Israel daily. The attacks prompted Israel to an immediate national mobilization for war, which included preventing all movement of people to and from the Gaza Strip, including cutting the flow of electricity, food, water, and medical supplies. Israel began regular bombing of targets inside Gaza. A deplorable terrorist attack on thousands of civilians has caused an instant humanitarian crisis for millions more.

The attacks by Hamas on civilians are a horror to condemn without equivocation. The people of Israel are justifiably angry and afraid, and many are calling not only for justice but also for revenge. This is the cycle that evil delights in — hatred sparks violence, violence sparks revenge, revenge grows hatred, and so on.

It can be incredibly hard to see how one's light can shine amid the bloodshed and brutality of the moment. The war unfolding before our eyes is bred from decades of mistrust, oppression, violence, and retribution, and we are half a world away. It can feel hopeless. Yet, I urge us to remember that it is in the darkest moments like these that we, followers of Jesus Christ, can and must let our lights shine, wherever we are.

The light of Jesus — the way, the truth, and the life — reminds us that all people are created in the image of God and thus we must *never* give in to dehumanizing language or rhetoric. Reducing other people to faceless enemies is one of evil's most successful ploys. Our lights shine when our prayers and conversations and calls for action remember that all life is sacred. It is never true that the worst members of a city, population, or nation define the entire group. Collective punishment of innocents (mass starvation, denial of medical care) is as heinous a war crime as terrorist attacks on peaceful families. Loving our enemies does not mean that justice is ignored, but it does mean that people of good faith will not cause reckless, undue harm in its pursuit.

The light of Christ is manifest in Matthew 25, where the people of God are known as ones who clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and give help to the prisoner. We must call for and help provide immediate, compassionate relief to the people trapped in Gaza — half of them, by some estimates, are

19 years old or younger. These innocents hold no responsibility for Hamas' crimes. I urge you to give generously to support the work of American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, in particular to the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, a long-standing beacon of healing and hope. (LINK = <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/neforfor/restriction/Ahli+Arab+Hospital++Gaza>)

The light of Christ is ultimately one that begins and ends in prayer. Pray for the people of Israel and Gaza, for those held captive and those living in fear, for those who have died and those who mourn them. Pray for yourself and your country and your church, that we may all be strong voices for peace, accountability, the end of suffering and the sanctity of human life. Let there be peace on earth, the song goes, and let it begin with me.

+*Kevin*