



from Garth...

The Desert Speaks



Recently I saw an article in the press that fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls had been found in a desert cave - the first such discovery for 60 years. Sections of the dig took place in the occupied West Bank - in Palestine - which in

itself causes controversy because it was done by Israeli archaeologists. "Israel has long been criticized for removing objects found in the Palestinian territories. According to international law, taking cultural property from an occupied territory is forbidden, but those concerns haven't prevented the Israeli Antiquities Authority from putting the discoveries on display." *CBS News*.

If that's not a message for these times what is?!

What was found was very interesting - one of the fragment's reads like this:

**"These are the things you are to do,
speak the truth to one another,
render true and perfect justice in your gates."**

I thought **if that's not a message for these times what is?! It certainly sounds like 'a word from the Lord'** which should inform and underpin what is going on in the Holy Land today.

It is, incidentally, extremely similar to Zechariah 8:16.

Peace Groups Prophecy

Britain does not need “Grandiose, money-wasting spending on weapons of mass destruction!” says Kate Hudson of CND.

Kate has been General Secretary of CND since 2010, having served as Chair since 2003. She first became active in the peace movement in the early 1980s in the big upsurge of activity against cruise missiles.

CND held an emergency online rally the other day which she chaired. The rally was in the light of Boris Johnson's shocking proposal on hugely increasing our nuclear weapons. Some familiar faces spoke, including such names as Jeremy Corbyn, Bruce Kent, Lindsey German from **Stop the War** and the Archbishop of York –



Kate Hudson

**Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell was the first speaker.
Some of his words:**

“The best way of avoiding war and making peace is collaborative enterprise. Then human communities are so invested in each other, and in each other’s well-being, that war becomes unthinkable.

And swords are turned into ploughshares.

The root of this vision, that we belong to each other and must find global solutions with each other, lies in the Jewish/Christian revelation of God who has created us one humanity to inhabit one world and whose purposes are those of peace.

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty of 1968, of which we are a signatory, is another example. Its aims to reduce and then eliminate nuclear weapons, has formed the backdrop for all UK defence policy by all governments ever since. Of course, many of us have rightly called for more; but there has been some progress and some reduction in arms.

But this week’s announcement changed this. War should be unthinkable - but we’re going to spend more money on bombs. We are going to increase our warheads by 40%.

This is inexplicable.

This is illogical.

This is immoral, and legally unjustifiable.

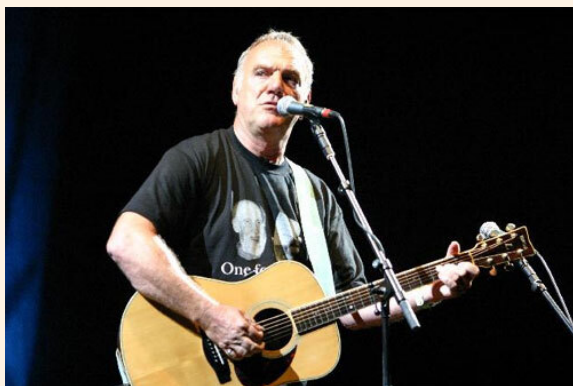
It flies in the face of our legal obligations.

It ignores the success of the **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).**

This defence strategy is indefensible.”

(You can read the whole of the Archbishop of York's speech [here](#))

Great letter from the Musicians for Peace and Disarmament (MPD)



Ralph McTell

"...This could not be a worse time for the government to raise the cap on nuclear warheads.

Musicians for Peace and Disarmament have been campaigning for a nuclear-free world since 1983. Although progress towards this end has been painfully slow, little did we expect such a sudden and profound setback as the recent announcement.

This reckless decision threatens to destabilise the already fragile world order, and instead of using precious funds for positive purposes, it squanders them on weapons of mass destruction that can never be used, are illegal, and are inherently immoral.

Society will need rebuilding after the destructive effects of the pandemic; millions of people around the world are in desperate need of help after years of conflict in their countries, yet foreign aid is being cut; and the climate emergency, now almost at the point of no return, must be made a matter of absolute priority.

MPD strongly urges the Prime Minister and his government to show political wisdom and moral leadership by withdrawing this plan."

Signed by Ralph McTell, Peggy Seeger, Wissam Boustany and many others.

The most militaristic government for over 30 years puts us all at risk, says the Peace Pledge Union

With the Prime Minister planning to lift the cap on the number of nuclear warheads by 44% it's clear that increasing militarism cannot be regarded as a side issue

Britain now has its most militaristic government since the 1980s. Despite recent headlines about reductions in troop numbers the military machine is not being cut nor its power reduced. The reverse is true... Johnson has already promised an increase in UK military spending of 24bn over four years, the largest percentage increase

since the Korean War - but he can't "afford" a decent pay rise for nurses... Last weekend "Defence" Secretary Ben Wallace wrote in the Sunday Telegraph about the threats facing Britain. **He did not once mention the threat of pandemics, poverty, or extreme climate change.** Ministers and generals continue to live in a fantasy world in which "defence" is a euphemism for war and "security" has nothing to do with what really makes people safe... **What can you do with 260 nuclear war heads that you can't do with 180?** Either number would be enough to wipe out much of the world.

We can campaign about the climate emergency but don't always mention how climate change is fuelled by capitalism and war... Now is the time for a renewed mass movement against militarism. We need to expose militarism's links with unaccountable corporate power, its tendency to fuel arms races, its dangers to the world, the way it takes resources from healthcare and struggles against poverty and climate change.

Symon Hill, Campaigns Manager at [Peace Pledge Union](#)

An affront crying out to heaven

Some thoughts by Pope Francis when he visited Nagasaki in November 2019

Pope Francis called for the abolition of nuclear weapons right across the world. He denounced the possession of such terrible weapons as perverse and indefensible.

In a city which the United States bombed - bringing unspeakable horror - the Pope said, "This place makes us deeply aware of the pain that we human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another. Here in this city, which witnessed the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of a nuclear attack, our attempts to speak out against the arms race will never be enough." He added that nuclear weapons were not the answer to a desire for security, peace and stability.

The Pope went on to say **"In a world where billions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made, through the manufacture, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons are an affront crying out to heaven."**

"I ask political leaders not to forget that these weapons cannot protect us from current threats to national and international security. We need to ponder the catastrophic impact of their deployment especially from a humanitarian and environmental standpoint, and reject heightening a climate of fear, mistrust, and hostility fermented

by nuclear doctrines.”

Against the Grain

Some of you will know that Palm Sunday is a very special day for me - you will have heard me talking about it in concerts - and you can see one of these times on [YouTube here](#). I love the piece of street theatre that Jesus provides and the message that it brings -
Easter's message of non-violence and hope.

As the song says,
*Don't need an empire of violence
We've seen all that before
We need the Sermon on the Mount
Need blessed are the poor
Because it brings so much hope
When it goes against the grain
The holy rebel Jesus gonna help you do the same*

Strange Weapons



Sister Ann Nu Thawng, a member of the Missionaries of St. Francis Saverio of Myitkyina, kneels in front of a row of police officers to plead with them to stop the violence in Myanmar, Feb. 28, 2021. (Credit: Twitter.)

In the sadness of the news from Myanmar the solitary witness

of a nun in prayer is a very powerful moment.

Seeing this action from Sister Ann reminded me of something I was trying to say in the song *Strange Weapons* on the **Scars** album. The first verse of *Strange Weapons* was about a demonstration in Cape Town during apartheid days. The procession was led by faith community leaders including Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Strangely, I have just been working on this song, adding a verse on the power of prayer - the first part of the new verse very much reflects the example of Sister Ann.

*Prayer is an act of defiance
Won't accept the way things are
Prayer is an act of protest
Won't accept the way things are
But prayer is an act of hope
Brings a vision of a new day
Of mercy and of peace
And love's transforming power
He was praying in his solitude
Praying for a new dawn
He was armed with love and dignity
Prayed for justice to be born*

The last four lines where it turns to "he" was sparked off by Patriarch Michel Sabbah who I spoke about in the last newsletter. His example of prayer for justice for the Palestinians showed a man of love and dignity, speaking out for truth and of course for justice.

The chorus of *Strange Weapons* says this

*Strange weapons of love
Strange weapons of love
But they're the ones who hold the power
To change the human heart
With their strange weapons of love.*

Sister Ann and Patriarch Michel use these strange weapons of love as followers of the one who so distinctively used the strange weapon of non-violence on Palm Sunday and right through holy week. The empire thought it could deal with that with its weapons of violence but God's affirmation of love and hope came on Easter Sunday morning.

On this [link](#) you can hear the original version of *Strange Weapons* which has the verse about the demonstration in South Africa with Desmond Tutu and then goes to the story of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Easter Prayer



O Jesus, our companion, we journey with you through Lent to Palm Sunday,
Then through Holy Week, Good Friday and to the joy of Easter.
We are always walking with you on a journey towards justice and hope,
A journey that lives out your values reflected so clearly in the Sermon on the Mount.
May we pause and pray and meet with you and then be a community of action and love.

Your teaching was about the kingdom or community of God,
A way of life and a community that goes up against the empires of domination,
violence and injustice —

As relevant now as it ever has been.

The empires of greed favouring the rich and powerful,
The empires of domination taking land, bringing occupation and oppression
Instead of your way which reflects justice and equality for all.

May we pause and pray and meet with you and then be a community of action and love.

When you headed to Jerusalem you witnessed to this on Palm Sunday
As you rode in from one side of Jerusalem gentle and riding on a donkey
From the other side came the army of empire, injustice, greed and oppression.
As you turned the tables of oppression, so the empire wanted you killed.
The powers who rule, crucify you: the sin of the world kills you.
But on Easter Sunday God affirms you and all you have done
There is the rising again —

May we pause and pray and meet with you and then be a community of action and love.

God's community of love continues forever.
May we be in the community of love
The community that is never silent,

The community on the side of the oppressed
And so a community of the Gospel bringing justice, equality, peace and hope to all.
May we pause and pray and meet with you and then be a community of action and love.

Amen



A joyful song to go out with!

I was sorry to hear the news of the death of Chris Barber. He was certainly one of the greats of British Jazz and Blues. When I was recording the album 'I Never Knew Life Was in Full Technicolor', the producer Tony Hooper (of The Strawbs), listened to me play the song *I Will Return*, and then he said he thought it would be good to do it with The Chris Barber Band. I was very surprised but delighted when he said they would come do it with us.

The song got a great reception from people, so we were asked to do a television programme together, which we did - it was for Good Friday. Recently I've tried to find a copy of the recording of that programme but sadly haven't been able to.

I found Chris a great person to work with and a great person to talk to. He had such a knowledge of music and musicians. He brought all sorts of people over to the UK such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Big Bill Broonzy, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and Muddy Waters.

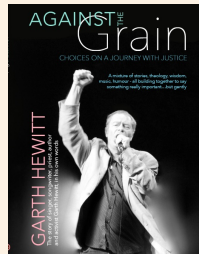
Having the chance to play with Chris and to talk to him was very informative and very enjoyable. He was a huge influence on many people.

You can hear the song [on YouTube here](#)

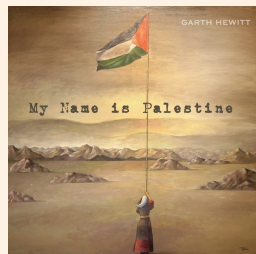
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Click here for the double CD Against the Grain, a collection of Garth's songs through the years, and including Against the Grain, referred to in this newsletter



Click here for Garth's autobiographical book



A CD of songs emphasising the dignity and value of each human being, with a strong rejection of the arms trade and war



A double album of songs, prayers and stories about the Land once known as 'holy'



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