

## Peace in the World Today

We know all too well that there are many conflicts happening now in our world and that millions of people do not know real peace. But I came across the following news item that I found particularly disturbing and, I have to confess, unexpected – I quote:

“The world is becoming a more dangerous place and there are now just 10 countries which can be considered completely free from conflict, according to authors of the 10th annual Global Peace Index.

The worsening conflict in the Middle East, the lack of a solution to the refugee crisis and an increase in deaths from major terrorist incidents have all contributed to the world being less peaceful in 2016 than it was in 2015.

And there are now fewer countries in the world which can be considered truly at peace – in other words, not engaged in any conflicts either internally or externally – than there were in 2014.

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, a think tank which has produced the index for the past 10 years, only Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Japan, Mauritius, Panama, Qatar, Switzerland, Uruguay and Vietnam are free from conflict.”

That Switzerland and Japan are included amongst those ten countries is no surprise. More unexpected but encouraging is Vietnam, given the horrors of the almost twenty years’ war between 1955 and 1975.

You will notice, though, that Switzerland is the only European country in the list. Britain is notable for its absence. Like other parts of Europe we are involved in conflicts elsewhere and we are at risk from acts of terrorism. The message is that very few parts of the world are safe.

This may all sound very negative and depressing. And yet the Christian message is one of hope. We just heard a passage from our Lord’s final words to his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. He assured them of the love of God. He gave them peace, his peace, true peace. He promised them the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. And the marvellous thing is that those same promises are for us too. Our hearts too are not to be troubled. We too are not to be afraid.

That does not mean that we are to sit back and do nothing, though. We may feel that our ability to contribute to peace and reconciliation are extremely limited. But there are things we can do in the different encounters and relationships in our own lives. And we can pray. For it is good and right that prayer for peace and reconciliation is offered regularly in this church and in very many other places throughout the world.

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