**Update on Our Link with Lebanon 16/10/2020**

**Please don’t stop praying for Lebanon!**

Lebanon may now be out of the headlines, but their national tragedy continues.17th October is the anniversary of the mass street protests that followed the economic and banking collapse brought on by government corruption. Protests have continued but the search for a new honest government has still not succeeded. The interim Premier appointed when the previous Government resigned in August has now himself resigned having failed to get parliamentary backing for cross-community government of national unity, in spite of heavy pressure from the French President and the wider international community who are offering aid if a government that can be trusted can be installed. The Lebanese Pound is now worth only 20% of its value before the crisis and large swathes of the population struggle to afford the food and medicines necessary to survive.

Churches have been very active, with support from our diocese following Bishop Philip’s appeal, in helping give aid to those who suffered after the great explosion in a nitrate fertiliser warehouse in Beirut docks at the beginning of August and in the repair and rebuilding of destroyed properties damaged by the explosion. But there are still thousands homeless and the continuing rampant inflation and unemployment is driving up the poverty rate. The covid infection rate is also high and the hospitals that survived the explosion are overwhelmed

Lebanon has been in the past a beacon of hope for the Middle East. It is the only country in the region where the churches are completely free both to worship and to evangelise and fulfil their social mission. Yet in the year when the country should be celebrating 100 years since it gained independence it is wracked with economic and political turmoil.

Far from detracting from the appropriateness of Bishop Philip’s vision for a link with Lebanon for our diocese, drawing on our shared trading and cultural history, these events show that Lebanon needs the solidarity of Christians from other countries more than ever. The most important way we can do this at the moment is through prayer that the Lord may grant them the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 to have a future and a hope.

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