

To the Editor. The Newbury Weekly News. April 21st 2019.

I was one of those who went to Newbury mosque to show solidarity with Muslim friends at Friday prayers after the terrible shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand. I'm deeply saddened too by the killing of Lyra McKee in Derry, perpetrated by the dissident republican group New IRA. We hope this will not precipitate renewed conflict in Northern Ireland.

As I write this, on Easter Sunday, we now hear of the terrible bombings of churches in Sri Lanka, with over two hundred people killed. This is a country where I met my Dutch wife, and had many adventures, including facilitating a six-day course on 'Vision and Values' for twenty-four young teachers, who all happened to be Buddhists. So, that country is close to my heart.

I am a Quaker, and a Christian. So, I ask myself how Easter relates to these present-day atrocities. In biblical times, there were doubtless many who hoped that Jesus would, in some way, lead them to freedom from Roman oppression. The crucifixion completely dashed their hopes, and they were left in despair. But then the penny dropped. The liberation that Jesus was advocating was of a different nature - a change of heart for all people, irrespective of belief.

It is just as relevant today, whether we live in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Newbury, or anywhere else. What we have in common is not a culture, nationality, sexual orientation or belief. It is a Shared Humanity. Whoever we are, let us decide to foster that spirit.

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