

## Ash Wednesday 2017



The Key, a Palestinian symbol of steadfastness. Many families still have the keys to the homes they lost in 1948. Picture taken by Rev. John Howard.

***Forty days and forty nights  
you were fasting in the wild;  
forty days and forty nights  
tempted and yet undefined.***

Singing the Faith 236 v1

***“As servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute.”***

2 Corinthians 6:4-8a.

**As we begin Lent 2017** we find ourselves in a very different world to the world of Lent 2016. Election and referenda results have made the world a lot less predictable. Issues which seem to have been taken as accepted ideas such as International Humanitarian Law, Climate Change and even Human Rights, are openly challenged again. For Palestinians the world is a much more threatening place, with no peace process, a hostile White House and an even more confident Israeli administration making everyday life more and more difficult in the West Bank.

The writer of 2 Corinthians recognizes the challenges of life. He and those he is writing to have been through it all for the sake of spreading the Gospel, "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments... and sleepless nights." His words resonate with the experience of the Christian community in Palestine. They too have been through "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments... sleepless nights." Yet almost all of the Christian community adhere to their faith in the ways of non-violence to challenge the occupation and bring about a more just situation here. In Palestine it is often known by the Arabic word "*Sumoud*" which can be translated as "Steadfastness," or "Endurance," but speaks of the active commitment of the people to stay where

they are in the homes and on the land that they own and that their families have farmed for centuries.

Christians in this part of the world are a witness for those of us who come from very different places. Often we need greater steadfastness, greater endurance - we can too easily give up on causes that we hold dear when it seems that results are slow in coming. Lent is a time for self-examination, to face the temptations and to mature spiritually as we address those things within us that undermine the faithfulness of our spiritual lives.

This Lent may we learn more of "*Sumoud*," and apply it in our spiritual lives.

### **Prayer.**

*Lord Jesus Christ, Luke's Gospel tells of how you set your face resolutely towards Jerusalem though you knew what would be waiting for you there. Teach us that same steadfastness, that we might be willing to tackle the difficult issues where justice and peace are hard to find. This Lent teach us "*Sumoud*." Amen.*

Devotion written by Rev. John Howard, Methodist Liaison in Palestine and Israel, from the Methodist Church in Britain.