

Bishop Kay's Christmas message 2016

We often hear that Christmas is all about children. The children singing with gusto at the Children's' Christmas service or having a great time as an angel or shepherd in the local Nativity Play, children writing letters to Santa, children wide eyed with wonder as they look at the Christmas lights and open gifts on Christmas morning. Their wonder and joy and enthusiasm is often a balm and a tonic to the tired and aching hearts of adults for whom wonder is a thing of the past.

Christmas *is* for the children. For all God's children, old or young. Wide eyed with wonder or hardened by hurt.

This year the images we have seen of children in places of war, in refugee camps, in places of conflict, in the heart of cities being systematically bombed and destroyed has been very confronting. One of those is of a little boy named Omran who was pictured after being rescued from rubble when a bomb had fallen near his house in the Syrian city of Aleppo. Syria has been home to some of the earliest Christian believers. Right now it is home to despair and suffering and children like Omran who are caught in the crossfire of political and national conflicts which are devastating and which the wider International community seems unable to stem.



Omran, Angels are Here! - painted by Judith Mehr

Aleppo is not the only place in which war and conflict, terrorism and fear abound. In so many places of conflict people continue to flee their homes and communities. Each week we pray for people who have been caught up in violence and terror, like those killed while at worship in the Coptic Orthodox church in Cairo earlier this month, and those killed or injured in Berlin a few days ago. Each week we pray for women and children whose lives are shattered by the terror of violence which they experience in their homes and at the hands of people close to them.

Last week at St Paul's Cathedral we sang a carol that I don't remember singing before, written by New Zealand hymn writer Shirley Murray called 'Star Child'. The words of this carol leapt from the page and became a prayer for me - a prayer that I have been singing since.

Perhaps you might sing it or pray it too this Christmas - because we know that Christmas *is* for the children. All God's children.



Star Child, earth Child, go between of God,
love Child, Christ Child, heaven's lighting rod,
*This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

Street child, beat child, no place left to go,
hurt child, used child, no one wants to know,
*This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

Grown child, old child, memory full of years,
sad child, lost child, story told in tears,
*This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

Spared child, spoiled child, memory full of years,
wise child, faith child, knowing joy in store,
*This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign,
down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine,
*This year, this year, let the day arrive
when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!*

I pray that you will know God's Christmas love, and be blessed

+Kay