



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

To Jewish friends and fellow workers on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah 2010

People of religious faith see the passing of time not simply as a matter of convenience but as marking and honouring the creative activity of God in the world. As Rosh Hashanah and the solemnities of the High Holy Days through to the Day of Atonement come around again, I am glad to express my warm greetings to Jewish colleagues and communities here and around the world and my prayers for the year ahead.

I am conscious of the many challenges that face Jewish communities at present, many of which are at the same time challenges to Christians to understand, to empathise with and to respond creatively to, not just as fellow citizens but as siblings in faith. Amongst the challenges is the reappearance of anti-semitism in new and old guises and sometimes associated with a questioning of the legitimacy of the existence of the State of Israel. I was glad to be invited earlier this year by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to a wide ranging discussion and to make clear again my view that the State of Israel is a legitimate, democratic and law governed state that exists by consent of the United Nations and has its place in the councils of states in the world. In the light of twentieth century history, it is crucial that there is a state in the world where it is unequivocally safe to be Jewish. I wish that in this country it would not be considered necessary for every synagogue and Jewish school to be protected by security measures that no other religion here has in place.

In the months ahead, direct negotiations will be taking place between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. This will be a critically important test for those directly responsible and a heavy responsibility lies on them to move the situation forward from the tragic patterns of recrimination and retaliation that have become so familiar. It will also be a time of testing for Jews, Christians and Muslims in this country. Shall we be able to pray together for peace and justice; shall we be able to refrain from words and actions which are partisan rather than reconciling and thereby model to the wider world how a deep commitment to each other can be sustained? It is my hope and prayer that this will be so.

I have much appreciated continuing opportunities in the past year to work with many Jewish colleagues including through the Board of Deputies in their 250th anniversary year, with the Chief Rabbi and with the Presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews and with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. I look forward to giving the Isaiah Berlin Lecture at the West Hampstead Synagogue in November.

May God bless us in the year ahead with a spirit of trust and reconciliation so that we may together be a blessing in the world.

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