



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

Bishop Guli's Easter message 2026

The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, the Bishop of Chelmsford, has written a message for the Easter season:

I've recently returned from another trip to Israel and Palestine to show solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters who continue to live under intolerable conditions. In the West Bank, in particular, the increase in the number of checkpoints haphazardly and cruelly dominates daily life and the effect of unrestrained illegal settlements perpetuates violence against Palestinians, driving people from their homes. Communities are being decimated and prospects for a lasting and just peace for all seem bleaker than ever. And, at the time of recording, all this continues while war rages in the Middle East.

During my trip, I was asked to preach at St. Philip's Church in Nablus. But what to say to people living with such pain? I confess I found it quite a challenge. I offered them greetings from that other beleaguered Christian community close to my heart in Iran. I spoke of Christian hope which persists even through the darkest times, and of the suffering which is at the heart of the Gospel in the way of the cross that Jesus walked. I spoke too of my solidarity and support in the ongoing cry for justice, also a Christian theme.

Finally, I reminded them (and all of us) to *continue looking for the good*, lest we be overwhelmed by the evil. For there is always goodness, even in the most vile situations. There is good in shared relationships, in small acts of kindness, courageous resistance, support given and received. These are glimpses of God's love and presence. They are signs of resurrection – of the life that burst forth as Jesus emerged from the tomb on that first Easter and of resurrection life that still refuses to be subdued.

So, whatever your context and experiences, may God give you grace to continue looking for the good, strength to bear your suffering, and courage to continue speaking and working for justice.

I wish you a blessed and joyful Easter.

+ Guli Chelmsford