

**BRIDGE BUILDERS' 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**  
**Some reflections by Rt Revd Peter Price, Bishop of Bath and Wells**

Thank God for the way Bridge Builders has helped to “bathe us in energy and inspiration.” That phrase comes from Luis Carlos Susin, a Brazilian Capuchin and Teacher. I like the way he plays with the image of sunshine breaking in on us: “Reconciliation and peace are rewards on the farthest horizon, ever beyond the next horizon and all landscapes. Nevertheless they are like the sun, which rises on the horizon and reaches with its rays into the space and time present anywhere, however violent the place.” I see the ministry of Bridge Builders as a step towards that farthest horizon, towards the vision of Revelation 21: “God will make his dwelling with humanity. He will wipe away all tears from eyes, and bring an end to the causes of death. And there will be no mourning and crying.”

In the here and now, we are aware of frightening injustice in the world. What can we do? Aristotle said, “Among friends there is no need of justice, whereas even among the just, friendship is still needed. It can be seen therefore that the highest level of justice resides in the achievement of friendship.”

This suggests that in a world of increasing globalisation the place of the neighbour has never been more significant. But we can go further. The Bible speaks of love for both neighbour and enemy. Perhaps surprisingly, the words *closeness* and *harm* have a common root. So “love your neighbour” and “love your enemy” are actually two ways of expressing the same commandment. Loving the one who can do you harm, or bother, or inconvenience is in reality the authentic start of the love of neighbour.

Such neighbourliness is costly and, in a certain sense, unfair. Those who suffer are called to forgive more than those who cause the suffering; loss accepts that suffering is the punishment that is deserved by another; but by bearing it we offer peace that the other does not deserve.

Forgiveness, then, is a process of loss that brings gain. I want Bridge Builders to keep pointing the way to forgiveness. In the here and now, hatred and enmity are on the increase. They can only be conquered by feelings of closeness, solidarity, peace and harmony. To achieve those things, we need to be bathed in energy and inspiration, and therefore I am thankful for the ongoing ministry of Bridge Builders and its service of the Church in Britain.