

I have been travelling and enjoying time with family, while also keenly following events in Australia in the lead up to the national elections on July 2nd. I've also been closely following the news in Europe and the UK where I have been travelling - Brexit, the rise of open racism, contested space, violence, threats to unity, economic disadvantage, fear and suspicion. The elections in the USA are also of particular interest to the global community. It still surprises me that some Christians can disconnect the social, economic and political realm from the spiritual realm. Yes, faith is personal, but never private. All the values of the Reign of God are either enhanced or diminished by how we relate together and the priorities we make together. This is a really significant time in our history that will affect future generations, whether it is attention to climate change, refugees and asylum seekers, reconciliation, economic disparity, access to education, health and ageing, care of the vulnerable, or any of the myriad of issues that call for compassion, justice and peace-making. Many of these areas are represented in the very diverse expressions of diaconal ministries that are represented across DIAKONIA. May God grant us all courage, vision and tenacity.

The following prayer was written by Jon Humphries, from the Uniting Church in Australia.

Fear-Less, Eternal God,
One who is beyond and behind time,
Not limited, but involved,
We pray.
We humans fill our time with fear
Each age brings its smorgasbord of worries
Its conflicts and strife. Its failures of diplomacy and democracy
Its difficulties and challenges.
We swallow these up almost as fast as we can cook them up.
We fear other nations. We fear other religions. We fear other cultures.
We fear for our safety. Our security. Our jobs. Our wealth. Our way of living. Ourselves.
What we fear in our own motives, we project onto others,
What others fear in their motives, they project onto us,
And the chaos of mistrust grows until it blossoms
Mistrust into suspicion. Suspicion into slights.
Slightings into provocations. Provocations into offence.
Offence into aggression, and aggression into conflict.
Whether it be in our personal, communal, political, national or international relationships,
The pattern of fear repeats itself again and again.
When will we learn?
You forgive us, O God, for we don't know what we do.
Forgive us, for we don't know how to stop doing it.
Forgive us, for we can't seem to work out that you know how to make it right.
You are perfect love
And only perfect love can drive out all fear.
In your love, drive us out of our fears
Drive us beyond ourselves into your world
That we might know a better way
That we might live a better way
That we might live in your love.
That we might live your love.
Centre us on the purpose of the Christ
That we might live the way which leads out of fear into life.
A life transformed. A life of transformation.
This we pray. Amen.

Please also hold in your prayers the DIAKONIA Executive that meets 2nd-7th July, hosted by the Reuilly Deaconess Community in Versailles. In addition to the usual DIAKONIA business, the Executive will be planning for the 2017 DIAKONIA World Assembly in Chicago. Hope to see many of you in Chicago!

Sandy Boyce, July 2016.